

Pro-Test Deutschland e.V.

SUFFERING

POOR

REPRODUCIBILITY

UNSUCK YOUR SCIENCE

Wednesday 21 April 2021. 2-5 pm

online. free of charge

Presentations and panel discussion
including

Stephanie Krämer, JLU Giessen
Christa Thöne-Reineke, FU Berlin
Emily Sena, U Edinburgh

and many more prominent speakers



event website



About this event

As students and postdocs, we're the actual crew of this ship called Science. Some of us get to stand on deck and enjoy the public applause. But more often than not, we're just busy working deep down in the engine room. And that can be a privilege because few other jobs are as interesting and rewarding as ours!

We want to do our job well. We care about our research. And though almost everyone around is well-intentioned, we can see much we don't like – a flawed analysis here, a missing control experiment there, wishful thinking by our boss. Because we're often the only ones to see that something's broken, we're also the only ones who can fix it. This holds especially true when performing animal experiments. We care about our lab animals. Taking responsibility for the life and death of another creature is never easy, but if done correctly, animal experiments can be both ethically sound and scientifically valid. So how do you know you're doing it right? And how can you do even better in the future?

In our online seminar on **Wednesday 21 April 2021, 2-5 pm**, 8 researchers will share their own solutions to 8 common issues. In addition to these practical fixes, we will highlight how better communications within your lab (and with the outside world) can enable such improvements in the first place. Joined by a panel of experts, we will then discuss what still makes it hard for YOU to make a difference, and what you need to overcome those hurdles. After the core event, you may engage in open discussion with some of our speakers and members of our organization in virtual break-out rooms.

The event will be held in English and is free of charge.



About us

Who are we?

We are a private initiative of animal caretakers, students, researchers, and veterinarians. We all have one thing in common: We have personal experience with animal experiments, and we want to talk about it. In our non-profit organization Pro-Test Deutschland e.V., we bundle our experiences and ideas to encourage a more open and honest debate about animal testing.

What do we want?

- We do not want animal testing to be a taboo subject anymore – regardless of whether one is in favor or against it.
- We want everyone who is involved in animal experimentation to talk about it openly and honestly, and we want to listen to each other.
- We want to explain how science works, and why animal experiments, e. g. in basic research, often cannot be replaced.
- We want to make active researchers even more aware of ways to protect animals – and to better inform the rest of society about animal experiments.
- We want to become personally visible and also encourage others to speak out personally!
- We want to hear from you and answer your questions directly.

What do we do?

In our free time, we volunteer to answer all questions from anyone interested. We do so at street campaigns, via Facebook, email, our blog, and Twitter, and in-person on stages, in schools, and lecture halls. We can help others with communications training, consulting, and certified coursework – but are also happy to just have a quiet chat over some coffee.

How do we finance ourselves?

Our non-profit organization has no employees whatsoever – we are all volunteers. To pay for events, flyers, and our website, we still need some money. We only accept small private donations (no donations from companies or research institutions). Besides, we offer communication courses with small groups of participants, in which our members show other people, for a small participation fee, how to discuss the science and ethics of animal experiments openly and without fear.

Our online event “Unsuck your Science” is open for everyone who wants to be part of the discussion around animal experimentation. Therefore, we have decided to offer it free of charge. Also, our speakers do not receive any financial compensation either.



Our program

2:00 pm **What is this “Culture of Care”?**
Introductory talk

2:20 pm **Session I: Solutions that work**
Brief presentations

***Sabine Bischoff &
Astrid Enkelmann***

Let’s start working transparently and not just talk about transparency in lab animal science – CIRS-LAS.de

Vanessa von Kortzfleisch

Reproducibility and the fallacy of rigorous standardisation

Katharina Hohlbaum

Recognizing the well-being of mice by automatic facial expression analysis

Fabienne Ferrara

Culture of Care: A matter of animal and human wellbeing

3:00 pm **Roundtable discussion**
How can junior researchers make a change?

