Deaths allegedly caused by the use of choke holds (shime-waza)

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Deaths Allegedly Caused by the Use of “Choke Holds” (Shime-Waza)

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Abstract

Shime-waza or the “choke hold,” when properly applied, should not cause death; therefore, its primary purpose should be to subdue violent suspects. When properly applied, the choke hold causes unconsciousness in 10 to 20 s. No fatalities as a result of shime-waza have been reported in the sport of judo since its inception in 1882. Among the methods of “control holds” taught to law enforcement officers is the choke hold similar or identical to shime-waza used in judo. Using the choke hold, officers may afford themselves maximum safety while subjecting the suspect to a minimum possibility of injury. The author has reviewed 14 fatalities with autopsy findings where death was allegedly caused by the use of choke holds.

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A chokehold, choke, stranglehold or, in Judo, shime-waza (Japanese: 割絞技; English: constriction technique) is a general term for a grappling hold that critically reduces or prevents either air (choking) or blood (strangling) from passing through the neck of an opponent. The restriction may be of one or both and depends on the hold used and the reaction of the victim. The lack of blood or air often leads to unconsciousness or even death if the hold is maintained. Chokeholds are used in martial arts.