

Does motivation matter? A systematic review and meta-analysis of outcomes following intentional foreign object ingestion.

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I. ABSTRACT

II. INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The global displacement crisis has reached unprecedented levels, with over 100 million forcibly displaced individuals reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as of May 2024 [1]. Refugees and asylum seekers often endure extreme hardships, compelling them to seek asylum in foreign countries [2,3]. This vulnerable population frequently faces compounded mental health challenges due to traumatic pre-migration experiences, hazardous journeys, and difficult post-migration realities, including detention and instability of legal status [4–7].

Self-harm, encompassing various behaviours where individuals inflict harm on themselves, is a particularly alarming manifestation of these mental health challenges. Rates of self-harm are significantly elevated among asylum seekers and refugees compared to general populations, especially among those who are detained, with rates up to 216 times higher in offshore detention facilities than in the general population [8–10].

Methods of suicide and self-harm among refugees differ based on available means, cultural factors, and motivating factors [11]. Common methods include cutting, self-battery, attempted hanging, self-poisoning by medication or chemicals, and intentional ingestion of foreign objects [9].

Intentional ingestion of foreign objects (IIFO) is defined as non-accidental ingestion of a true foreign body (non-nutritive items)[12]. Most ingested foreign bodies (80–90%) pass spontaneously, but 10–20% require endoscopic removal and up to 1% need surgery. Timely assessment and intervention are critical [13,14]. In refugee contexts, however, geographic isolation and limited access to advanced care complicate timely management, potentially increasing morbidity and mortality [15].

Globally, rates of IIFO are increasing. In the United States, rates doubled in 2017, with 14% of cases deemed intentional [16]. A 2009 review found intentional ingestions in up to 92% of adults from lower socioeconomic populations, suggesting that rates may be even higher among refugees and asylum seekers [17].

Management of IIFO has been evolving since 1635, when Daniel Schwabam recorded the first gastrotomy on a man who had swallowed a knife [18]. In 1738, Gorsauld is credited as the first surgeon to perform a cervical esophagotomy for the removal of a

foreign body (FB) [19]. In 1906, José Goyanes extracted a coin impacted in the esophagus using a rigid esophagoscope for the first time [20]. The early 20th century saw the emergence of rigid esophagoscopy as the first large-scale method for foreign body extraction, with further case series detailing technical refinements appearing in the literature [21,22]. Among the most extraordinary documented cases is that by Chalk, who reported a psychiatric patient ingesting 2,533 objects weighing a total of 21,268 grams [23]. The largest single ingested item reported measured 28 cm in length [24].

Clinical outcomes are influenced by various factors, including patient age, comorbidities, object characteristics (size, shape, composition, anatomical location), and the time elapsed since ingestion and current guidance advises invasive foreign object extraction guidance based on these factors [13].

Literature to date largely focuses on IIFO in prisons or psychiatric contexts, with sparse data from displaced or asylum-seeking populations. In detention, where traditional communication channels are obstructed, ingestion may serve as a form of protest or distress signal [25]. Conversely, in psychiatric settings, ingestion may reflect mental illness or affective dysregulation [26–30].

Psychiatric conditions most frequently associated with intentional ingestion of foreign objects (IIFO) include psychosis, malingering, pica, and personality disorders [26,31].

Malingering can present in various forms, particularly in prison populations where manipulation to trigger medical transfer is a noted motivation [26,31,32]. In such cases, the optimal management often involves brief medical intervention with minimal reinforcement, followed by prompt return to custody [33]. In contrast, individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) may describe escalating anxiety prior to ingestion followed by a sense of relief afterward [31].

In cases involving borderline personality disorder, Gitlin et al. [26] suggest that IIFO may function as an affect regulation strategy, particularly during episodes of perceived abandonment. While such behaviour may appear life-threatening, it should not be presumed to indicate suicidal intent [31].

In rare and severe cases, some authors have proposed a palliative care approach to repeated IIFO, recognising the limited prognosis associated with treatment-resistant psychiatric illness and the cumulative harms of repeated surgical intervention [34].

Despite the rising prevalence, the heterogeneity in populations engaging in, and the potential severity of IIFO, there is limited research exploring how motivations for ingestion differ across populations and how these motivations may influence clinical outcomes [35–37]. Varying motivations likely influence clinical management, including decisions around the need for endoscopic or surgical intervention. For instance, if ingestion is primarily intended as protest, patients may avoid behaviours that risk

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severe harm, potentially lowering the threshold for conservative management.

This systematic review aims to address these gaps by evaluating how motivation for IIFO influences clinical outcomes. Specifically, we aim to examine how different motivations impact rates of endoscopic and surgical interventions, in the hope of informing future clinical strategies and healthcare responses. The protocol adheres to PRISMA guidelines [38].

Objectives

This systematic review aims to quantify the rates of endoscopic and surgical interventions following intentional ingestion of foreign objects in human populations. It also seeks to examine how individual factors—such as demographic characteristics, object characteristics and motivations for ingestion (including protest, self-harm, or suicidal intent)—influence the likelihood of requiring endoscopic or surgical procedures and the incidence of complications.

III. METHODS

Eligibility Criteria

This review included studies involving human participants of any age who had non-accidental ingestion of a true foreign body (non-nutritive items). Studies were only included if they reported on all of the following data: motivations for ingestion (such as protest, suicidal intent, self-harm, or psychiatric conditions); management strategies (including whether conservative, endoscopic, or surgical treatment was used); and object characteristics such as type (e.g., blunt, sharp, long, short, multiple objects). All settings were eligible, and a wide range of study designs were accepted, including observational studies (cohort, case-control, cross-sectional), case series, clinical trials, and case reports.

A full list of eligibility criteria is available in Appendix A-A and a full list of exclusion criteria is available in Appendix A-B.

