

## Challenging the old ways: a call to rethink behavioural methods

**Jenny Berrio<sup>1</sup>, Sara Hestehave<sup>2</sup>, Katharina Hohlbaum<sup>3</sup>, Otto Kalliokoski<sup>1</sup>, Jenny Wilzopolski<sup>3</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>University of Copenhagen, Denmark, <sup>2</sup>University College London, United Kingdom, <sup>3</sup>German Centre for the Protection of Laboratory Animals (Bf3R), Germany*

While conducting systematic reviews of one of the most popular behavioural tests for assessing depression in laboratory rats, we came to recognize that tradition might be working against us. Researchers, in the spirit of getting reproducible results, have opted to follow methods that have remained mostly unchanged over the years. Some of these methods, initially developed with practicality and ease-of-use in mind, may have prioritized convenience over solid biological grounds. As a result, these methods might confound the results of experiments by introducing critical, and easily overlooked, methodological biases. In our systematic reviews, we found that such faithful compliance to tradition led to a decrease in the reliability of the test and undermined the confidence in the body of evidence derived from studies using it. We would like to bring awareness to the detrimental effect that abiding to tradition might have on the quality of animal-based research. It is a call to go back to basics, to rethink and refine behavioural methods, because if tradition comes at the cost of validity, maybe it is time to challenge tradition.