

# QUALITY TIMES



## **MENTAL WELLBEING**

OUR COVID-19  
EXPERIENCES

## **SPOTLIGHT ON RUTH BAMS**

FACTS & FIGURES

## **CHRISTMAS PARTY INVITE**

# WOW...



## EDITORS

### Tom Blom

Operations & Development  
Manager  
tom.blom@spgl.eu

### Veronique Schnabel

Sr. Consultant  
veronique.schnabel@spgl.co.uk



what a year, who would have thought that the entire world would have come to a standstill! A new brave world of Zoom meetings and training, online social cafés and quizzes, not to mention staycations and virtual parties. We certainly are living through some strange times, yet it only seems like yesterday that we were dancing the night away at our Christmas party in Antwerp.

In spite of the Covid pandemic striking overnight, we have all quickly adapted and continued with our daily lives, supporting our customers and each other. Working from home, social distancing and maintaining physical/mental health has not been easy, so thank you all for your resilience, dedication, hard work and above all, your continued support and commitment.

The past year has been unprecedented and extremely challenging, however, I am sure that by continuing to support the Life Sciences sector, we can all make a valuable contribution in defeating this virus and play our role in saving humanity!

One of my highlights every year is our annual Christmas party, which obviously this year we are unable to host. However, in order not to miss out completely, we have organised a virtual party, so I do hope to see you all very soon – see back page for details.

Where there is hope there is light, so remember that life will return to normality and I look forward to seeing you all.

Wishing you, your family and loved ones a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

**Jay Lad,**  
**Managing Director**



## LONDON

SPGL Limited  
4th Floor 33  
Cannon Street  
London EC4M 5SB  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0)20 7084 6873

## BELGIUM

SPGL Limited  
Posthofbrug 6-8  
2600 Berchem  
Belgium  
+32 (0) 3 376 00 15

info@spgl.eu

# MENTAL WELLBEING



**In what has been an extraordinary period in our lives, the Covid pandemic has forced us all to adapt our lifestyle and rethink our daily routines.**

**Working remotely with minimal social interaction, financial strain and in some cases, separation from our family and loved ones has all created pressure and stress on our social, physical and mental wellbeing.**

**Giovanni Mazzella**  
**Client Development Director**

Mental health is not always very well understood and often overlooked. However, good mental health drives our overall behaviour and therefore, during these trying times it is critical that we remain vigilant about our mental state.

In order to promote good mental health, it is vitally important to establish new routines and habits for ourselves, as habits create "Moods" and moods affects "Personality" and personality drives mental wellbeing.

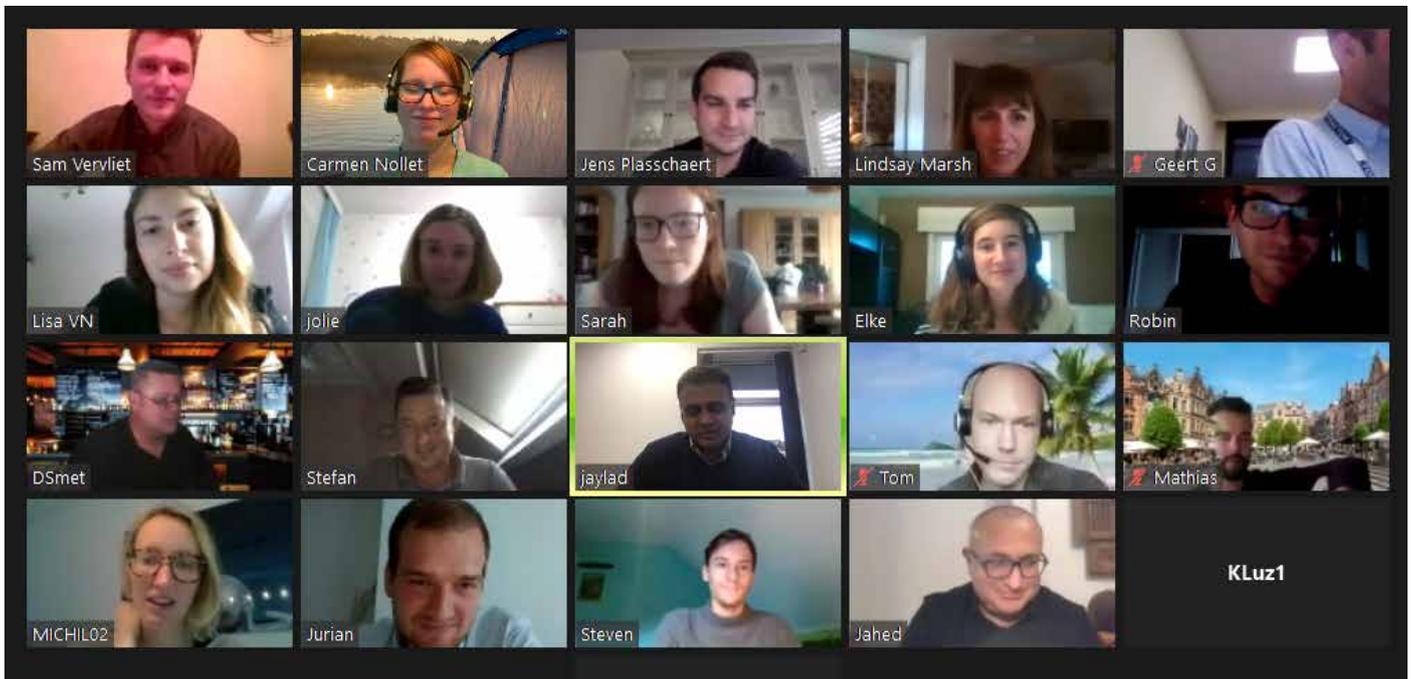
**So how do we create routines and habits that promote good mental wellbeing?**