Information Sources

Relevant articles were identified through a systematic search of PubMed, Web of Science, Embase, Scopus, PsycINFO, CENTRAL and Google Scholar on 15th January 2025, with the assistance of a librarian. Included articles then had their bibliography's searched by the primary author (JGE) on 14th May 2025.

Search Strategy

The search was conducted using keywords and MeSH terms based on the concepts underpinning this review. The bibliography of each included article was searched for any further relevant articles. The keywords and MeSH terms used can be found in Appendix B.

Selection Process

All identified articles were collated, duplicate articles were identified and removed. Following duplicate removal, all remaining articles underwent independent title and abstract screening conducted by the first author (JGE). To ensure consistency, a randomly selected 10% sample of these articles underwent independent screening by a second author (MS) during both stages. Any discrepancies identified between these two reviewers were resolved by a third reviewer (GC). Inter-reviewer agreement was calculated at each screening stage using Cohen's Kappa.

Data Collection Process

Data were extracted by a single reviewer (JGE) into an Excel [39] spreadsheet. Variables for extraction were developed through an iterative process of engaging with the literature and identifying consistent patterns in the data reported. A preliminary analysis of the first 30 case reports informed the development of additional data categories, which were subsequently applied to the remaining reports. Once the case report data were extracted, these structured variables were used to guide the extraction of aggregate data from case series. Studies were grouped for extraction according to their classification as case reports or case series. Where case series contained sufficiently granular data, cases were extracted individually and treated as case reports; otherwise, data were extracted at the aggregate level. Case grouping for analysis was based on whether they met criteria for inclusion as individual case reports or case series, as defined above. Relevant data from reviews and other literature types were recorded under the case report category.

Data Items

Data were extracted for a range of outcomes, including rates of endoscopic and surgical intervention, conservative management, mortality, and ingestion-related complications such as perforation or obstruction. Where reported, other outcomes including injuries requiring intervention or additional medical consequences were also recorded.

Additional variables included demographic characteristics (e.g. psychiatric history, prisoner or displacement status), motivational factors (e.g. intent to self-harm, protest, psychiatric or psychosocial drivers), and object features (e.g. length, sharpness, presence of magnets or batteries, and quantity ingested). Full definitions of all variables are provided in Appendix C.

The full dataset of extracted case-level and study-level data (including bias assessments), is available as Supplementary Tables S1 and S2 (provided as separate files).

Risk of Bias Assessment

Risk of bias was assessed manually for all included studies by a single reviewer (JGE), using the *Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklists for Case Reports and Case Series* [40]. Studies were first classified as either case reports or case series based on the level of granularity in the data. Each study was then evaluated using the corresponding JBI tool.

Effects Measures

For binary outcomes (endoscopy, surgery, and death), the effect measure used was the odds ratio (OR), calculated from 2x2 contingency tables. Each odds ratio was accompanied by a 95% confidence interval (CI) and a p-value from a chi-square test of independence.

This approach was used consistently across all pairwise comparisons between binary exposure variables (e.g., motivations, object types, population characteristics) and binary outcome variables. Significant associations were identified at a threshold of $p < 0.05$ and reported alongside their respective ORs and CIs.

IV. RESULTS

Study Selection

A total of 808 records were identified through initial database searches: PubMed (317), Web of Science (277), Google Scholar (135), Embase (25), SCOPUS (24), PsycINFO (16), and Cochrane (14). 316 duplicates were identified and removed.

Title and abstract screening was undertaken, with JGE reviewing all 492 records. A random sample of 50 records was generated for independent screening MS. Cohen's Kappa was calculated for inter-reviewer agreement between JGE and MS, yielding a value of 0.38, indicating fair agreement. Where JGE and MS disagreed, 16 records were reviewed by GC. In total, 176 records were excluded, leaving 316 for full text review.

During full text review, JGE reviewed all 316 records. A random sample of 32 records was generated for independent review by MS. Inter-reviewer agreement was again calculated using Cohen's Kappa, yielding a value of 0.21, indicating fair agreement. Where JGE and MS disagreed, 5 records were reviewed by GC. In total, 276 records were excluded during full text review. 40 records were included and proceeded to bibliography search.

The bibliographies of the 40 included papers were searched by manually JGE. Relevant bibliography items were identified, collated, and evaluated against the eligibility criteria, yielding 194 results. These 194 results were reviewed by JGE. 164 bibliography search records were excluded, leaving 30 for inclusion.

Therefore, a total of 70 records were included in this study and proceeded to bias assessment. This process is illustrated in Figure 1.

Risk of Bias

Case Reports: 75 cases from 67 studies [32,41–106] were evaluated using the JBI Checklist for Case Reports [40]. 4 cases were excluded. Cases were excluded at this stage as they failed to meet critical criteria in the following domains: current condition (2 cases, 50%), post intervention condition (2 cases, 50%), harms (2 cases, 50%), takeaway lessons (2 cases, 50%), history timeline (1 cases, 25%), and intervention treatment (1 cases, 25%). The excluded cases came from the following studies: [43,79,91]. Of the remaining cases (71), most clearly described intervention treatment (100%), history timeline (99%), post intervention condition (97%), takeaway lessons (97%), patient demographic (96%), and current condition (96%). Reporting was also strong for diagnostic assessment (92%), and harms (90%).

Case Series: Separately, 3 studies [107–109] were evaluated using the JBI Checklist for Case Series [40]. Reporting quality was generally high across all JBI domains. All included case series fully reported clear inclusion criteria, standard condition measurement, valid id method, complete inclusion, clear demographic reporting, clear clinical info reporting, clear outcome followup reported, and appropriate statistical analysis. However, fewer studies reported consecutive inclusion, and clear site demographic reporting.

Study Characteristics

A total of 67 studies were included in the synthesis. Case reports made up 64 studies [32,41,42,44–78,80–90,92–106], yielding 71 cases. Case Series made up 3 studies [107–109], yielding 90 cases.

