Econ 444 Exercise for September 23
de Jong, Fall 2003

1. Obviously, the second article below is nonsense; yet, its reasoning is quite similar to that of the first article below, right? So, how is it possible that the first appears to make sense, while the second does not?

2. Can you sketch verbally how a proper statistical analysis that relates consumption of beans to disease should be implemented?

(Appeared in Time magazine, March 20, 2000)

BEAN COUNT

Apparently beans really are, as the old schoolyard rhyme insists, “good for the heart.” After reviewing the dietary habits of nearly 12,000 men and women, researchers report that eating beans four times a week can reduce the incidence of heart disease, including heart attacks, by 20%. Any legume will do, even peas, peanuts and soy. It is thought that the vegetable protein in beans may help reduce cholesterol as well as lower blood pressure.

(Nonsense made-up article)

ASHES TO ASHES

Throw out your old ashtrays! Recent research at the Ashtray Research Center indicates that the possession of more than one ashtray may actually be damaging to your family’s health. In an extensive study of 10,000 families, researchers found that in those families that possessed two or more ashtrays, the occurrence of heart disease was higher than in those families who possessed one or zero ashtrays. When asked for a comment, the university’s Ashtray Museum insisted that there are no potential health risks to its visitors, because all ashtrays in the museum are kept under glass.