

7 (or, if your instructor prefers, summarize the argument in ordinary paragraph form).

*Critical evaluation:* Evaluate the argument; that is, say whether you think the argument is a good, convincing argument and give reasons to support your view. You may find it helpful to keep in mind the following general guidelines on evaluating arguments, discussed earlier in this chapter:

- Are the premises true? (*Note:* You may need to do some research to make an informed judgment on this issue.)
- Is the reasoning good? Is the argument deductively valid or inductively strong?
- Does the arguer commit any logical fallacies?
- Does the writer express their points clearly and precisely?
- Are the arguer's claims logically consistent?
- Is the argument complete? Is all relevant evidence appropriately taken into account?
- Is the argument fair? Is the arguer fair-minded and unbiased in their pre-presentation of the evidence and treatment of opposing arguments and views?

*Conclusion:* Briefly restate the key points of your critical response to reinforce them in the reader's mind. If possible, end with a strong concluding line (e.g., an apt quotation) that nicely sums up your response or puts the issue in a larger context.

A sample critical essay is included in an appendix to this chapter.

### **Why I'm Not Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine**

*Doug Munkers*

Despite all the government and media hype, I'm not planning on getting the COVID-19 vaccine, and a lot of my friends feel the same way.

Most vaccines undergo years of careful testing before they are approved for general use. The COVID-19 vaccines

are experimental drugs that were created quickly, tested on a small number of volunteers, and approved only for emergency use after a rushed process of review. How do we know they're really safe?

I've seen several stories online about people getting a COVID vaccine and then dropping dead later that day. We know that the vaccines can cause dangerous blood clots. Even the government admits that. And what about possible long-term side effects? The vaccines have only been given for a few months. How do we know what health problems they might cause a decade or two down the road?

As I see it, for someone young and healthy like me, the risks of getting vaccinated outweigh the benefits. If I get COVID, I'm sure I'll sail through it fine and not have to worry about getting it again. With the COVID vaccines there are just too many unknowns.

To me, this is really a matter of personal choice. When it comes to my health and my family's, I don't think the government should be telling me what I can and can't do, especially when it comes to experimental treatments like the COVID-19 vaccines. Let people make up their own minds on vaccinations. It's the American way.

### **COVID-19 Vaccines Are Safe and Effective**

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*Dr. Nia Easley, M.D.*

Doug Munkers expresses a number of reasons why some people are reluctant to get a COVID-19 vaccination. Let me briefly address these concerns.

It's true that the COVID vaccines were developed and approved more quickly than vaccines typically are. But that doesn't mean the COVID vaccines are unsafe. All currently approved vaccines underwent a rigorous four-phase process of testing and review in which no corners were cut. To date, over three billion people have received COVID vaccinations around the world, and all evidence suggest that they are remarkably safe and effective.

Munkers is correct that some COVID-19 vaccines may cause blood clots, especially in young women. But such clots are extremely rare (only about seven per million for women aged 19-49, and lower for men and for women in other age groups). Moreover, studies show that blood clots are far more likely to be caused by COVID-19 itself than by vaccines.

It should come as no surprise that some people fall dead soon after receiving a COVID shot. In America, tens of thousands of people die unexpectedly every day. The question is: Did they die because of the COVID vaccination? The CDC has an extensive vaccine safety tracking system. They follow up on every reported case when someone dies shortly after receiving a COVID vaccine. A recent clinical review found no evidence that vaccination contributed to patient deaths.

Munkers also expresses concern about possible long-term side effects. Most vaccine side effects occur relatively quickly, usually within six weeks after the vaccine was administered. COVID-19 vaccines were developed using technologies scientists have been using safely and effectively for more than two decades. Any risks of long-term side effects are easily outweighed by the proven benefits of the vaccines.

Munkers says he isn't greatly concerned about getting COVID-19. As a healthy young person, he's confident that he will recover quickly and gain natural immunity from further infections. This ignores the risk of so-called long-haul COVID. Research suggests that many people who recover from COVID still suffer from lingering aftereffects three months after they were infected. These effects may be relatively mild, such as fatigue or headaches, but they can also involve serious long-term damage to the brain, heart, lungs, and other organs.

Munkers believes that, for him personally, the risks of a vaccine outweigh the benefits. But what about the risk of

infecting others? An ethical person must consider threats to others as well as to oneself. It is also important to consider the huge economic, social, and psychological toll COVID-19 continues to take on society. Only when a large percentage of the population is vaccinated can we achieve herd immunity and return to some semblance of normality.

Deciding whether to get a COVID-19 vaccination is indeed a personal choice. It is entirely voluntary. In the United States, neither the states nor the federal government has mandated that the general public be vaccinated, though some schools and employers have imposed mandates. But along with choice goes responsibility. COVID-19 can be either a blip or a huge long-term problem. The choice is up to us.

## **Stand Up for Campus Free Speech**

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*Henry Nardone*

Americans are justly proud of their world-class system of higher education. The cornerstone of that system has long been freedom of thought and expression. The central mission of universities—teaching students to think—is undermined by any system of thought control that permits only “approved” or “politically correct” ideas to be expressed. Until recently, this commitment to campus free speech was a core value shared by virtually all members of higher-education communities. Now campus free speech is under siege.

And increasingly it is liberals and progressives—once the staunchest supporters of free speech—who are the new campus censors.

Since the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president in 2016, there have been numerous incidents in which student protestors have used threats of violence, obstruction, and other strong-armed tactics to prevent conservatives from speaking on campus.