Case Reports: A total of 71 cases from 64 studies were included in the case synthesis. The mean age of this 30.7 (range: 7.0–100.0). A full list of group summary characteristics and outcomes is available in Table I

Gender: 43 cases (60.6%) were Male [32,41,42,44,45,47,48,50,52,53,56,57,61,64–67,69,71,72,76–78,81–84,88,89,92,94–98,100,103,106], 27 cases (38.0%) were Female [46,49,51,54,55,58–60,62,63,68,70,73–75,80,85–87,90,93,99,101,102,104], 1 case (1.4%) had no gender recorded [105].

Age Group: 25 cases (35.2%) were between 26 and 40 years of age [44,47–49,52,54,59,60,62,65–67,69,72,78,82,84,88–90,94,98,102,104,105], 18 cases (25.4%) were between 18 and 25 years of age [32,41,45,50,55,61,73,74,76,82,83,87,92,99,103], 12 cases (16.9%) were under 18 years of age [46,58,63,68,81,85,86,95,96,101], 11 cases (15.5%) were between 41 and 60 years of age [42,56,57,64,70,71,77,93,97,100,106], 3 cases (4.2%) were over 60 years of age [51,75,80].

Demographic: 35 cases (49.3%) had a psychiatric history [44,46,48–51,57,59,62,63,65,66,69–73,75–78,81,83,84,86,87,90,93–95,104–106], 19 cases (26.8%) had ingested previously [44,48,53,55,61,63,64,69,71,72,81,90,95,97,104–106], 12 cases (16.9%) were detained persons [32,44,47,48,82,88,94,98], 7 cases (9.9%) were severely disabled [50,75,81,86,87,104,106], 4 cases (5.6%) were psychiatric inpatients [63,105,106], 3 cases (4.2%) were under the influence of alcohol [52,61,97], 2 cases (2.8%) were displaced people [41,67].

Motivation: 34 cases (47.9%) had a psychiatric motivation [42,44,46,48–50,54,55,62–65,69–78,80,81,84,86,90,93–95,103,106], 20 cases (28.2%) were motivated by self-harm intention [32,42,44,45,57,59–61,66,80,82,83,90,94,95,105], 17 cases (23.9%) had a psychosocial motivation [41,52,55,58,68,70,76,80,85,88,89,92,96,97,99,101,102], 9 cases (12.7%) were motivated by protest [32,56,67,82,99], 9 cases (12.7%) had another documented motivation [46,47,64,69,87,90,98,100,104].

Object Characteristics: 50 cases (70.4%) ingested a large diameter object (2.5cm) [32,41,42,44,45,47,48,50,53,54,55–61,63,64,67,69,71,72,74–78,82–90,93,95,97,98,102,104–106], 44 cases (62.0%) ingested multiple objects [46,48–51,55–58,64–66,68–74,76–78,80–86,92–97,100,101,103,105,106], 39 cases (54.9%) ingested a short object (<5cm) [32,41,46,48,49,51–53,55,56,58,62,65,68–71,73,77,80–82,85,87,89,92,94–96,99–102,105], 33 cases (46.5%) ingested a sharp object [32,44,48,49,52,54,55,57,61–66,69–72,74,76,78,82–84,92,103,106], 31 cases (43.7%) ingested a long object (5cm) [42,45,47,50,54,55,57,59–61,63,64,66,67,72,74–76,78,83,84,86,88,90,93,97,98,103,104,106], 16 cases (22.5%) ingested a long sharp object (5cm) [54,57,61,63,64,66,72,74,76,78,83,84,103,106], 16 cases (22.5%) ingested a short sharp object (<5cm) [32,48,49,52,55,62,65,69–71,82,92], 9 cases (12.7%) ingested a magnet [46,56,58,81,85,86,95,96,101], 2 cases (2.8%) ingested a button battery [53,56].

Outcomes: 48 cases (67.6%) experienced a complication [45,46,48,50–54,56–58,60–68,72,74–78,81–86,90,92,93,95–99,101–104], 43 cases (60.6%) underwent surgery [32,42,44–46,50,51,54,55–63,65–67,72,74–76,78,81–85,92,95–97,99,101–105], 31 cases (43.7%) underwent endoscopy

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases, registers and other sources.