Stephanie Krämer

ICAR3R at Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen

Emily Sena

University of Edinburgh, CAMARADES

Christa Thöne Reineke

Freie Universität Berlin

4:10 pm **Session II: Solutions that work**
Brief presentations

Lars Lewejohann

Animal welfare outside the experiment

Annemarie Lang

Innovative approaches to share organs and tissues to reduce the lab animal usage

Sarah Jeuthe

How ongoing education can lead to the development of a shared culture of care

André Bleich

How is my mouse?

5:00 pm **Closing remarks**

Open discussions with speakers in break-rooms (optional)

Florian Dehmelt of Pro-Test will host the event and moderate the roundtable discussion.



Our panel speakers

Stephanie Krämer, JLU Giessen [Head of ICAR3R Giessen](#)

Emily Sena, U Edinburgh [CAMARADES](#)
**Collaborative Approach to Meta-Analysis and Review
of Animal Data in Experimental Studies**

Christa Thöne-Reineke [Freie Universität Berlin](#)

How can junior researchers make a change?

There is no lack of motivated young researchers willing to improve both science and the lives of lab animals. But wanting a change is not the same as making one - which often requires additional resources, contacts, advice, and encouragement. Most importantly, it requires acknowledging the very real difficulties of acting within a complex work environment: "speaking up" can mean confronting one's own boss, "advocating improvements" may reveal the mistake of a friend and colleague, and "optimal solutions" often take time and effort that could have been put towards more tangible benefits - a better talk at lab meeting, another manuscript draft, or optimizing one's CV. But these obstacles are not insurmountable. So how can we best empower young researchers? How can they actively support one another? Which of the hurdles can we remove, and which ones are here to stay?

Florian Dehmelt of Pro-Test will moderate the roundtable discussion.



Abstracts (in chronological order)

Let's start working transparently and not just talk about transparency in lab animal science – CIRS-LAS.de

Speakers: Sabine Bischoff & Astrid Enkelmann

Affiliation: University Hospital Jena

Abstract:

If you talk about failure in lab animal science, the first step towards more transparency is done. Talking about critical incidents, near accidents, or unforeseen events leads to open-minded discussions in lab animal science and results in ideas to increase animal welfare. Now, it's time to take the second step – make your experiences, discussions, and ideas visible with cirs-las.de and report your critical incidents. Your report can help others working with lab animals to improve animal welfare. Furthermore, you can investigate reports on cirs-las.de and improve your own work. By using cirs-las.de we demonstrate responsible behavior with lab animals.

Session I: talk 1

Reproducibility and the fallacy of rigorous standardization

Speaker: Vanessa von Kortzfleisch

Affiliation: Universität Münster

Abstract:

The credibility of scientific findings is questioned by the rising awareness of the so-called 'reproducibility crisis'. Counterintuitively, the rigorous standardization to homogenous experimental conditions is discussed to cause poor reproducibility rather than promoting it. The results are limited to the specific environmental background in which the experiment is conducted. This is assumed to decrease the external validity of the results and lead to poor reproducibility. Instead, embracing biological variation and integrating it into the experimental design in a systematic and controlled way has been shown to increase the generalizability of the results and thus improve reproducibility.

Session I: talk 2

Recognizing the well-being of mice by automatic facial expression analysis

Speaker: Katharina Hohlbaum

Affiliation: Freie Universität Berlin

Abstract:

The facial expressions of animals provide valuable information on their well-being. Therefore, facial action coding systems, such as the Mouse Grimace Scale, were developed for various species in recent years. For instance, squeezed eyes, stiffened whiskers, laid-back ears, and nose or cheek bulges can indicate pain in mice. To facilitate the use of the Mouse Grimace Scale we made efforts to automatize it using deep learning and to create an app that is freely available for everyone – with the aim to minimize suffering of mice in the laboratory [1].

[1] Andresen N, Wöllhaf M, Hohlbaum K, Lewejohann L, Hellwich O, Thöne-Reineke C, et al. (2020). Towards a fully automated surveillance of well-being status in laboratory mice using deep learning: Starting with facial expression analysis. PLoS ONE 15(4): e0228059. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0228059>.

