

CNIO WOMEN IN SCIENCE OFFICE

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The CNIO Women in Science Office (WISE) was created at the end of 2012 with the aim to give visibility to women, to promote institutional awareness on gender equality, and to try to promote and support women in their professional careers. The WISE Office is composed of CNIO volunteers from different areas of the Centre, people who believe there is still a real need for action to be undertaken to ensure gender equality in the research career. Recent studies from different organisations in Spain and the European Union still display the typical ‘scissors’ graphic regarding the distribution of gender along the career ladder, together with an approximate 20% salary gap between men and women. Furthermore, women are still underrepresented as recipients of prestigious scientific awards; as an example, another year has gone by without a single Nobel Prize, in any scientific discipline, being awarded to a woman. The issue does not seem to be that women are not present in academia; the latest data show that 55% of women pursue university studies. Although it is worrying to see the lack of female students in the

so-called ‘STEM’ careers, they are still well represented at the pre- and post-doctoral stages. However, this representation drops to a meagre 25% of women at the Principal Investigator level, and it is even lower at the levels of Department Directors and beyond.

When experts analyse the data and try to identify the causes, one factor that keeps coming up repeatedly is the existence of cultural stereotypes between men and women. Since those stereotypes need to be challenged at an early age, the Office has decided to, from 2016 onwards, open up its seminars to schools and high schools with 2 main purposes: to make teenagers aware of those gender issues, and to promote equality and hopefully vocations among young girls to enter the scientific career.

We are certain that within the CNIO community, we all need to continue working together, with the other CNIO administrative offices as well as the Works Council, in order to reach our common

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goal, namely, to maintain the CNIO’s high level of scientific productivity and to ultimately make it an outstanding centre to work where gender barriers are completely eliminated and there is a sensible balance between work and life.

The Office consists of two working groups:

- Work/Life Balance – aimed to promote and support initiatives to help improve the delicate balance between professional and personal life at the CNIO.
- Seminars and Events – aimed to raise awareness of gender issues, and provide networking opportunities to all CNIO researchers.

In 2016, the WISE Office was again able to invite and welcome several top female leaders from different areas to tell us about their experience with gender issues, giving our young scientists ideas and advice on how to best overcome some of the hurdles that they may face during their careers, while also giving CNIO researchers the opportunity to expand their networks.

Some of the seminars organised by the WISE Office during 2016 are:

- EXPEDITION TO SUCCESS: Achieving goals and overcoming difficulties. Edurne Pasaban. Mountaineer, Tolosa, Spain. March 8th.
- *Recuerdos y Olvidos Feministas*. María Teresa Fernández de la Vega. President of the Women for Africa Foundation, former Vice President of Spain. May 10th.
- *Las Sinsombrero, sin ellas la historia no está completa*. Tánia Balló. Documentalist. Barcelona, Spain. June 28th.
- Marie Skłodowska-Curie: Medical Physics pioneer and inspiration to female scientists. Dr Guadalupe Martín Martín. Medical Physicist. Fuenlabrada University Hospital. Madrid, Spain. November 7th.

“Within the CNIO community, we continue to work together towards the elimination of gender barriers, the empowerment of women in Science and society and the promotion of scientific vocations among young girls. Scientific Excellence can only be fully achieved through gender equality.”

Also, in November, we hosted the itinerant exhibition on the life and work of two-time Nobel Laureate, Marie Skłodowska-Curie, who is still an inspiration to women scientists. We put together six organised visits to the exhibition combined with a tour to different CNIO laboratories for students and the general public; these were a great success.

Since 1901, the year when Alfred Nobel established the awards bearing his name, only 17 women have been honoured with the recognition in the scientific field and unfortunately, many were left out despite their now widely recognised merits. We wish to contribute towards changing those numbers, and so we are working on developing different mentorship and leadership programmes for CNIO researchers.