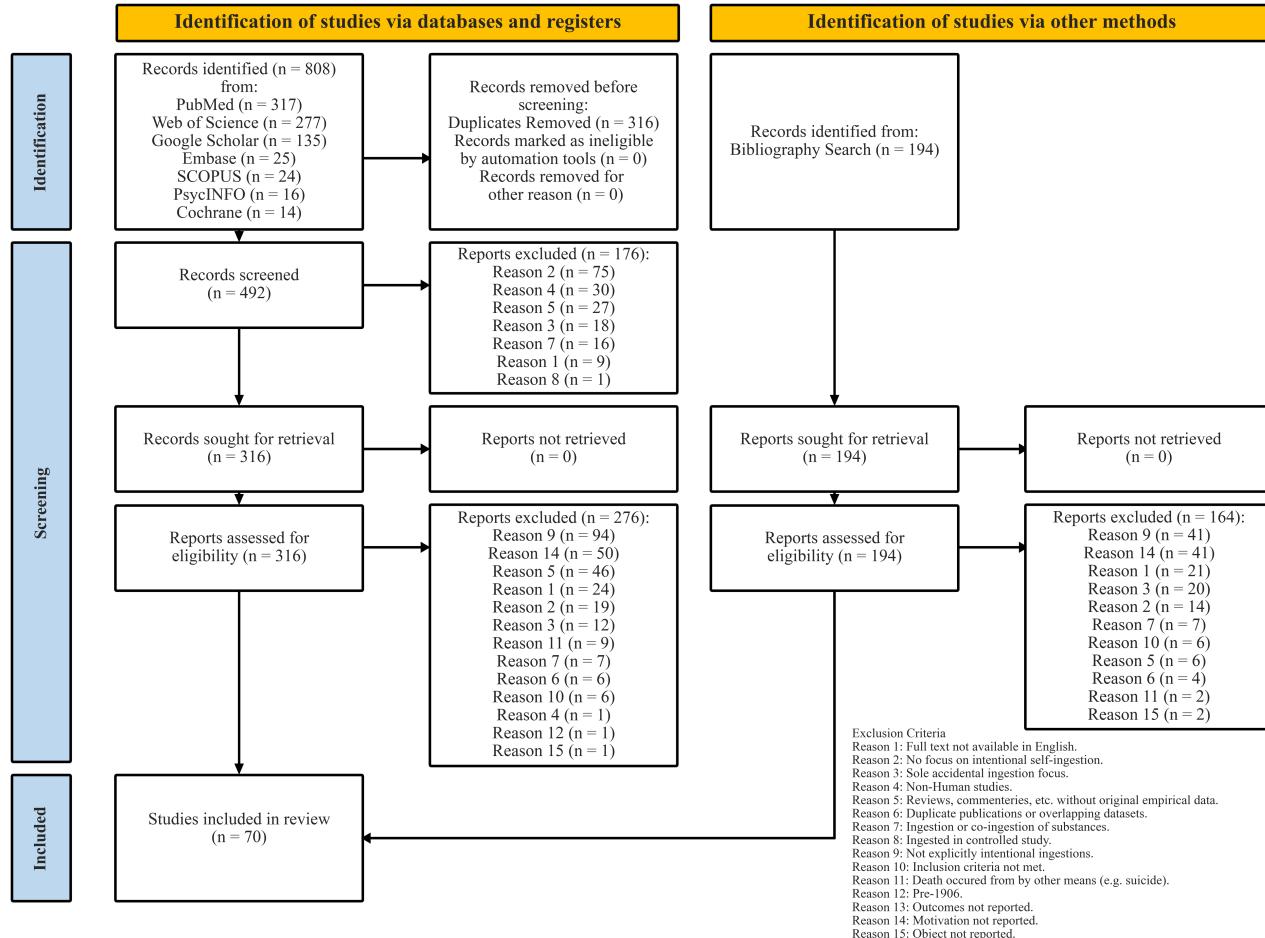


Fig. 1: PRISMA flow diagram summarising the study selection process.

[41,47,48,50,52–54,56,57,59,62,67,69–71,74,80,81,86–90,93–95,98,100,102,106], 2 cases (2.8%) died [64,77].

Case Series: 3 case series were included in the synthesis [107–109], yielding 90 cases. The mean age for this cohort is 24.0 (range: 17.0–50.0) years. 100.0% were male gender (90); 0.0% were female gender (0); 0.0% were unknown gender (0). 90 cases (100.0%) were detained at the time of ingestion [107–109], 88 cases (98.3%) were intentional ingestions [107–109], 30 cases (33.2%) had a psychiatric history documented [107–109], 2 cases (2.2%) had a history of prior ingestion [107]. 0 recorded cases were psychiatric inpatients. 0 recorded cases were displaced people. 0 recorded cases were under the influence of alcohol at the time of ingestion. 0 recorded cases had a severe disability history.

Motivation: 70 cases (78.3%) reported protest motivation [107–109], 12 cases (13.3%) reported psychiatric motivation [108], 6 cases (6.7%) reported self-harm motivation [107,108]. 0 recorded cases reported psychosocial motivation. 0 recorded cases unknown. 0 recorded cases reported other motivation. 0 recorded cases reported other motivation with known psychiatric history. 0 recorded cases reported other with severe disability history.

Object Characteristics: 68 cases (75.6%) involved sharp object ingestion [107–109], 32 cases (35.6%) involved long (>5cm) object ingestion [109], 25 cases (27.8%) involved ingestion of multiple objects [107,109], 17 cases (18.9%) involved short

(<5cm) object ingestion [107,109], 16 cases (17.8%) involved short (<5cm) sharp object ingestion [107]. 0 recorded cases involved button battery ingestion. 0 recorded cases involved magnet ingestion. 0 recorded cases involved large diameter (>2.5cm) object ingestion. 0 recorded cases involved long (>5cm) sharp object ingestion.

Outcomes: 47 cases (52.2%) underwent endoscopic intervention [107,109], 29 cases (32.2%) were managed conservatively [107,108], 15 cases (16.7%) underwent surgical intervention [107–109], 7 cases (7.8%) had an ‘other’ outcome [107,109], 6 cases (6.7%) had an injury that required intervention [109], 2 cases (2.2%) had a perforation [107,109], 2 cases (2.2%) underwent endoscopy and surgery [107,109], 1 case (1.1%) died [107], 1 case (1.1%) had an obstruction [107].

Synthesis

Case Reports: A full table of grouped chi-squared test results for the case report cohort is available in Table II. In the gender subgroup, there were no significant associations between gender and outcomes. In the age group subgroup, 41–60 was significantly associated with Surgery (OR = 0.19, 95% CI [0.04, 0.78], p = 0.034). 41–60 was significantly associated with Death (OR = N/A, 95% CI [N/A, N/A], p = 0.018). All other comparisons in this subgroup were non-significant. In the population characteristics

subgroup, there were no significant associations between population characteristics and outcomes. In the motivation subgroup, Intent To Harm was significantly associated with Surgery (OR = 5.10, 95% CI [1.28, 20.33], p = 0.032). Other was significantly associated with Surgery (OR = 0.15, 95% CI [0.03, 0.77], p = 0.031). All other comparisons in this subgroup were non-significant. In the object characteristics subgroup, there were no significant associations between object characteristics and outcomes.

TABLE I: Grouped summary of characteristics and outcomes.

