

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: I just don't get it. I do not get this...

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Hey, what's up? You don't look too happy.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: I'm not! I don't understand this at all.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: What's going on?

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: You know we've been trying for months to replicate those results from the Hanson lab, but ours still don't match up.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: OK. You know what? I'm gonna go give him a call. See if there's something in the paper, maybe in or left out of the methods section, for that assay that we're missing.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: OK, great.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Yes, several times over the past few months. I'm just brainstorming here, but is it possible we're missing something? Maybe there're some differences in the solutions or peptide?

JEFFREY HANSON: No. I'm looking at what you sent me and it looks like you've got the formulations exactly right.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Huh. OK.

JEFFREY HANSON: Listen, why don't I send you the files I have... it's all the raw data and the protocols... maybe you find something there?

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Oh great. That's incredibly generous.

JEFFREY HANSON: Well, I'll tell you what, this is starting to bother me too... Will you be in touch?

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Absolutely. Thanks so much, Jeffrey.

JEFFREY HANSON: You got it.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Will you run it one more time while I look thru his files?

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Sure. I hate to seem superstitious but... cross your fingers, will you?

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: While that's not entirely scientific... whatever works!

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: I can't believe this... it's still not working.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Really?

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Really. I'm super frustrated. Why can't I repeat this? I've gone over and over the methods section of this paper, every single thing that's here.>>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: It doesn't make any sense...

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: This is all I think about... I am counting tubes to fall asleep at night!

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Now that's just sad.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: But true.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: I'm gonna schedule a Skype call with Jeff Hanson. I've looked through the protocols and data and I might have something. Don't get your hopes up. Face to face, maybe we'll get somewhere.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Good idea.

JEFFREY HANSON: No, it looks like you're following all the protocols.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: What about the controls? I didn't see anything in your paper or the files about how they were prepared.

JEFFREY HANSON: We used the same controls we always use.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Where do you get them?

JEFFREY HANSON: I mean, we keep them in the minus eighty freezer, and we take them in and out as we need them.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: So, these are control samples that have been around for possibly years...

JEFFREY HANSON: [sighs] Yeah.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: I've been preparing them fresh each time.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: That could be it.

JEFFREY HANSON: Sure could! Things taken in and out of a freezer will degrade over time...

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Like ice cream... it's not going to taste as good if you've been taking it in and out of the freezer for months, right?

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Oh....

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: That tiny detail...

JEFFREY HANSON: ...Could make a huge difference.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Of course.

JEFFREY HANSON: Listen, this has got me thinking. We will rerun the experiment here using freshly prepared controls, and if you'll do the same once more, then we can compare results. I'm a bit worried about this, and want to resolve any questions about this experiment.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: That sounds like a good plan. Let's discuss our results next week.

JEFFREY HANSON: You got it.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: And I can go back to counting sheep...

[laughter]