

## Flaw Arguments

1. The author seems to consider the emergence of new diseases as entirely independent of man's use of technological advances. However, the implementation of scientific advances might impact the "ongoing emergence and disappearance of diseases." Therefore, the flaw in the writer's reasoning stems from his refusal to consider the possible impact of man's alteration of naturally occurring substances upon the emergence of new diseases. The correct answer is (E).

Selection (A) is tempting. However, the author disagrees with those who argue that man's conduct is "entirely" responsible for the high incidence of cancer. Thus, he implies that man's actions might have some role in the prevalence of cancer. There is nothing in the passage to indicate whether or not (B) is true, even though it is common knowledge that scientists are continually conducting cancer research. The LSAT test is designed so that outside knowledge is not needed to answer the questions. Rather, the questions should be answered solely on the basis of what is stated or implied in the passage. Inadvertently, the LSAT authors might include a question that can be more readily answered with outside knowledge, but they make every effort to avoid that situation. With respect to (C), whether or not diseases have been discovered or not is irrelevant to the passage, and (D) is similarly irrelevant.

2. Selection (A) is correct. Donna's argument does not state that people who drink heavily will necessarily have serious health problems, only that they will probably have serious health problems. Providing only one example

to attempt to disprove a probable result is a serious flaw.

We do not know whether medical researchers considered the case of Steve's great uncle, so (B) is not correct. Steve's argument does not imply that there is no correlation between drinking and health. He is unequivocal that there is no correlation. Therefore, (C) is not correct. Steve's great uncle clearly didn't have any serious health problems because he appeared to be in good health and he lived to be 87, so selection (D) cannot be correct. Finally, (E) is irrelevant to the arguments presented. What type medical treatments were used is irrelevant to whether or not Steve's great uncle was affected by his heavy drinking.

3. (A) No. This answer deals with enforcement of the new policy, not whether the new policy is likely to change the unwanted behavior in the first place.
- (B) No. This answer is irrelevant to the issue—behavior the coach wishes to change.
- (C) **Yes.** The coach assumes that if his players do not belong to fraternities, they will not have other distractions at night to keep them from getting a reasonable night's sleep. Many other reasons may keep the players up late at night—non-fraternity parties, library research, part time jobs, etc.
- (D) No. We know from the passage that only some of the football players were late and lethargic at practice and that many of these later players were fraternity members. Perhaps his best players were fraternity members who showed up to practice on time, but we cannot tell this from the passage.
- (E) No. This answer is also irrelevant to the issue. The impact of the coach's rule upon the fraternity system is unimportant in this scenario.

4. Begin by symbolizing the argument. The sentence "If a person studies four hours a day for the LSAT, he will score in the top 10 percent" can be symbolized as

**4hrs—>10%**

The sentence "Every student at Harvard School of Law scored in the top 10 percent" can be reworded as an

if-then statement: "If a person is a student at Harvard School of Law, then he scored in the top 10 percent." This in turn can be symbolized as

**H—>10%,**

where H stands for "*a student at Harvard School of Law.*" Now, the phrase "*Sarah who is studying at Harvard School of Law*" affirms the premise in the conditional

**H—>10%.** Hence, we know she scored in the top 10%. This affirms the conclusion in the conditional **4hrs—>10%.** Up to here the argument is valid. But it then commits the fallacy of affirming the conclusion by stating that she must have studied 4 hours a day. This ignores the possibility that Sarah may be gifted and hence studying only two hours a day may have been sufficient for her. The answer is (C).

5. In order for the conclusion to reasonably follow, we need to know what would have happened had the diet not been changed. Perhaps the same decrease in behavior problems would have occurred even if the diet was not changed. In other words, we need a control group with which to compare the results of the test group. The answer is (B).

6. The argument commits the fallacy of false correlation. The argument assumes the fear of the destructive effects of nuclear war has prevented a nuclear exchange. It does not take into account that other factors may have affected events, such as the economic value of remaining at peace. The answer is (E).

7. You may have noticed that this argument uses the converse of the fallacy “*Confusing Necessary Conditions with Sufficient Conditions*” mentioned earlier. In other words, it assumes that something which is sufficient is also necessary. In the given argument, this is fallacious because some people may still score in the ninetieth percentile, though they studied less than four hours a day for one month. Therefore the answer is (C).

