

#BeRCSI Bulletin 8

Dear Colleagues,

As we enter the last weekend of a challenging January, we can't help but feel more hopeful for the slightly longer days and shorter month of February. We hope you are making the most of the daylight hours to remain active and get outside within your 5km radius. It is so important that we continue to actively practice our resilience and self-care over the coming weeks with the extension of the Level 5 restrictions to help reduce the pressure on our Healthcare system and clinical colleagues. By staying home we are supporting them together.

We would like to reiterate our strong encouragement for managers, teams and staff to work together to allow for flexibility for those who are once again juggling home caring and schooling responsibilities. For some this could be working amended hours or re-prioritising work for a short time period. Remember that *good is good enough* as we continue to support each other through the weeks ahead. We are hearing of a lot of us are experiencing increased stress at this time, which is understandable in the current circumstances. If you are experiencing a heightening state of stress or would like to learn how to manage stress better, the HSE is running a free 6 session stress control course starting on Monday 8th February- 25th February. The classes will be live streamed on YouTube and made available for 48 hours afterwards if you miss the live session. During these classes you will learn about stress and anxiety, and some practical ways you can control it and boost your wellbeing. You can find out more [here](#). A reminder also that all staff and their families have access to the RCSI Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is a free professional counselling and information service. You can talk to a counsellor about any issues or concern on the phone or by video 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Please be assured that any contact you have with the EAP service is strictly confidential; By Phone: Freephone 1800 995 955; By Email: eap@vhics.ie

With so much of our professional and personal ways of working and connecting relying on technology this year (and sometimes our sanity when it's the only thing that will keep the kids entertained!), the term 'Technology Fatigue' is something we can all relate to. It is good to remember that technology can also be used to help us to maintain healthy boundaries and reduce our screen time where we can. We have created some top tips for improving your digital wellbeing and reducing technology fatigue:

1. **Boundaries:** Improve your working from home and personal/family time boundaries by turning off your work notifications on your mobile for out of work hours- there is no need to be 'always on'
2. **Disconnect:** Use your smartphone technology to set up a 'wind down' time on your phone before bed which can turn off all notifications and reduce mindless scrolling! [Android tips](#), [iOS tips](#)
3. **Respect:** Think twice about who needs to be a recipient on your email and include deadlines for when work is needed by. Know how to correctly use the **To** vs **CC** fields. This article contains best practice [Outlook: Do's and Don'ts](#)

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4. **Time Management:** Respect people's time and keep meetings short and to the point and no longer than 50 minutes where possible. For more tips you can check this LinkedIn Learning [Managing Meetings](#) course
5. **Connect:** This week's #SpotlightonWellbeing is focused on the importance of positive connections. We've included ways you can connect to colleagues below and we encourage you to get involved. We're all grateful that technology enables us to stay connected, we just need to have healthy technology boundaries to protect mental health too.

In this week's **Team Spotlight!** piece we hear from our Researcher colleagues working in the **Molecular Medicine laboratory** in the ERC in Beaumont, and get an insight into how they have adapted over the last 10 months and the inspiring work they do.

The Molecular Medicine Team is based in ERC, Beaumont and is composed of staff and students not only from the department of Molecular Medicine, but also from Surgery, Anesthesia and Critical Care, Medicine, FutureNeuro and Pathology. The team includes both clinicians and scientists who play key roles in teaching and research. Many of our colleagues in the lab are health care workers who have also been caring for Covid-19 patients since last March.

After our sudden exit from the Molecular Medicine lab on 12th March, we all quickly adapted to working from home with great support from our departmental IT Super User Lorraine Nolan-Daly MSc. Supervisors of undergraduate students in the lab on placements at the time ensured that they could complete their work remotely and still gain valuable experience. We still had to keep essential lab equipment and facilities running and team members that were in a position to go on site were extremely helpful - in fact some were only too happy at the opportunity to see the inside of the lab again!

The welcome news that a return to the lab was permitted for essential research triggered Dr Stephen Keely (PI), Dr Olive McCabe (Lab Manager) and Lorraine Nolan-Daly MSc (Operations Manager) to immediately liaise with RCSI Safety and the Estates team in ERC to put a plan in place for a safe return. This included regular meetings with team members to make sure that everyone felt safe. Since returning to the lab, we have worked on separate shifts and use an online Log Access system designed by Lorraine (this was also adapted by another ERC lab) to limit the number of staff on site at any one time. Everyone has been hugely co-operative and considerate of their colleagues and has shown a great team effort in adapting to and implementing the new safety measures. In July 2020, Lorraine organised a staff online feedback survey which provided an opportunity for people to raise any issues of concern and make suggestions for any changes/improvements needed.

Dr Jean McBryan and Dr Sinead Toomey organise monthly Research Meetings for the entire Team. We now attend these meetings remotely and each meeting is followed by smaller break-out sessions where we can chat to colleagues that we may not have seen in some time, especially those working remotely or on different shifts.

