

#BeRCSI Bulletin 7

Dear Colleagues,

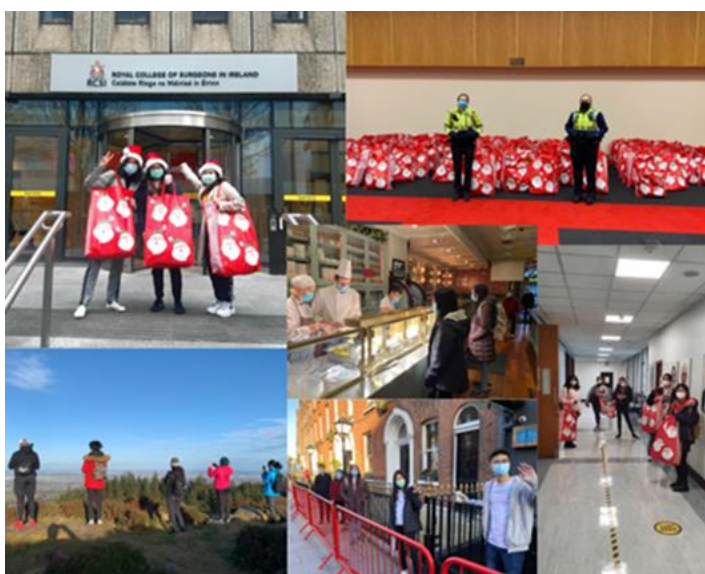
We hope you are keeping safe and well in what has undoubtedly been a challenging start to 2021. All of us are having to draw on reserves of resilience to deal with the many challenges the rise in Covid-19 cases has brought with it. Many of us are worried that we, or our loved ones, may become ill and it is important to reiterate that there should be no shame or stigma in contracting Covid-19 even while adhering to all safety precautions. We know that Covid-19 is one of the most contagious viruses we have seen in our lifetime. For any staff who develop symptoms or test positive for Covid-19, it is important that you follow HSE advice and the detailed steps set out in the [RCSI protocol](#) and inform us so that we can support you and ensure the safety of our staff, students, and wider community, and to do so without shame. We are all in this together. In our last email we asked staff to continue to exhibit the behaviours represented by the *BeRCSI* campaign, especially to **BeKind**, that also means to be kind to yourself. This message is also important for our many staff who are once again having to balance work commitments with caring or schooling responsibilities. We encourage you to make your schedule work for you and to engage with your line manager and fellow team members to enable this flexibility. As part of our commitment to advocate working flexibly and ensure healthy home working habits and boundaries, we have created the attached infographic with practical tips on how we can continue to support and respect each other's professional and personal lives.

On a happier note, we wanted to acknowledge the amazing effort that took place in the run-up to the Christmas break to put in place some extra supports to help our students feel at home over the festive period. Of primary focus centered on our earlier year students that would not be travelling home to their families and may have experienced feelings of loneliness over the holiday period. SMT approved the formation of a dedicated working group to coordinate the efforts across multiple departments, working closely with our fantastic Student Union representatives. We are so grateful to all the volunteers who worked a number of weekends and up and including Christmas eve, to make this a success. The feedback from students was extremely positive and reflected their acknowledgement of the care and concern RCSI staff have for their health and wellbeing. Events organised included:

1. The GYM team launched a 5 week Lifestyle Medicine programme, with a series of in-person practical classes focusing Nutrition, Exercise and Stress management (hear more of this below in the 'Team Spotlight' piece)
2. On Friday the 11th December, there was a baked goods giveaway to students across multiple campuses– over 400 baked goods were baked and distributed by staff – this was incredible

Barry Holmes
Director of Human Resources

3. 1,500 Santa Sacks (with 14 items in each) were handed out to undergraduate and postgraduate students. The costs for these were supported from fundraising efforts by staff and alumni. 100 of these sacks were donated to the local community in partnership with Gardaí from St Kevin’s Station. RCSI staff packed and distributed these sacks.
4. 472 undergraduate and postgraduate students availed of an offer to collect a Christmas Dinner and dessert from a local hotel (Iveagh Garden) on Christmas Eve. 50 of these dinners were donated to St Catherine’s residential home in collaboration with RCSI REACH
5. Our 1st years students across all programmes received an end of term lunch in the last week of term (18th – 21st December). The canteen was decorated and we worked with our catering suppliers to provide again a main course, dessert and small gift (selection box). 14 lunches were hosted and 270 students participated.
6. In early December, prior to when case numbers again escalated, we were able to plan a series of in person events (all outdoors) within learning communities. Starting the 6th December and until the 21st December there was a series of events held; cycle hunts in phoenix park, hikes in Dublin mountains, walking tours of Dublin are some examples.
7. RCSI REACH coordinated a number of volunteering efforts with students – cards for older people, hampers and a virtual choir. Importantly 70 students were trained in contact tracing to support the HSE. Over 25 of these worked over the Christmas period (including 12 on Christmas day).



In this week’s **Team Spotlight!** piece we hear from the team that try their best to keep us all on our toes and embody the positive spirit of the RCSI staff and student community. We caught up with David Harris and the RCSI Gym Team:

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Like most teams, the RCSI Gym team were a little lost in those early days of lockdown. The primary purpose of the gym team up to the very moment the campus closed was to promote and complete as much one to one personal training and group fitness classes to as many people as possible, so the move to online only was a huge adjustment!