- 1 Working from home**  
Create a specific, positive workspace that promotes productivity and tranquillity. It's equally important to take regular breaks away from this space and separate worktime from homelife.
- 2 Be active**  
It is easy to fall into unhealthy patterns, that result in us feeling bad about ourselves. Try and create a 10-minute workout in your home or go for a daily walk to boost mental wellbeing. Drinking water is key to invigorate our healthy minds.
- 3 Stay in touch**  
Find new ways of communicating with family, friends, loved ones, colleagues etc and make time to have regular chats.
- 4 Avoid toxic productivity**  
Since the pandemic started and lockdown occurred, there has been a pressure for radical self-improvement, which in some cases can lead to guilt and negative thoughts. Remember, you are all great, exactly as you are today!
- 5 Disconnecting**  
Online activity has obviously surged during isolation. Excessive online activity can fuel anxiety, frustration and FOMO (fear of missing out). Manage your online time and allow your mind to take a break.
- 6 Be kind to yourself and others**  
Why? Kindness is the cornerstone of our individual and collective mental wellbeing. It strengthens relationships and increases feelings of solidarity. A single kind action, can unlock our shared humanity.

One random act of kindness, not only makes us feel good, it may just have a deep and meaningful impact on someone else's life, an impact that we could never have imagined.

# EXPERIENCES

We explore SPGL staff's experiences of the impact of Covid-19 on their working lives.



## Jahed Khawaja

“When the Covid-19 pandemic hit us globally, reports were conflicting about its severity and its long-term effects on human life and on the economy. I must admit that at start, I was an optimist and predicted victory of the medical and drug industries over the Pandemic within a reasonable period of time in spite of the increasingly alarming signals. (Pretty much like the Swine Flu and Mad Cow Disease which subsided fairly quickly in comparison with the Coronavirus).

Subsequent events have proven otherwise. Witnessing the vibrant, the sleepless, and the very crowded cosmopolitan city of London becoming almost like a ghost town was rather worrying. Seeing empty supermarket shelves and scarcity of basic foods and medicines was unprecedented. I had to adapt rapidly to a new work regime. I had to put up with severe restrictions on my travel and on my outgoing life within and outside Britain. I had to get used to social distancing even while walking on the pavement etc.

It was however very rewarding to see that we can adapt and manage change quickly. It is also inspiring to see how we can manage wisely and

efficiently while in crises and sustain good health and continued business success.

In my opinion, people in general got closer to one another and have become more empathetic with each other since the pandemic crises began. Defeating a nasty common disease that affects all people equally from the different corners of the world regardless who they are and what they do has become the ultimate objective.”

## Jolien Vanthielen

“Working during the Corona pandemic isn’t as easy as before. There is less contact with my colleagues and connection with the site.

But, I am really glad that I have been able to continue working. My weeks are busy which gives a balance with the quiet weekends now.

Before Corona, I often went for a drink, dinner or party, but most of all, meeting a lot with friends. These are the people that I miss the most.

If Corona taught me one thing, it is that my friends are really important in my life.”

