

**“Fighting irreproducibility in preclinical medicine using a meta-analytical approach for detecting flaws in behavior-based testing” - A short report detailing the first six months of the project**

When setting off on our 3R-Center-funded project at the beginning of the year, few of us could predict what 2020 would have in store for us. The COVID-19 epidemic has complicated our project somewhat. However, we consider our project to be well on track, if somewhat delayed.

According to the original plan, a PhD student was to be recruited during the spring with a first sub-project well underway at present. This time table has had to be slightly amended. The release of the funds from the Danish Agricultural Agency (“Landbrugsstyrelsen”) was somewhat delayed. This, in combination with the university’s central administration being hamstrung by the changes brought on by the pandemic, meant that we were only able to start recruitment of a candidate at the end of Spring.

The job posting, although formulated in May, only went online in the beginning of July, with a deadline for applications in the first week of August (we believe the delay was due to an administrative backlog). We strove to cast a wide net, since there are currently no educational programs that give a solid basis in meta-analysis of animal studies. The advertisement was mirrored onto a handful of job posting sites, and shared through social media. The tactic appears to have been successful as we have piqued the interest of candidates across four continents that are knowledgeable in animal welfare, in behavioral studies, and in evidence synthesis/meta-analysis. We have been able to narrow the selection down to ten prospective candidates. Interviews are planned for next week (24-27 August). We hope to have identified the best candidate by the beginning of September. We expect to have the project fully up and running during the course of the fall months.

As we are anxious to get this project off the ground, we have tried to shave as much time as possible from each leg of the recruitment process. There are however regulations surrounding university recruitment that pose hard limits to how much we can speed up the process (candidates must, for example, be given an opportunity to appeal their assessments). We take some solace in the fact that a PhD project is a marathon, not a sprint. During the coming three years, we will have many opportunities to make up for lost time.

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