Session I: talk 3

Culture of Care: A matter of animal and human wellbeing

Speaker: Fabienne Ferrara

Affiliation: ConScienceTrain

Abstract:

Animal testing is inevitably associated with pain, damage and suffering. Performing animal testing itself or public criticism, can lead to individual mental stress and ethical conflict situations. With the revision of the Directive 2010/63/EU, animal welfare considerations are to be given highest priority. Even not directly mentioned, the term Culture of Care is a commitment to improving animal welfare, scientific quality, care of the staff, and transparency and a main task of institutional animal welfare bodies. Taking care of staff is particularly important as impaired mental wellbeing as compassion fatigue have a direct negative impact on animal welfare.

Session I: talk 4

Animal welfare outside the experiment

Speaker: Lars Lewejohann

Affiliation: Freie Universität Berlin & Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung

Abstract:

The vast majority of laboratory animals in Europe are mice, with millions used or housed as stock animals, and many more humanely killed because they are considered 'surplus' animals. Mice are usually housed in small cages which do not offer much variety. One of the key ways to make the lives of laboratory mice better is to aim to continually improve their housing and living conditions. While it might not be possible to maximize the welfare of some animals due to experimental constraints, especially the "surplus" animals provide a great potential for improving the overall welfare of laboratory animals (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0023677219891754>).

Session II: talk 1

Innovative approaches to share organs and tissues to reduce the lab animal usage

Speaker: Annemarie Lang

Affiliation: AniMatch & Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin

Abstract:

Sharing organs and tissues of animals sacrificed for scientific purposes, surplus animals, or those used for organ collection under anesthesia or for educational purposes provides the great opportunity to sustainably reduce the animal number. Therefore, several small initiatives can be identified in Europe which are mostly focusing on biobanking of one specific animal species (EU PRIMNET, MIDY), tissue (NERD) or disease model (SEARCHBreast, SharmUK). A more general approach was launched under the name AniMatch (www.animatch.eu) - an innovative web-based platform that allows scientists to register and publish or search for offers to facilitate the multiple use of freshly killed animals.

Session II: talk 2

How ongoing education can lead to the development of shared culture of care

Speaker: Sarah Jeuthe

Affiliation: Lise Meitner School of Science Berlin & Max-Delbrück-Centrum Berlin

Abstract:

This presentation will address the importance of teaching and ongoing awareness in laboratory animal science. Only the continuous education of all persons working with animals leads to a living Culture of Care. This starts with the training of laboratory technicians and animal caretakers, includes all scientists and veterinarians in the animal facilities and ends with the group leader. Only if each individual is regularly trained in the field of laboratory animal science a common basic understanding and state of the art in all areas of animal welfare and thus a living culture of care develop can be developed.

Session II: talk 3

How is my mouse?

Speaker: André Bleich

Affiliation: MHH Hannover

Abstract:

to be announced

Session II: talk 4



Join us!

All about us

You are involved in animal research in some way or perform it yourself? You feel like talking about it to somebody? We'd love to. No matter whether you are a scientist, vet, animal welfare officer, press officer, technical assistant, animal care attendant, research group leader, or somebody else who is employed at an institute where animal research is performed: we would love to be in touch with you. Animal research is an emotional and difficult issue. And this goes double for those responsible for animal experiments. Maybe you are not sure yourself: is this the right way? Or maybe you have trouble explaining animal research to others, like your own family. One thing is certain: you're not alone.

We Pro-Testers aim to strengthen communication about animal research in general. That does not only mean communication with the public at large but also among ourselves and with everybody concerned. We firmly believe that only an open exchange of viewpoints can promote the cause of research as well as the cause of animal welfare. Doubts and misgivings must be voiced, as must be real problems. Therefore, anybody willing to talk about animal research will find an open ear with us.

Our main goal is to provide a platform to make animal research more transparent and talk openly about animal experiments. Regardless of whether you feel uncertain, simply lack experience in animal research, or have already had encounters with opponents of animal research, feel free to reach out to us. Especially institutes that might get into the sights of opponents of animal research may feel mounting pressure from the media and activists which subsequently often lead to a hiding policy. However, in our experience, people usually understand pretty well what animal research is about once one explains the background and context. And only through open discussion can one gain experience in explaining one's own animal experiments, should it become necessary. We of Pro-Test Deutschland would like to offer up our experience. We are always available for you to talk!

So whoever you are and whenever you would like to talk about animal research, please contact us!



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