

Reading Comprehension

Passage

(1)

The Opium Convention of 1912, where a treaty was signed by China, Britain and ten other countries to prohibit opium use and trade, marked the start of the still-ongoing international effort to control the consumption of addictive-drugs through prohibition. The idea that opium was dangerous to both individual and societal well-being was a consequence of the popular but erroneous perception that unrestrained opium trade by Britain in the nineteenth-century had reduced the once-great Chinese civilization to an emaciated and hopeless population of opium addicts smoking themselves to death.

(2)

Opium was the most effective painkiller known to mankind before the discovery of modern medicines and had been imported into China for this medicinal property since the seventh century. With their better means of production that resulted in higher yields, the British traders supplied much more opium to China than the country had hitherto imported, thereby bringing the price of opium down to where even the poor Chinese could afford its regular consumption. This facilitated opium becoming a commonly-used panacea against the symptoms of a wide number of ailments and diseases. Medicinal use of opium also increased concurrently in Asia, the Middle East and Europe and the drug remained popular till modern medicines became cheaply available in the twentieth century. During the nineteenth century, the per capita consumption of opium was much greater in Britain than in China, but the British users did not suffer adverse effects on either their health or longevity. Moreover, there is ample evidence that most users of opium, including the Chinese, used it in moderation and only occasionally, such as when in pain.

(3)

The implementation of the 1912 treaty in China led to the public humiliation and imprisonment of tens of thousands of ordinary opium users. As most of these users were already ill, some with contagious diseases, the crowded prison cells became the breeding grounds of epidemics and had high mortality. Further, opium could now be obtained only in black market; scarcity and illegality made it expensive. A search for cheaper alternatives led most opium users to morphine and heroin, psychoactive substances that were much more addictive and were deleterious to health. The prohibition thus proved to be a cure that was worse than the disease.

(Adapted from the article written by historian Frank Dikotter www.opendemocracy.net and the book *Narcotic Culture* www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

According to the passage, with which of the following statements are the countries trying to decrease the consumption of addictive drugs most likely to agree?

- A The best way to counter an increase in the consumption of addictive drugs is to stop trying to regulate their trade and use.
- B Some addictive drugs are benign as they serve as the poor man's substitute for expensive medicines.
- C Public humiliation of the users of addictive drugs is a proven way to discourage other people from trying those drugs.
- D Eliminating the general availability of addictive drugs is an effective strategy to reduce their use.
- E Making an addictive drug scarce and illegal paradoxically increases its national consumption.

Sub-Question 2 of 4

Select the sentence in the passage that indicates that opium trade by the British in the nineteenth-century China benefitted the non-wealthy Chinese.

- A "The Opium Convention of 1912, where a treaty was signed by China, Britain and ten other countries to prohibit opium use and trade, marked the start of the still-ongoing international effort to control the consumption of addictive-drugs through prohibition."
- B "The idea that opium was dangerous to both individual and societal well-being was a consequence of the popular but erroneous perception that unrestrained opium trade by Britain in the nineteenth-century had reduced the once-great Chinese civilization to an emaciated and hopeless population of opium addicts smoking themselves to death."
- C "This facilitated opium becoming a commonly-used panacea against the symptoms of a wide number of ailments and diseases."
- D "The implementation of the 1912 treaty in China led to the public humiliation and imprisonment of tens of thousands of ordinary opium users."
- E "A search for cheaper alternatives led most opium users to morphine and heroin, psychoactive substances that were much more addictive and were deleterious to health."

Sub-Question 3 of 4

Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the author's citation of British opium users as an example to suggest that opium probably did not adversely affect the health or longevity of Chinese opium users?

- A The per capita opium consumption of the British was less than that of some Middle Eastern countries for which no records on the health and longevity of opium users were available.
- B The prevalence of ailments and diseases that required the use of a painkiller was much higher in Britain than in China.

- C The bodies of the British and the Chinese usually show similar responses to most common allergens, medicines, addictive-drugs and other stimuli.
- D The other Asian countries in which the supply of opium increased in the nineteenth-century through British opium trade reported no adverse public health consequence on their population.
- E While the British opium users chewed opium tablets, the Chinese opium users smoked opium, a method that had greater addiction potential and serious health effects.

Sub-Question 4 of 4

The author of the passage is primarily concerned with

- A explaining the problems in the first international attempt to control drug use
- B clarifying a common misconception about the impact of prohibition on drug use
- C explaining how the British effort to eradicate opium triggered a worse crisis of addiction
- D discussing the factors that may decrease the effectiveness of prohibition in decreasing drug use
- E describing the consequences of a pandemic of opium addiction in the nineteenth-century China