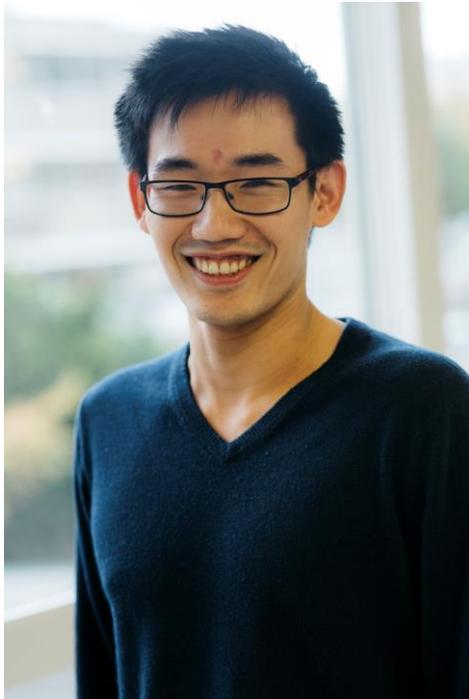


PhD candidate in the spotlight:

Patrick TJOK JOE

LSM - Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy – BMWF



My name is Patrick Tjok Joe, Msc in Biomedical Sciences and currently in my 4th year of my PhD at the laboratory of Molecular and Cellular Therapy (LMCT). I am of Chinese-Surinamese descent and was born in the Netherlands before coming to Belgium in 2001. After my Master thesis I wanted to pursue a PhD in immunology and am currently involved in the evaluation of messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines against HIV and influenza.

Want to know more about Patrick's research topic? Read his full interview [here](#).

Patrick is also involved in several interesting “side-projects”

The fun part of being involved in complex projects is the opportunity to work with several *collaborators* and tackling the issues and challenges together. During my PhD, I have had the pleasure to be involved in the iHIVARNA consortium, which led to the clinical evaluation of a mRNA HIV vaccine, as well as close collaborations with VIB for the preclinical evaluation of a mRNA vaccine against influenza.

In addition, the recent establishment of the *spin-off company* eTheRNA from the lab, gave me the unique position to observe how business knowledge comes into play when you want to transfer research from the bench to the patient's bedside. This then fuelled my interest for the life science industry, which then led to me doing a Master in Management alongside my PhD to better understand the business world.

Together with friends and colleagues, we then launched the *Bionitiative group* in May 2017 to bring this knowledge to both students and academic researchers in order to raise awareness on their career options in industry and provide insight into the principles, business processes and challenges that are required to translate research into innovative care. Currently, we are supported by the

doctoral schools of Life Science and Medicine of the VUB, flanders.bio, the Erasmus hogeschool Brussel, the ULB and I3health institute.

Have there been times where your research wasn't really working out the way you expected it to be? How did you cope with this difficulty? Or: What kept you motivated to continue nevertheless.

Let's just say that the struggle is real when you're doing a PhD. Especially when you have a ratio of 1:10 (if not higher) success to failed experiments, like me. When I started my PhD, these failures really hit hard, but being a more experienced PhD student now (with failure at least) you just have to realize that it's all about the journey. *Scientific work is a lot like finding treasures at the bottom of the ocean. A lot of rocks, very little gold, but an exciting journey on its own.*

Is there something you want to share with the VUB PhD Community?

Looking for a career in the life science industry? Or just curious on how this business operates? Join Bionitiative on the 12th of October for the launch of our flagship Afterwork event series BioTwist. This Afterwork event combines powerful presentations together with delicious drinks and fingerfood for an interdisciplinary, informal and interactive experience.

Meet industry professionals during our networking drink or talk to on-site recruiters for career tips or to jumpstart your next adventure! More information and registration at <http://www.vub.ac.be/events/2017/biotwist> or connect with us on Facebook or LinkedIn at Bionitiative.

Were there unexpected situations wherein skills (...) your learned via your research or doctoral school trainings came in handy?

I feel that during the PhD, you obtain a lot of transferable skills such as the ability to absorb a lot of information in a short period of time as well as figuring things out relatively quickly. This ability helped me a lot for example when I started the Master in Management despite not having any background in business or economics.

Furthermore, the ability to keep going despite failure is a handy skill to have in any situation.