Variable	Count	Percentage	References
Gender			
Male	43	60.6%	[32,41,42,44,45,47,48,50,52,53,56,57,61,64–67,69,71,72,76–78,81–84,88,89,92,94–98,100,103,106]
Female	27	38.0%	[46,49,51,54,55,58–60,62,63,68,70,73–75,80,85–87,90,93,99,101,102,104]
Unknown	1	1.4%	[105]
Age Group			
26–40	25	35.2%	[44,47–49,52,54,59,60,62,65–67,69,72,78,82,84,88–90,94,98,102,104,105]
18–25	18	25.4%	[32,41,45,50,55,61,73,74,76,82,83,87,92,99,103]
<18	12	16.9%	[46,58,63,68,81,85,86,95,96,101]
41–60	11	15.5%	[42,56,57,64,70,71,77,93,97,100,106]
60+	3	4.2%	[51,75,80]
Population			
Psychiatric History	35	49.3%	[44,46,48–51,57,59,62,63,65,66,69–73,75–78,81,83,84,86,87,90,93–95,104–106]
Previous Ingestor	19	26.8%	[44,48,53,55,61,63,64,69,71,72,81,90,95,97,104–106]
Detained Person	12	16.9%	[32,44,47,48,82,88,94,98]
Severely Disabled	7	9.9%	[50,75,81,86,87,104,106]
Psychiatric Inpatient	4	5.6%	[63,105,106]
Under Influence of Alcohol	3	4.2%	[52,61,97]
Displaced Person	2	2.8%	[41,67]
Motivation			
Psychiatric	34	47.9%	[42,44,46,48–50,54,55,62–65,69–78,80,81,84,86,90,93–95,103,106]
Intent to harm	20	28.2%	[32,42,44,45,57,59–61,66,80,82,83,90,94,95,105]
Psychosocial	17	23.9%	[41,52,55,58,68,70,76,80,85,88,89,92,96,97,99,101,102]
Protest	9	12.7%	[32,56,67,82,99]
Other	9	12.7%	[46,47,64,69,87,90,98,100,104]
Object			
Large (2.5cm) Diameter	50	70.4%	[32,41,42,44,45,47,48,50,53,54,57–61,63,64,67,69,71,72,74–78,82–90,93,95,97,98,102,104–106]

Table I (continued)

Variable	Count	Percentage	References
Multiple	44	62.0%	[46,48–51,55–58,64–66,68–74,76–78,80–86,92–97,100,101,103,105,106]
Short (<5cm)	39	54.9%	[32,41,46,48,49,51–53,55,56,58,62,65,68–71,73,77,80–82,85,87,89,92,94–96,99–102,105]
Sharp	33	46.5%	[32,44,48,49,52,54,55,57,61–66,69–72,74,76,78,82–84,92,103,106]
Long (5cm)	31	43.7%	[42,45,47,50,54,57,59–61,63,64,66,67,72,74–76,78,83,84,86,88,90,93,97,98,103,104,106]
Long (5cm) Sharp	16	22.5%	[54,57,61,63,64,66,72,74,76,78,83,84,103,106]
Short (<5cm) Sharp	16	22.5%	[32,48,49,52,55,62,65,69–71,82,92]
Magnet	9	12.7%	[46,56,58,81,85,86,95,96,101]
Button Battery	2	2.8%	[53,56]
Outcome			
Complication	48	67.6%	[45,46,48,50–54,56–58,60–68,72,74–78,81–86,90,92,93,95–99,101–104]
Surgery	43	60.6%	[32,42,44–46,50,51,54,57–63,65–67,72,74–76,78,81–85,92,95–97,99,101–105]
Endoscopy	31	43.7%	[41,47,48,50,52–54,56,57,59,62,67,69–71,74,80,81,86–90,93–95,98,100,102,106]
Death	2	2.8%	[64,77]

TABLE II: Grouped chi-square test results.