**After Pfizer began their race for a vaccine, I rapidly became a part of the vaccine's development team: the biggest, most impactful team in the last decade of the pharma industry.**

### Elke Mommaerts

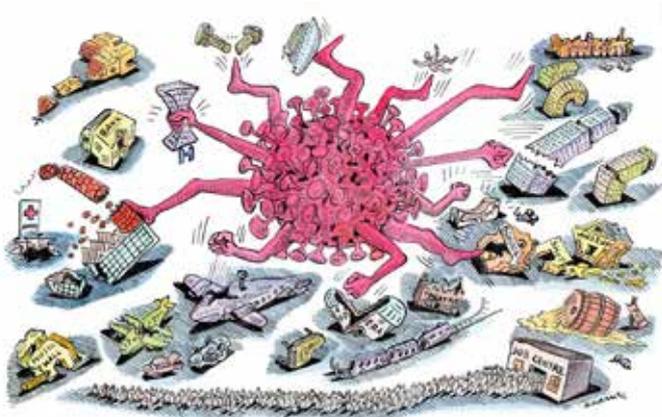
"Before the pandemic I had a very rich social life. Every weekend was filled with family dinners, dates with friends, small events in our hometown, rehearsals with the concert band ... until Covid-19 came. Luckily, we live in the same town as most of our friends and family, so now our weekends are full of walks and garden visits. Although I really miss spontaneous gatherings for a coffee or lunch, I have realised I enjoy this 'slow' way of living."

### Kelly Rymenams

"Down the rabbit hole we go ... An ever faster growing world was placed on hold and freedom was shackled to protect the health of all. A normal shopping day with friends or family visits became a rare event and covering your face in public a must. Although, as with so many things in life, not all was bad. The rediscovery of nature, the better work-life balance due to working from home, the many heart-warming support actions that were organized, ... gives me hope in these dark times. We will stay strong together, awaiting better times at the end of the tunnel."

### Michelle Billen

"Before the pandemic, I saw my friends every week and we would go out to eat or grab some drinks."



This was the part that was affected the most. At first, I was having a rough time with working from home and not being able to see anyone. But now I feel like I am getting used to it and taking up old hobbies again, having the time to read and cooking more often. However, I will be glad when this is over and I will be able to spend some time in person again!"

### Sam Vervliet

"In 2020, my SPGL career launched at Pfizer's cleaning validation department where, in March, lockdown struck like lightning in broad daylight. Whereas before, my spare time was filled with soccer practice and cosy evenings with friends, lockdown policy decided differently."



After Pfizer began their race for a vaccine, I rapidly became a part of the vaccine's development team: the biggest, most impactful team in the last decade of the pharma industry.

So even though the Coronavirus had impacted my social life, my professional career sky-rocketed enormously with a successful story right around the corner. I guess 2020 wasn't too bad after all!"

### Robin Van Havere

"My life in lockdown reminded me that family and friends are always important. It is not easy losing the intimate connection with them."

Luckily, we are as ever creative in finding ways to connect. Even a quick phone call can brighten up someone's day. I had the fortune that I recently started a new project. Which led me to be more on site than home.

Working from home has its benefits and warnings. Because the lines between work and family fade very fast, it is hard to find that balance. And that's why we enjoy the calm moments even more together."



### Lotte Michiels

"In the early days of working from home I experienced the pandemic as a burden: the lack of social contact and later also the combination of work and taking care of the children and doing the housework was very tiring, both mentally and physically. Now I'm used to it and I enjoy our new routine of walking and discovering new playgrounds for the kids during the weekends. We adapted pretty fast and try to make the most of it by taking friends or family on our hikes, making paintings, baking cookies ... we are definitely enjoying a less hectic life these days."

### Kathrin Siguda

"Lockdown the word of 2020 (Collins Dictionary) – really anything related to Coronavirus! I do not miss the 2:30am Monday alarm clock, the travel stress and delayed flights and who knows what Brexit brings. I enjoy the extra private time and what it means to be at home (except my very, very, very noisy neighbours). Do my part to support NHS by doing everything to stay safe, following Covid rules and support the client where needed on Ebola and Covid."

**The chance to work on a COVID-19 project at Pfizer, making me feel like I can contribute more to the world. And that was an encouraging thought.**

### Ilias Janssens

"As a young individual, ready to jump right into the next chapter of my life after graduating, the pandemic decided to take me to a whole different direction than expected. I got the chance to work on something bigger than myself. The chance to work on a Covid-19 project at Pfizer, making me feel like I can contribute more to the world. And that was an encouraging thought."