Mindful that staff and students had no access to gym, we began by pre-recording different types of home and outdoor workouts. We followed that up by launching twice daily online classes (which have continued since). As lockdown progressed, it became clear to everyone that a reduction in activity levels in conjunction with increased access to food was leading a huge percentage of people to gain the 'Covid Kilos'! We decided to launch the virtual #together10k

To encourage people to exercise and provide a tangible goal, we choose 27th June as the date for our 10k challenge. We wrote 10 different 10k plans which catered to all levels and each trainer took on a number of clients to coach them through. We were delighted that over 140 RCSI staff and students completed the 10k from all over the world. If you did it and have not received your commemorative medal, get in touch as we have it ready for you!

To support the accommodation manager, Ivan Carty, the gym team undertook and managed 'Project Boomerang'. This involved the repatriation of all left luggage by students when they left at short notice in March. All luggage was itemised, organised and delivered to each student's new accommodation over a period of 11th August to 19th October. The gym team also delivered all welcome packs for new students as well as assisting Ivan with all pre-arrival checks of rooms, fixtures and fittings.

In addition to our weekly team meetings, the gym team undertook one short educational course every week of the summer. These courses ranged from customer service and MS excel to retention and marketing. Each team member took turns presenting their thoughts on the course and how it could be applied in our roles. It was brilliant to have free access to this.

With full support from SMT, Estates were able to secure a suitable space in Croke Park to create a new dedicated gym for the students based there. Installation of gym equipment is normally done to order and takes an average of 12 to 14 weeks. Due to the limited timeframe to get the gym open, this was not an option. Following a detailed trawl of available equipment in Europe, we were able to secure equipment in Belgium and have it transported and installed just over 2 weeks after the gym was first mooted! Due to social distancing some equipment was transferred from SSG to Croke Park too. After long days, the new gym opened for students on 14th September with the best views in Ireland!

We were delighted to support the upcoming Lifestyle Medicine module by offering practical workshops in person in the sports hall in 26 York Street. We delivered 45 workshops over 5 weeks and covered topics such as; Nutrition, Mindfulness, Guided Meditation, Mobility and Yin Yoga.

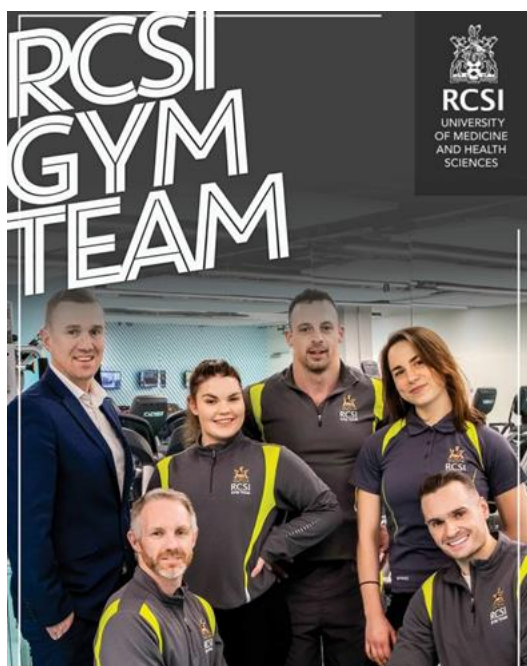
Our first challenge of 2021 is Project 6, a 6 week plan designed to support students and staff in making positive changes to their health and wellness. Unlike most January's, we are taking a softer

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approach due to the increased anxiety being experienced by a high proportion of the population. One of the key factors is the one to one coaching and support every week which participants will receive. We will deliver 6 live fitness classes as well as regular workshops, cook alongs, challenges and access to a host of other supporting content. If you're looking for a positive challenge to keep you focused over the next 6 weeks I would encourage you to sign up through [this link](#).

Throughout the period of the gym closure, the gym team have been engaging in one to one, small group training for certain departments and groups of students and online fitness classes. It is not the same as in person interaction, but as with everyone, we must adapt to succeed in spreading the message of good health to everyone that will listen!

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank each and every person who has interacted with us over the past few months – it really does make a difference.



(not a house robe or quarantine kilo in site!)

This week's **#SpotlightOnWellbeing** series focuses on something we could all draw on over the coming weeks, **Resilience**. We are all facing different and difficult challenges as we continue to live through the pandemic and the ability to stay resilient is more important than ever. Resilience is not only our ability to bounce back from adversity but also our ability to grow from the stressors and challenges we confront. We are really grateful to Prof Ciaran O'Boyle from our Centre for Positive Psychology and Health for recording this short video on the value of using the ancient philosophy of Stoicism to help you endure when times are tough. If you missed it on WorkVivo you can watch the video back here <https://youtu.be/O66yUau73hs>.

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You might like to listen to [this podcast](#) with explorer, motivational speaker and 2015 RCSI Honorary Doctorate Degree recipient Mark Pollock. In this podcast Mark talks on overcoming the challenges he has faced in his life, both those that happened to him through his blindness and partial paralysis, and those that he chose through his ultra-endurance racing. He touches on resilience, motivation, uncertainty and the stoic philosophers practice of negative visualisation to help ground you. One of our favourite quotes from Mark in this podcast is “Sometimes we choose our challenges, sometimes they choose us but it’s what we decide to do about it that counts”. Prepare to be inspired!

Lastly, we would like to share a poem to help lift our spirits and keep a positive focus.

The Laughing Heart by Charles Bukowski

*Your life is your life
don't let it be clubbed into dank submission.
be on the watch.
there are ways out.
there is light somewhere.
it may not be much light but
it beats the darkness.
be on the watch.
the gods will offer you chances.
know them.
take them.
you can't beat death but
you can beat death in life, sometimes.
and the more often you learn to do it,
the more light there will be.
your life is your life.
know it while you have it.
you are marvelous
the gods wait to delight
in you.*

Stay safe and take of yourself and each other,

Barry & the HR Team