8. It is unreasonable to reject the effectiveness of a product merely because it has modest requirements for use. All medications have directions and restrictions. Hence the answer is (B). Don’t make the mistake of choosing (A). Although it is a good rebuttal, it does not address the flaw in the argument. Interestingly, it too is true but irrelevant.

9. The opening sentence “*The senator has long held to the general principle that no true work of art is obscene*” is the premise of the senator’s argument. It contains an embedded if-then statement: *If it is a work of art, then it is not obscene*. This can be diagrammed as follows:

$$A \rightarrow \sim O$$

where A stands for “it is a work of art” and O stands for “it is obscene.” Now,

the senator justifies this principle by stating “*if these works really are obscene then they cannot be works of art,*” which can be symbolized as

$$O \rightarrow \sim A$$

Applying the contrapositive to this diagram yields

$$A \rightarrow \sim O$$

Now, we have already established that this is the premise of the argument. Hence the senator’s argument is circular—he assumes what he seeks to establish. The answer is (D).

10. This argument commits the fallacy of false dichotomy. It assumes that workers have only two reactions to their work—either it’s not challenging or it’s too challenging. Clearly, there is a wide range of reactions between those two extremes. The answer is (B).

11. In the phrase “selfish individualism” the word “selfish” is being used with its usual meaning—self-centered. But in the phrase “selfish concern for the human species” it appears to mean unselfish or altruistic. Hence, the argument equivocates. The answer is (E).

12. It is unwarranted to assume that older people’s reasons for saving are as compelling as those of younger people. Older people may have stronger reasons to save. For example, in their youth they may have learned the folly of not saving, or they may be more aware of the need for a retirement fund. The answer is (D).

13. Instead of addressing the issue, the argument commits a personal attack against the students supporting the proposal. The answer is (A).

14. The argument unfairly assumes that Walcott's background prevents him from being objective. The answer is (A).

15. Two conditions are introduced as necessary for achieving the goal of explaining mental functions in neurobiological terms:

- 1) knowledge of how neurons interact
- 2) a delineation of the faculties

The second is partially fulfilled (visual perception and memory are suggested and others are implied), but the first isn't. The passage states that we know a substantial amount about the basic functions of neurons. However, it does not mention anything about how they interact. Hence the passage does not meet the very conditions it requires for explaining mental functions in neurobiological terms—this is an error in reasoning. The answer is (E).

16. (A) No. Since she *did* speak out, this choice is irrelevant.

(B) No. The argument does assume that the mayor has a grasp of the scientific issues; however, it is not necessary to assume this is due to the qualities that got her elected to public office.

(C) No. The passage does not even imply that consistent and outspoken opposition is necessarily an informed opposition. The three features of her opposition to nuclear power plants—

outspoken, informed, and consistent—are presented as an independent series. (D) No. Although this is a possible criticism of the argument, there are better and more direct criticisms.

(E) Yes. We do not know her motives. Perhaps she changed her mind after carefully weighing the issues, or perhaps she was paid to change her mind.

17. The passage draws an analogy between armed forces and college athletic teams, and concludes that training methods which work in college sports will be effective in the military as well. There are three training methods listed for a successful sports team:

- 1) trained as individuals and as team
- 2) inspired by their coach
- 3) learn from their mistakes

Reasoning by analogy is not made invalid by minor differences between the two items being compared. Choices (A), (B), (D), and (E) point out such differences but do not detract from the essence of the analogy. However, choice (C) states that it may not be possible for soldiers to learn from their mistakes, a definite distinction between sports and the military, and one that weakens the argument. The answer is (C).

18. By concluding that apples are more expensive than oranges because the cost of apples went up a greater percentage, we implicitly assume that oranges were not much more expensive initially. For example, if apples were initially \$1 per pound and increased 40% to \$1.40 per pound while oranges were originally \$2 per pound and increased 20% to \$2.40 per pound, apples would not be more expensive. The answer is (C).

As for (A), whatever increase in prices occurred before the storm has no effect on the results after the storm. With (B), if apples were previously more expensive and increased in price a greater percentage than oranges, they would be even more expensive. Finally, choices (D) and (E) have no impact on the current prices of apples and oranges.

19. This argument claims that a causal relationship exists between television viewing and arrest levels of young adults because the two situations are correlated. However, the argument does not rule out the possibility that both of these situations may be caused by a third, independent event. The answer is (C).

The other choices may all be true, but they do not impact the researchers' conclusion.