



**Name:** Rodrigo Bacigalupe, PhD

**Position:** Associate Director

**Affiliation:** GSK

**Location:** Rixensart, Belgium

**Pronouns:** He/Him

Please briefly describe your current role in your position

*I contribute to the scientific strategy of various vaccine and drug projects through microbial genomics and microbiome research activities, and I also lead a small team of computational biologists.*

What is your terminal and/or current position in academia?

*Postdoc*

How did you hear about your current position? Was it a career option that you were aware about during your educational process?

*I was contacted by my first manager who was scouting for a role they were about to open. I was always aware that the industry was a career option*

How did you end up working at your current affiliation?

*I found the position and the team to be truly fascinating, so I decided to apply for it.*

How long have you been working at your current affiliation?

*>2 year*

What type of position is your current job?

*Hybrid (In-Person & Remote)*

Is your role more a managerial or individual contributor role?

*It is really a mix of both, and I enjoy having the two sides.*

What are the defined roles of your position?

*Multiple, from leading a team of computational biologists and associated managerial activities, to contributing towards vaccine projects by designing scientific studies, performing microbiome or microbial genomics analysis, collaborating with scientists, interacting with other departments and functions in the company or externally, etc.*

What are your day to day tasks that you perform in your position?

*Days can vary significantly depending on the projects I am working on. However, my typical activities include data analysis, discussions with team members, reading literature, writing scientific reports, presenting at internal or external meetings, communication with a range of stakeholders, etc.*



What do you like best about your job?

*Working with exceptional individuals and connecting with diverse profiles and expertise in a team setting is something I truly enjoy. And while it may sound cliché, I find truly rewarding to think that our work will hopefully contribute to the prevention or treatment of diseases.*

What do you dislike about your job?

*I also like we stay focused on what truly matters but as a scientist driven by curiosity, I occasionally come across intriguing scientific questions that I cannot explore further because they may not be relevant for the project's objectives.*

If your job is outside of academia, what is similar and what is different about your current job and your terminal position in academia?

*Working within an R&D organization and in a scientific role can be very similar to academic research. However, I feel in industry work is truly done in teams, staying focused on what matters and ultimately thinking of the patients we serve. Another difference is the multi-disciplinary nature of teams, which enables connections with colleagues across many functions. This collaborative environment fosters continuous learning and provides substantial support for day-to-day activities.*

How did your microbial ecology education prepare you for your current position?

*Microbial ecology is key for understanding the role of microbial pathogens in human health and many aspects are needed in vaccine research. For instance, studying microbial communities associated with diseases can identify microbes that contribute to the development of disease and represent appropriate targets for a vaccine. Or understanding the evolution and gene content variation of microbial populations is essential for selecting the right antigens that can be targeted through a vaccine to elicit a protective immune response against pathogens. In the vaccines field there are plenty of examples where microbial ecology is applied.*

What skills do you wish you learned during your educational process that would better prepare you for your current role (e.g. machine learning, management skills, etc.)?

*In my case, I would have liked to delve deeper into Immunology. I have always been highly interested in the biology of the microbes, understanding their evolution, transmission, and interactions between them, but not as much on the host. I had to revise and extensively read books and manuscripts to be able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the disease areas I began working on.*

Do you have any recommendation and/or tips for early career microbial ecologists looking for jobs similar to yours?

*I would recommend them to keep their LinkedIn profiles up to date as hiring managers may be scouting for potential candidates. Additionally, attending industry-focused conferences is a great opportunity to connect with professionals in the field. Also apply for positions even if you don't meet all the listed requirements, you may be the best candidate of all.*