### Lisa Van Nieuwenhuysen

"I actually like the pandemic – up to a certain point. Not feeling obligated to have a busy schedule and completing life goals as soon as possible, but just living life at your own pace, choosing the people you want in your life and realizing what truly matters to you as a person. I have found a job at J&J, via SPGL, which is something I never thought I would like. I miss getting to know my colleagues in person but on the other hand, the absence of traffic in the morning is a real plus!"

### Steven Van Den Panhuyzen

"Prior to the pandemic, my life was a bit more hectic I must admit. I like to be busy so I was always on the go to meet friends and do other activities outdoors. Now of course, I have much more time for myself as I can't see many people. I find it crucial to stay active so I started running and doing workouts outside. Sleep and rest have always been important to me, but due to the pandemic, I have more time to rest, read, listen to interesting podcasts etc., so I am actually quite grateful for that."

Having said that, I would prefer to have a mixture of both lives, one where I can meet my friends but where I don't feel socially obliged to do so all the time. One where I can go outside whenever I want, but also enjoy the rest that I need and one where I can work both on-site and at home.

Also, having recently joined SPGL, I haven't really met many of my colleagues. I don't even know how some of my colleagues look, so I must say that that's a bit odd."

# SPOTLIGHT

## Ruth Bams

### Quality Engineer

Hi there! I'm Ruth, 28 years old and working for almost two years at SPGL.

#### **Tell us a bit about your background and what you did before you joined SPGL? Why did you take the decision to work in the biopharma industry?**

In 2016, I finished my Master of Sciences and graduated as an Industrial Biochemical engineer. In my master thesis, I worked at the research lab of Prometheus (bone tissue engineering). Oh, by the way, I studied together with Jurian. He's also one of those lovely SPGL consultants! After graduating it took me a while to find a job. To pass time during my job search, I worked as an operator in two companies. One of the company specialized in battery recycling, who were looking for a process engineer. That's how I got my first job, Process Engineer (intervention leader) at Sortbat, a daughter company from Bebat (yes ... from the radio spot 'Samen recycleren, beter voor de natuur' and those little green boxes you get in your letter box). After almost two years of working in the environmental sector, I wanted to return to my field of study and work in the Bio-Pharmaceutical industry. This is when SPGL contacted me.

#### **How do you find working for SPGL from a technical and personal perspective?**

For me, it is interesting to work as a consultant to understand different types of jobs within the Bio-Pharmaceutical industry. Personally, I am really happy I started working at SPGL. They gave me the job and personal boost I needed at that moment.

During my first project I worked as Quality Engineer at Pfizer CSP, together with my lovely SPGL colleague Lotte! For my next project, I am hoping to take on a role as a Validation Engineer or Project Engineer, working the 'other side' of my previous job. It is nice to know that SPGL focuses on your personal experience and growth.

#### **Getting to know Ruth!**

#### **What is your favourite food?**

It has to be chocolate ... I think that would be the most typical Belgian answer.



#### **What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?**

I am one of those busy persons who has a lot to do in her free time. Normally, I would be playing volleyball. But now, due to the Covid pandemic, our volleyball season is put on hold. I play as a setter at Lizards (Dames B), together with Lina by the way. She's also one of those lovely SPGL consultants! In the meantime, I love to go running. Besides that, I am renovating my house together with the help of my lovely friends and family. That's also fairly time consuming. And last but not least, I am a photographer. So, I have the honour to capture people's happiness on picture.

#### **If you were stuck on a desert island and you could have two people with you who would they be?**

I think I would choose my two best friends. Not only for their good survival skills, but also for their amazing company.

#### **If you could live anywhere in the world, where you choose?**

One year ago, I bought my house, which I am renovating to become my home. So, I would probably choose that lovely place. But I don't mind spending my time in Finnish Lapland, were I have lived for about four months during my Erasmus experience. I fell in love with the Scandinavian nature and Finnish culture.

## COLLEAGUE

# FACTS & FIGURES

**As a strong, reliable and trusted partner, our clients are readily reaching out to us to help them with their projects and as a result we have seen steady growth in our business.**

Over the past few months we have successfully secured several new projects with our key customers including Janssen, Pfizer, Novartis, Sanofi, AstraZeneca, UCB/Exyte, CSL Behring and Lonza. These projects are based throughout Europe covering Belgium, The Netherlands, France, Switzerland and the UK.

## BELGIUM HIGHLIGHTS

### Michelle Billen

Michelle joined SPGL as a Bio-Engineer late last year. After successfully completing her project at Novartis, she is now helping our Belgium team with business development and recruitment.

### Jens Plasschaert

Jens became a proud father of his second baby boy, Louca, born 28 Nov 2020. Congratulations!