Variable	Endoscopy	Surgery	Death	Complication
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	1.34 [0.51, 3.53] (p=0.722)	0.99 [0.37, 2.62] (p=1.000)	—	1.28 [0.47, 3.52] (p=0.824)
Female	0.82 [0.31, 2.18] (p=0.887)	0.92 [0.34, 2.44] (p=1.000)	—	0.93 [0.34, 2.59] (p=1.000)
Unknown	—	—	—	—
<i>Age Group</i>				
<18	0.37 [0.09, 1.50] (p=0.267)	2.21 [0.54, 8.99] (p=0.425)	—	2.76 [0.55, 13.81] (p=0.348)
18–25	0.28 [0.08, 0.95] (p=0.065)	2.90 [0.84, 9.97] (p=0.147)	—	1.34 [0.41, 4.34] (p=0.847)
26–40	2.17 [0.81, 5.85] (p=0.195)	0.96 [0.36, 2.61] (p=1.000)	—	0.78 [0.28, 2.18] (p=0.831)
41–60	2.62 [0.69, 9.95] (p=0.262)	0.19 [0.04, 0.78] (p=0.034)*	—	0.51 [0.14, 1.90] (p=0.512)
60+	0.63 [0.05, 7.32] (p=1.000)	1.32 [0.11, 15.25] (p=1.000)	—	0.96 [0.08, 11.13] (p=1.000)
<i>Population</i>				
Detained Person	0.99 [0.28, 3.53] (p=1.000)	0.86 [0.24, 3.08] (p=1.000)	—	0.63 [0.17, 2.26] (p=0.704)
Psychiatric Inpatient	0.44 [0.04, 4.54] (p=0.861)	2.25 [0.22, 22.99] (p=0.861)	—	0.15 [0.01, 1.50] (p=0.200)
Displaced Person	—	0.67 [0.03, 12.84] (p=1.000)	—	0.50 [0.03, 9.77] (p=1.000)
Under Influence of Alcohol	0.88 [0.07, 10.69] (p=1.000)	1.00 [0.08, 12.27] (p=1.000)	—	—
Psychiatric History	0.84 [0.30, 2.33] (p=0.942)	1.29 [0.46, 3.59] (p=0.827)	0.74 [0.04, 12.33] (p=1.000)	0.75 [0.26, 2.21] (p=0.806)
Severely Disabled	4.02 [0.72, 22.47] (p=0.202)	0.83 [0.17, 4.04] (p=1.000)	—	1.25 [0.22, 7.02] (p=1.000)
Previous Ingestor	0.83 [0.26, 2.65] (p=0.986)	0.74 [0.23, 2.36] (p=0.832)	1.61 [0.09, 27.40] (p=1.000)	0.34 [0.10, 1.23] (p=0.179)
<i>Motivation</i>				
Intent to harm	0.53 [0.17, 1.67] (p=0.419)	5.10 [1.28, 20.33] (p=0.032)*	—	0.97 [0.31, 3.01] (p=1.000)
Protest	0.32 [0.06, 1.69] (p=0.302)	5.68 [0.66, 48.72] (p=0.170)	—	4.47 [0.52, 38.51] (p=0.279)
Psychiatric	1.37 [0.52, 3.61] (p=0.699)	0.49 [0.18, 1.33] (p=0.248)	—	0.61 [0.22, 1.70] (p=0.487)
Psychosocial	0.86 [0.28, 2.63] (p=1.000)	0.65 [0.21, 1.99] (p=0.644)	—	0.89 [0.28, 2.84] (p=1.000)
Other	2.96 [0.68, 12.95] (p=0.259)	0.15 [0.03, 0.77] (p=0.031)*	7.62 [0.43, 134.24] (p=0.595)	0.55 [0.13, 2.29] (p=0.656)
<i>Object</i>				
Button Battery	—	—	—	—
Magnet	1.04 [0.25, 4.24] (p=1.000)	2.53 [0.49, 13.17] (p=0.444)	—	—
Long (5cm)	0.84 [0.33, 2.18] (p=0.912)	2.32 [0.86, 6.30] (p=0.154)	1.27 [0.08, 21.10] (p=1.000)	2.14 [0.74, 6.19] (p=0.245)
Large (2.5cm) Diameter	1.46 [0.49, 4.32] (p=0.679)	1.60 [0.55, 4.66] (p=0.556)	—	0.98 [0.32, 3.05] (p=1.000)
Sharp	0.35 [0.13, 0.94] (p=0.061)	2.07 [0.78, 5.50] (p=0.221)	1.16 [0.07, 19.24] (p=1.000)	1.20 [0.44, 3.25] (p=0.923)
Multiple	0.46 [0.17, 1.21] (p=0.181)	1.09 [0.41, 2.91] (p=1.000)	—	2.40 [0.86, 6.66] (p=0.150)
Long (5cm) Sharp	0.35 [0.10, 1.21] (p=0.155)	3.61 [0.92, 14.11] (p=0.102)	3.60 [0.21, 61.02] (p=0.933)	2.48 [0.63, 9.75] (p=0.307)
Short (<5cm)	1.25 [0.49, 3.22] (p=0.820)	0.41 [0.15, 1.11] (p=0.128)	0.82 [0.05, 13.58] (p=1.000)	0.53 [0.19, 1.49] (p=0.342)
Short (<5cm) Sharp	0.72 [0.23, 2.26] (p=0.781)	0.79 [0.26, 2.45] (p=0.912)	—	0.75 [0.23, 2.38] (p=0.847)

OR: Odds Ratio. CI: Confidence Interval. p: p-value. * indicates $p < 0.05$. — indicates missing or unreported values.

Data Availability

The data and code used in this systematic review are available at http://github.com/jackedge/iifo_systematic_review.

Case Reports: For case reports, the JBI Checklist for Case Reports was used. This tool assesses eight domains of reporting quality, including whether patient demographics were clearly described, a timeline of clinical history was provided, the presenting condition and diagnostic assessment were outlined, and whether the intervention, post-intervention condition, and any adverse events were reported. The final domain evaluates whether the case provides meaningful takeaway lessons.

In addition to manual JBI appraisal, a logic-based validation filter was applied to all case reports using *Python Pandas* [110]. This secondary filter assessed whether key variables — specifically, outcomes, object characteristics, and motivation — were completely unreported. For each domain, a binary flag was generated:

- *Outcome_Unknown* was marked 1 if all outcome-related fields were either missing or marked as unknown.
- *Object_Unknown* was marked 1 if all object-related fields (excluding *Object_Other_Long*) were missing or unknown.
- *Motivation_Unknown* was predefined in the dataset and indicated absence of motivational information.

If any of these flags were triggered, the corresponding JBI item most affected by the missing domain was marked as not reported (e.g., *Post Intervention Condition Described* or *History Timeline* set to N). Finally, an *Overall Appraisal* score of *Exclude* was assigned, indicating high risk of bias and exclusion from analysis. This ensured that only case reports with sufficient information to meaningfully contribute to the review question were retained.

Case Series: For case series, the JBI Checklist for Case Series was applied. The JBI Checklist for Case Series assesses 10 domains of methodological and reporting quality. These include whether the case series defined clear inclusion criteria, applied valid and consistent methods to identify the condition, and included participants consecutively and completely. The checklist also evaluates whether participant demographics and clinical information were clearly reported, whether outcomes or follow-up results were adequately described, and whether the study setting was detailed. Finally, it considers whether the statistical analysis used was appropriate for the data presented.

In addition to manual JBI appraisal, a logic-based exclusion filter was applied using *Python Pandas* [110]. This filter assessed whether key variables — specifically, motivation, object characteristics, and outcomes — were unreported for the entire study population. For each of these domains, a derived rate variable was calculated:

- *Outcome_Unknown_Rate* was marked as 1 if all outcome-related fields were missing or marked as unknown (i.e. the entire population had an had an unknown outcome).
- *Motivation_Unknown_Rate* indicated whether motivation was absent or only partially reported across cases within the study.
- *Object_Unknown_Rate* was derived if all object-related fields were missing or unknown.