Dr Stephen Keely recently worked with the Postgraduate Students Union to establish a new forum for postgraduate students to present their projects online. With support from the School of Postgraduate Studies the new Postgraduate Seminar Sessions are being held monthly. In the absence of face-to-face conferences, this provides a much needed forum for students to share their research, practice presentation skills, and get valuable feedback from their colleagues in a relaxed and informal environment.

We have adapted the labs in ERC to establish a dedicated Covid-19 research area where this important work can be carried out safely. This is in addition to continuing our existing programs of research in breast, colon and lung cancer (Dr Jean McBryan, Dr Ann Hopkins, Dr Sinead Toomey, Prof

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Bryan Hennessy), multiple myeloma (Dr Siobhan Glavey), inflammatory bowel disease, colon cancer and irritable bowel syndrome, (Dr Stephen Keely), sepsis and lung disorders (Prof Ger Curley, Prof Killian Hurley, Dr Irene Oglesby). Covid-19-focussed research includes looking at how a ventilator-splitting device can safely deliver mechanical ventilation to patients in the event of ventilator shortages, examining the lung physiology characteristics of severely ill patients ventilated with Covid19 ARDS in ICU and the adaptation of one of the existing lung cancer research technologies to use exhaled breath condensate to diagnose COVID-19 infection. Killian and Irene received major HRB funding in 2020 to study families with pulmonary fibrosis and adapted their model of induced pluripotent stem cell (iPSC) derived lung cells to investigate gender differences in severe COVID-19 infection.

Over the past few months we welcomed five new team members and we also welcome Dr Warren Thomas back to the lab having spent 6 years working in RCSI Perdana. We recently welcomed a new member to the team with the arrival of baby Daniel Kennedy. His proud Dad Dr Sean Kennedy tells us that is he is great craic!



Speaking of celebrations, one thing that we have all missed is the traditional Mol Med ‘cake events’ to celebrate birthdays, graduations (Dr Emily Rutherford and Dr Cha Len Lee both graduated with MDs in 2020), research success.....basically any excuse to eat nice cakes!! We have some wonderful

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bakers in the team and we expect to have some new ones thanks to much practice over the past few months so this is definitely something to look forward to whenever we are all back on site together again!

The final topic we're looking at as part of the #SpotlightonWellbeing series is the importance of Positive Connections. In this [week's video](#) Prof Ciaran O'Boyle of the Centre for Positive Psychology and Health looks at human connections – why we need them, the importance of our mindset and some practical exercises you can do to enhance you sense of connection with others. Our last staff pulse survey highlighted that colleagues are really missing their teams and that the prolonged period of remote working is leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation which of course negatively impacts overall wellbeing. From a work perspective it is undoubtedly our relationships and communication with others that enables us to do our best and keep going in tough times. In this week's video Prof O' Boyle highlights how proactively engaging with others even through technology is good for us. So we want to share ways you can connect with your colleagues even while we are apart:

1. Take a spin on the **Coffee Roulette** wheel today at 10am! You'll be randomly paired with 2 other colleagues from across the University to have a cuppa and a chat (no work talk, approved topics include Bridgerton, pets, sports, did we mention Bridgerton??)
2. Join with your team or whole department for the **RCSI Step's to Health Challenge!** RCSI Inspire are challenging teams to walk from Dublin to Bahrain together, that's 6,954.1km! Starting on 16th February for Love Life Love Walking Day. Sign up [through this link](#), more info to follow.
3. Join the **RCSI Inspire Baking Club** who are making a comeback after the success of the Great RCSI Bake Off 2020. There will be baking challenges with pictures posted to our dedicated WorkVivo Space. All levels welcome, join the fun here!
4. The **RCSI Staff Networks** are a great way to meet likeminded individuals with common interests. The EDI Unit has established six staff networks: Parent's and Carers'; LGBT+ Pride; Men's Shed; Women's Network; Age Friendly; and Intercultural. To join any of the staff networks and access that network's Workvivo Space, please email the EDI Unit at: equality@rcsi.ie.

We sign off this week with a poem by Liam Porter to remind us to remember to take time for ourselves and for living.

TAKE TIME

Take time for now.

This is the only moment you are sure of.

Take time for friends.

They will help you through the very worst days.

Take time for family.

You will miss them, immeasurably, when they are gone.

Take time for work.

But don't let work, take all of your time.

Take time to laugh.

Laughter raises spirits and lifts the gloom.

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Take time for music.
It will feed your soul and bring you joy.
Take time to exercise.
You have one body, you should look after it well.
Take time for you.
For if you keep dividing yourself, what will be left?
Take time to understand.
That we cannot save time. We can just try to use it wisely.
Take time to live.

Take care and continue to be safe,

Barry and the HR Team

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