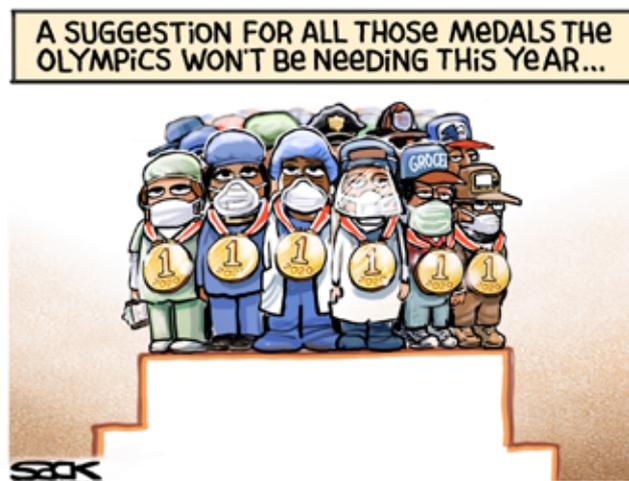
### Client Recognition

#### Sam Vervliet

Sam joined as a graduate Bio-Specialist earlier this year and is currently supporting Pfizer with the manufacturing of the Corona vaccine from a "cleaning validation" perspective. As a young, highly motivated professional, Sam has quickly become a key member of the team and has received great recognition from Pfizer for his dedication, commitment and tremendous work in the race to find the Covid-19 vaccine. Well done Sam and keep up the good work!

### UCB Project Team

In recent months, our team at UCB has grown rapidly with the addition of several Engineers, Managers and Consultants. The UCB project is currently the largest Biotech investment in Belgium and we are very proud to be a preferred partner, working in close collaboration with the Engineering firm.



### Recruitment/Business Development

With the growing investments in new facilities and projects, there has been increased demand for highly skilled engineers and scientists. Recruiting new staff has been challenging, however, we have managed to successfully attract new talent, at all levels, and therefore been able to better serve our existing customers such as Sanofi, J&J, Novartis and Biocartis. Also, due to our historical and close working relationships with these clients, the outlook for 2021 looks even brighter!

## INTERNATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### Giovanni Mazzella

Earlier this year, Giovanni was appointed as our new Director of Client Development for UK & Ireland. Welcome aboard!

### Janssen Cilag, Europe

We have established a small team of consultants with Janssen Cilag Consumer Products, supporting them with their technology transfer projects in France, Germany and Spain.

### Astra Zeneca, UK

SPGL in conjunction with Mace Group is supporting AstraZeneca with the automation design and validation of their new multi-million pharmaceutical facility in Macclesfield, UK.

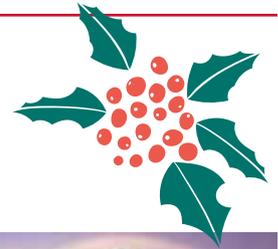
### Lonza Biologics, Switzerland

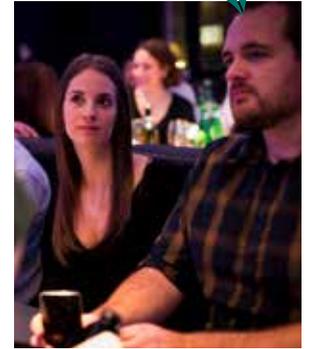
We are also supporting Lonza Biologics with the Commissioning, Qualification & Validation effort associated with their multi-million biotech facility in Visp, Switzerland.

### CSL Behring, Switzerland

SPGL in conjunction with Jacobs Engineering are supporting CSL Behring with the commissioning effort associated with their new Bio-Pharmaceutical facility in Switzerland.

We'll be missing you all this year, so here's a reminder of our 2019 Christmas party in Antwerp.





See you all at our virtual Christmas party on 17th December!



Cordially invites you to our

# CHRISTMAS PARTY

17<sup>th</sup> of December 2020  
18:00 CET



Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88455606029>

There will be a Christmas Hamper with snacks & drinks for you to enjoy during the party



Dress-code: Christmas Sweater

**We look forward to seeing all of you during our virtual Christmas Event!**

- 18:00 Introduction & Drinks
- 18:15 Teams Set-up & Chat
- 18:30 Start of Quiz
- 19:00 Christmas Message & Prize Ceremony

#### QUIZ PRIZES:

**1st Place: €100 Gift voucher per person**

**2nd Place: €50 Gift voucher per person**

**3rd Place: €25 Gift voucher per person**