If any of these indicators were flagged, the corresponding JBI checklist item (e.g., *Clear_Outcome_Followup_Reported*,

Clear_Demographic_Reported, or *Clear_Clinical_Info_Reported*) was marked as N, and the study received an *Overall_Appraisal* of *Exclude*. This logic-based validation ensured that case series lacking essential variables could be systematically excluded from the final analysis, maintaining consistency with the review question and minimising risk of bias in the dataset.

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APPENDIX A
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

A. Inclusion Criteria

Category	Details
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any human. Any age group.
Interventions or exposures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humans that have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-accidental - Ingestion of a true foreign body (non-nutritive items)
Comparators / Control group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation/reason for ingestion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protest - Suicidal intent - Self-harm - Psychiatric and other documented motivations Intervention details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of ingestions - Management strategies (Conservative, Endoscopic, Surgical) Object characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple objects - Blunt objects - Sharp-pointed objects - Long objects (>6 cm) - Short objects (\leq6 cm) Setting/location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Endoscopic intervention - Surgical intervention - Conservative management - Complication rates - Mortality rates
Outcomes of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any setting. - Observational studies (cohort, case-control, cross-sectional) - Case series - Clinical trials - Case reports

B. Exclusion Criteria

#	Exclusion Criterion
1	Full text not available in English.
2	Studies not focusing on intentional self-ingestion (into the gastrointestinal tract) of foreign object via the oral cavity (mouth) or where unclear if ingested.
3	Studies focussing solely on accidental ingestion.
4	Non-human or animal studies.
5	Reviews, editorials, commentaries, and opinion pieces without original empirical data.
6	Duplicate publications or studies with overlapping data sets (the most comprehensive or recent study will be included).
7	Studies focusing on ingestion or co-ingestion of substances (e.g. poisons, medications) rather than physical foreign objects.
8	Ingestions undertaken in controlled environments as part of a voluntary study.
9	Ingestions not explicitly stated to be intentional and history not suggestive of deliberate ingestion (i.e. Age \leq 8, no history of previous ingestions, no psychiatric co-morbidities, not a prisoner/detainee/vulnerable group).
10	Does not meet inclusion criteria.
11	Ingestions where death resulted from other means (i.e. suicide).
12	Studies before the advent of endoscopy (1906).

APPENDIX B
KEYWORDS AND MESH TERMS

A. PubMed

Concept	Keywords	MeSH Terms
Foreign Bodies	"foreign obj*" "foreign bod*"	Foreign Bodies [MeSH]
Intentional Ingestion / Self-harm	"intent*" "deliberate*" "purpose*" "self-injur*" "selfharm*" "self-harm*" "ingest*" "swallow*"	Self-Injurious Behavior [MeSH]
Ingestion Behavior		—
Interventions	"surg*" "endoscop*" "EGD" "OGD" "Esophagogastroduodenoscopy" "Oesophagogastroduodenoscopy" "manag*"	Endoscopy [MeSH] Surgical Procedures, Operative [MeSH] Conservative Treatment [MeSH] Drug Therapy [MeSH]

TABLE III: Concepts with associated keywords and MeSH terms used in PubMed search strategy.

B. Embase

Concept	Keywords	EMTREE Terms
Foreign Bodies	"foreign obj*" "foreign bod*"	"foreign body"/exp
Intentional Ingestion / Self-harm	"intent*" "deliberate*" "purpose*" "self-injur*" "selfharm*" "self-harm*" "ingest*" "swallow*"	"automutilation"/exp
Ingestion Behavior		"swallowing"/exp
Interventions	"surg*" "endoscop*" "EGD" "OGD" "Esophagogastroduodenoscopy" "Oesophagogastroduodenoscopy" "manag*"	"endoscopy"/exp "surgery"/exp "conservative treatment'/exp "drug therapy"/exp

TABLE IV: Concepts with associated keywords and EMTREE terms used in Embase search strategy.

C. Cochrane (CENTRAL)

Concept	Keywords	Cochrane MeSH Terms
Foreign Bodies	"foreign obj*" "foreign bod**" (foreign NEXT obj*) (foreign NEXT bod*) intent* deliberate*	[mh foreign bodies]
Intentional Ingestion / Self-harm	purpose* (self NEXT injur*) (self NEXT harm*) ingest*	[mh self-injurious behavior]
Ingestion Behavior	swallow* surg* endoscop*	-
Interventions	EGD Esophagogastrroduodenoscopy Oesophagogastrroduodenoscopy manag*	[mh endoscopy] [mh surgical procedures, operative] [mh conservative treatment] [mh drug therapy]

TABLE V: Concepts with associated keywords and Cochrane MeSH terms used in CENTRAL search strategy.

D. Web of Science

Concept	Keywords	Search Field
Foreign Bodies	foreign obj* foreign bod* automutilation intent* deliberate*	ALL=
Intentional Ingestion / Self-harm	purpose* self-injur* selfharm* self-harm* swallowing	ALL=
Ingestion Behavior	ingest* swallow* endoscopy surgery conservative treatment drug therapy	ALL=
Interventions	surg* endoscop* EGD Esophagogastrroduodenoscopy Oesophagogastrroduodenoscopy manag*	ALL=

TABLE VI: Concepts with associated keywords and Web of Science fields used in the search strategy.

E. Scopus

Concept	Keywords	Search Field / Syntax
Foreign Bodies	foreign PRE/0 obj* foreign PRE/0 bod* intent* deliberate* purpose* self PRE/0 injur* self PRE/0 harm*	ALL()
Intentional Ingestion / Self-harm	ingest* swallow* endoscopy surgery 'conservative' 'treatment' 'drug' 'therapy' surg* endoscop*	ALL()
Ingestion Behavior	egd esophagogastroduodenoscopy oesophagogastroduodenoscopy manag*	ALL()
Interventions		ALL()

TABLE VII: Concepts with associated keywords and Scopus syntax used in the search strategy.

