

Assessing Stem Cell Therapeutics in Murine Models

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Github Repository: <https://github.com/gilescarlos/Stats-170-Cap-Stone>

1 Introduction and Problem Statement

Spinal cord injury (SCI) is a debilitating condition that impacts up to 300,000 individuals in the U.S. each year. As such, a significant focus of stem cell research is dedicated to developing therapeutics that could help bring affected individuals' livelihood back. Likewise, the tests and methods used to assess different therapeutics are incredibly important. The efficiency and rigor of these tests allow for discovery of novel therapies and help advance the research field dedicated to solving spinal cord injury. The ladder beam test is a behavioral method for assessing recovery following SCI in murine models. During the test, mice must walk across a ladder with fifty rungs. Injured mice are expected to have more missteps while recovering mice should have more plantar or sufficient steps. However, to properly utilize this test our sponsors must spend several hours analyzing hundreds of videos of mice completing the task in order to individually score each mouse's performance. Consequently, this tedious process tends to slow down the lab's workflow and some automation would provide a significant increase in efficiency. Streamlining the ladder beam task and its data analysis would allow for significant efficiency in retrieving data necessary for the advancement of SCI research and therapeutics. Our primary goal is to use appropriate machine learning algorithms and build off existing research to aid in the lab's data collection process for the ladder beam task. Secondly, we will assess the effectiveness of different treatments through appropriate statistical models and hypothesis tests.

2 Related Work

Several other labs have encountered this bottleneck in efficiency and have aimed to address this problem as well. One such solution is DeepLabCut¹, which is an open source software developed in Python that utilizes a deep neural network to track various body parts in multiple species across a broad collection of behaviors or physical assessments. Another study was able to utilize the software to conduct a comprehensive 3D gait analysis of mice after focal cerebral ischemia². The authors concluded that using a previously trained data set for tracking mice movement, their own recordings of mice completing the ladder beam task, and the DeepLabCut neural network provides accurate and sensitive data to describe the complex recovery of rodents following a stroke. Other researchers have also been successful in building upon DeepLabCut and creating their own toolbox utilizing a convolutional neural network appropriate for their recording equipment³.

¹Mathis, A., Mamidanna, P., Cury, K.M. et al. DeepLabCut: markerless pose estimation of user-defined body parts with deep learning. *Nat Neurosci* 21, 1281–1289 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41593-018-0209-y>

²Weber, R.Z., Mulders, G., Kaiser, J. et al. Deep learning-based behavioral profiling of rodent stroke recovery. *BMC Biol* 20, 232 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12915-022-01434-9>

³Aljovic, A., Zhao, S., Chahin, M. et al. A deep learning-based toolbox for Automated Limb Motion Analysis (ALMA) in murine models of neurological disorders. *Commun Biol* 5, 131 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s42003-022-03077-6>

3 Data Sets

We obtained our data from our sponsors at the UCI Stem Cell Research Center. Specifically, we received about a hundred videos of mice completing the ladder beam task and the corresponding manually labeled excel sheet corresponding to the videos.

