

## *Viewpoint*

It's time to pay attention to the other food safety risk

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**T**erry is doing fine," the e-mail header said.

Terry and John Smigelski are friends from back when we all worked for Daka, a now-defunct food service contractor. I hadn't known anything was wrong with either of them. These days, John is vice president of a hotel and catering company in Booth Bay Harbor, ME. Terry sometimes helps out when they're serving a big event.

John's e-mail told this story:

"Terry [who was working a catered event and had stopped for supper] was chewing on a piece of prime rib when suddenly she had to cough. When that happens, the normal reflex is to breathe in for air. The meat went down and lodged in her throat. Donna, who was standing nearby, immediately did the Heimlich maneuver (a way to force an object out of a victim's throat), but was unsuccessful.

"I ran over and tried several times, but Terry passed out in my arms. I began CPR and mouth-to-mouth [resuscitation], turned her on her side and was doing low abdominal thrusts to try to dislodge the object from her throat.

"She was lifeless and not breathing. Her eyes were rolling back. Some of the folks gathered around were crying, including me, but we continued to work on her with her head tilted back. We were screaming to her to hold on.

"One of the thrusts of air I blew into her mouth must have moved the obstruction slightly so she could take in small amounts of air until the paramedics arrived.

"We kept at it with oxygen as we slowly got her limp body on the gurney and began to move her through the back porch. At this point, it was a good 15-20 minutes that we kept her alive by helping her breathe.

"Maybe all the bumping down the steps dislodged the object. Terry started to yell, saying she could breathe, take the oxygen mask off. The doctor told us the next day it was a one-in-a-million chance that she survived. She's home resting today."

John's conclusion: "As a company, we should have someone on staff in every kitchen who is CPR certified."

How would your food service team react in this kind of emergency?

- Tom Mac Dermott