F. PsycINFO

Concept	Keywords	PsycINFO Descriptors
Foreign Bodies	foreign obj* foreign bod* automutilation intent* deliberate* purpose* self injur* self harm*	—
Intentional Ingestion / Self-harm	ingest* swallow* endoscop* conservative treatment drug therapy	DE "Nonsuicidal Self-Injury"
Ingestion Behavior	surg* egd esophagogastroduodenoscopy oesophagogastroduodenoscopy manag*	DE "Ingestion"
Interventions		DE "Surgery"

TABLE VIII: Concepts with associated keywords and controlled vocabulary (Descriptors) used in PsycINFO search strategy.

G. Google Scholar

Concept	Keywords	Search Field
Foreign Bodies	"foreign obj*" "foreign bod*" "intent*" "deliberate*" "purpose*"	–
Intentional Ingestion / Self-harm	"self-injur*" "selfharm*" "self-harm*"	–
Ingestion Behavior	"ingest*" "swallow*"	–

TABLE IX: Concepts with associated keywords used in Google Scholar search strategy.

APPENDIX C
VARIABLE DEFINITIONS

Used for case report data extraction. Aggregates of which were used to create Variable_Rate and Variable_Count.

Variable	Definition
Is_Prisoner	Documented in prison, police custody, or detained (including immigration detention) at the time of the encounter; 'N' if not detained; 'UK' if unknown.
Psych_Hx	Documented DSM-V mental disorder (including substance-related disorders) [111]; 'N' if no diagnosis; 'UK' if data unavailable.
Is_Displaced_Person	'Y' if: meets the UN General Assembly [112] definition of 'Refugee'; or meets UNHCR [113] definition of an 'internally displaced person'; or meets the UNHCR [114] definition for 'asylum seeker'; 'N' if not displaced; 'UK' if unknown.
Under_Influence_Alcohol	Evidence, suspicion, or self-report of alcohol influence at presentation; 'N' if no indication; 'UK' if unknown.
Is_Psych_Inpat	Admitted (voluntarily or involuntarily) to a psychiatric facility/ward at encounter; 'N' if not admitted; 'UK' if unknown.
Severe_Disability_Hx	History of severe learning disability or impaired consciousness; 'N' if absent; 'UK' if unknown.
Previous_Ingestions	Prior episode of foreign-body ingestion documented; 'N' if first ingestion; 'UK' if history unknown.
Motivation_Intent_To_Harm	Ingestion intended for self-harm, self-injury, or suicide; 'N' if other motive; 'UK' if unclear.
Motivation_Protest	Ingestion as protest, demonstration, or manipulation (e.g., objection to detention conditions); 'N' if not protest-related; 'UK' if unclear.
Motivation_Psychiatric	Ingestion driven primarily by an underlying psychiatric condition (psychosis, impulsivity, etc.); 'N' if not psychiatric; 'UK' if unclear.
Motivation_Psychosocial	Ingestion motivated by social or interpersonal factors (imitative acts, shock value, body-image, safekeeping, etc.); 'N' if not psychosocial; 'UK' if unclear.
Motivation_Uncertain	No clear motivation identified in documentation; 'N' if specific motive recorded; 'UK' if ambiguous.
Object_Button_Battery	Button battery ingested; 'N' if not; 'UK' if object type not recorded.
Object_Magnet	Magnet ingested; 'N' if none; 'UK' if unknown.
Object_Long	Ingested object length > 5 cm; 'N' if \leq 5 cm; 'UK' if dimensions unknown.
Object_Long_Sharp	'Y' when both Object_Long and Object_Sharp are 'Y'; 'N' otherwise; 'UK' if either unknown.
Object_Short	Derived: object length < 5 cm when Object_Long='N'; retains 'UK' if dimensions unknown.
Object_Short_Sharp	'Y' when both Object_Short and Object_Sharp are 'Y'; 'N' otherwise; 'UK' if either unknown.
Object_Sharp	Object described as sharp or pointed (e.g., blades, nails, needles); 'N' if not sharp; 'UK' if unclear.
Object_Multiple	More than one object ingested in same episode; 'N' for single object; 'UK' if number unspecified.
Object_Uncertain	Where object characteristics are unknown. 'N' if known; 'UK' if Unknown.
Outcome_Endoscopy	Endoscopic intervention performed during episode; 'N' if not; 'UK' if unavailable.
Outcome_Surgery	Surgical intervention performed (operative procedure under anaesthesia); 'N' if not; 'UK' if not documented.
Outcome_Endoscopy_Surgery	'Y' if both Outcome_Endoscopy and Outcome_Surgery are 'Y'; 'N' otherwise; 'UK' if data insufficient.
Outcome_Conservative	'Y' if managed without endoscopy or surgery; 'N' if either procedure performed.
Outcome_Death	Death causally related to ingestion complications; 'N' if survived; 'UK' if outcome unknown.
Outcome_Perforation	Clinical or radiological evidence of gastrointestinal or airway perforation; 'N' if absent; 'UK' if unknown.
Outcome_Obstruction	Confirmed or suspected gastrointestinal obstruction; 'N' if none; 'UK' if not documented.
Outcome_Injury_Needing_Intervention	Injury necessitating medical/procedural intervention and influencing decision for endoscopy/surgery; 'N' if no such injury; 'UK' if data unavailable.
Outcome_Other	Other clinically significant outcomes (aspiration, sepsis, prolonged stay, etc.); 'N' if none; 'UK' if data insufficient.
Outcome_Uncertain	Where no outcome identified; 'N' if outcome identified; 'UK' if Unknown.