

New drowning rescue steps could save lives

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A New Zealand researcher from the University of Auckland, Jonathon Webber, is part of an international study team that has come up with a new way to help prevent drowning.

The new series of simple steps is presented as a "Drowning Chain of Survival" and could save lives, according to the study by a global team of water safety researchers.

The team has developed a procedure to address a global drowning epidemic that they say could significantly improve chances of prevention, survival and recovery of people in danger in the water.

Drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury death worldwide, accounting for seven per cent of all injury related deaths. The World Health Organization estimates 359,000 people lose their lives to drowning each year. Despite this, there is no globally accepted method to prevent drowning.

In a new article just published in the journal Resuscitation, the researchers describe the development of a universally-appropriate 'Drowning Chain of Survival' for the prevention and effective response to drowning.

The 'Drowning Chain of Survival' comprises five life-saving steps for lay and professional rescuers. The steps of the chain are: Prevent drowning, recognise distress, provide flotation, remove from water and provide care as needed.



"Prevention is the most important contributor to reduce drowning. In low and medium income countries where more than 90 percent of the global drowning occurs, guidance to accelerate culturally appropriate prevention, rescue and resuscitation strategies is most urgently needed," says Mr Webber.

"When preventative measures fail, responders need to be able to perform the necessary steps to interrupt the drowning process. The first challenge is to recognise someone in distress and to activate rescue and emergency medical services," he says.

"It's important to realise, contrary to the prevailing notion, that most people are not able to wave or shout for help when drowning. Instead, they may appear to be climbing an 'invisible ladder' in a desperate effort to stay afloat".

Once recognising a victim is in distress, the next priority is to interrupt the <u>drowning</u> process by providing flotation to the victim – a strategy not widely used despite buying valuable time for emergency services to arrive.

"It is critical that lay-persons do not become victims themselves," says Mr Webber.

The study concludes that as soon a person is removed from the water, rescuers must seek medical attention for them if symptoms are present, and for all victims who required resuscitation.

"Drowning is a complex global problem, and as such there were challenges in developing a 'one shoe fits' all approach," says Mr Webber. "As we worked on the 'Drowning Chain of Survival', it became evident the simpler the message, the more acceptable and widely used it would be for the different scenarios and levels of rescuer experience; and,



ultimately, the more likely it would be to save lives."

The research team included Dr David Szpilman from Brazil, Dr Linda Quan from Seattle,USA, Dr Joost Bierens from the Netherlands, Mr Luiz Morizot-Leitee from Miami, USA, Dr Stephen John Langendorferf from Ohio, USA, Dr Steve Beerman from Canada, Dr Bo Løfgren from Denmark and Mr Jonathon Webber from Auckland.

Resuscitation is a monthly international and interdisciplinary medical journal. The papers published deal with the aetiology, pathophysiology and prevention of cardiac arrest, resuscitation training, clinical resuscitation, and experimental resuscitation research, although papers relating to animal studies will be published only if they are of exceptional interest and related directly to clinical cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Papers relating to trauma are published occasionally but the majority of these concern traumatic cardiac arrest.

Provided by University of Auckland

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