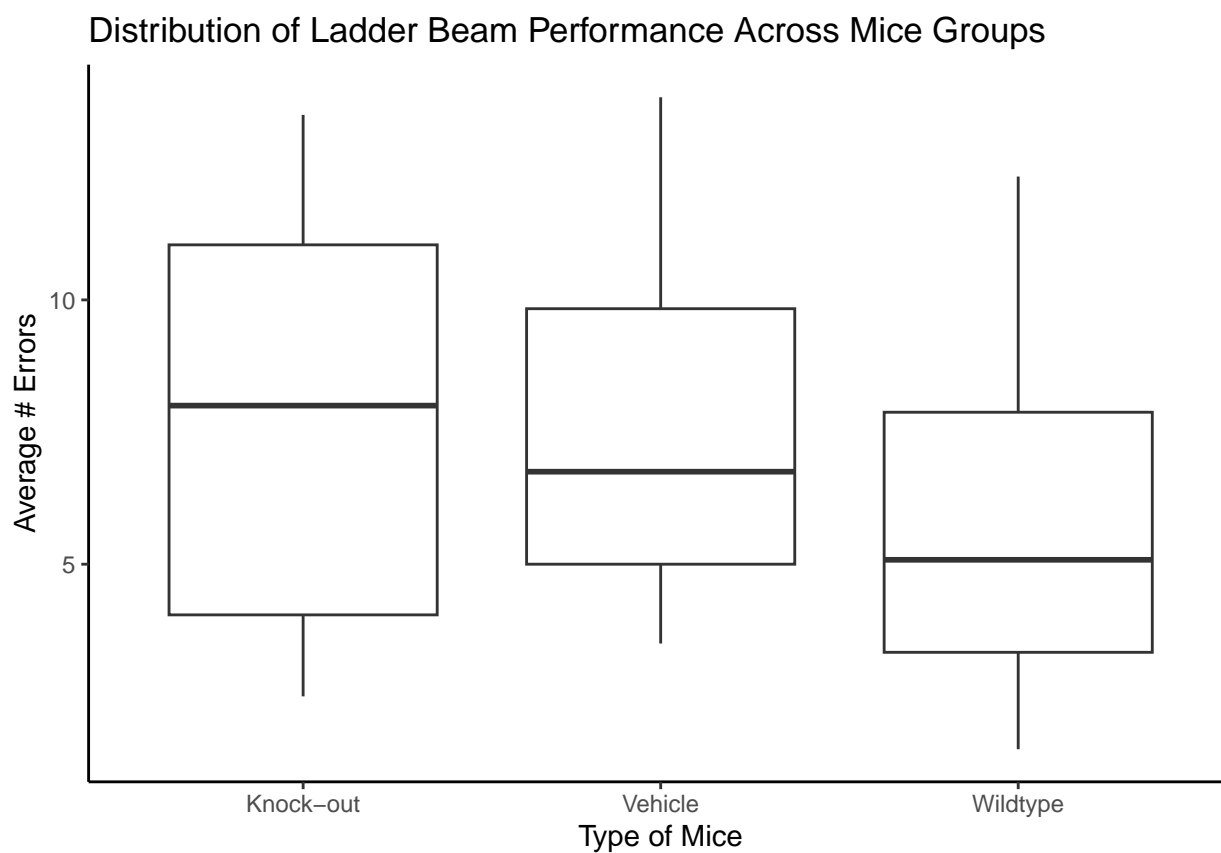
Table 1: Example of First 10 Rows of Manually Input Data Set Obtained from Ladder Beam Task

animal	total_good	total_bad	ave_good	ave_bad	lb_score	type
1	276	24	46.00000	4.000000	92.00000	w
2	280	20	46.66667	3.333333	93.33333	k
3	255	45	42.50000	7.500000	85.00000	w
4	228	71	38.00000	11.833333	76.25418	k
5	267	33	44.50000	5.500000	89.00000	v
6	279	21	46.50000	3.500000	93.00000	v
7	276	24	46.00000	4.000000	92.00000	k
8	226	74	37.66667	12.333333	75.33333	w
9	227	73	37.83333	12.166667	75.66667	k
10(11)	222	78	37.00000	13.000000	74.00000	v

4 Overall Technical Approach

4.1 Data Wrangling

4.2 Exploratory Data Analysis



5 Software

6 Experiments and Evaluation

7 Notebook Description

8 Members Participation

Table 2: Percentage of workload across group members

Task	Giles	Nathan	Alex	Vinh	Owen
task 1	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

9 Discussion and Conclusion

What did you learn about the methods and algorithms you worked with? What did you learn about their strengths? And their limitations?

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What ended up being harder than you expected in your project? What was surprising about your project?

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What other lessons did you learn, expected or unexpected (e.g., perhaps about the tools you used, if you used anything out of the ordinary?

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If you were in charge of a research lab, what ideas and directions might you invest in over the next year or two to try to make major progress on this problem? Feel free to be speculative in discussing possible future directions.

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