One of the key missions of the CNIO is to ensure the most productive scientific environment for our personnel in training. This is a main commitment of our faculty, since over 60% of the work force at our institution are undergraduate students, postdoctoral and staff investigators. We wanted to celebrate this Lab Day with CNIO alumni. We were fortunate (and proud) of seeing how Marta Shabbahi, co-founder of the CNIO PhD Students Association, and Donatello from Cristina Mayor (trained in Oscar Fernández-Capetillo’s Group), on the quite successful projects she is developing in her new laboratory at the Institute for Research in Biomedicine (IRB, Barcelona). We were also inspired by Damia Fierro, trained in the Melanoma Group in our Centre, seeing how he has set up multiple and highly successful start-up companies and a hedge fund, as well as the not for profit Columbus Foundation (USA) in support of children with rare diseases. Not less impressive was the wonderful experience that we will certainly repeat in the future.

Another highlight of the year was our Annual CNIO Lab Day, in 2020 celebrating its 10th anniversary. This also took place online, but was quite special. An online ePoster session was set up, whereby a record high of over 85 communications were discussed among CNIO members so that they could showcase their projects and get feedback. Some of the “best-to-come” in each of the scientific programmes of the Centre were selected for video presentations and also for oral discussion. Importantly, we set up a “research kit” with informative material that was mailed to over 250 registered guests so they could perform an experiment in their own homes, following and talking live with our scientists. It was a wonderful experience that we will certainly repeat in the future.

We also kept our outreach activities active, one of the most exciting being the Marie Sklodowska-Curie European Researchers’ Night. This was our seventh participation in an event happening in various countries in Europe and in multiple centres in Spain. Our contribution at the CNIO was “Meet a Scientist, Become a Scientist”, this time in a virtual format. The event was a tour-de-force from an organisational perspective, but truly rewarding. In brief, we set up a “research kit” with informative material that was mailed to over 250 registered guests so they could perform an experiment in their own homes, following and talking live with our scientists. It was a wonderful experience that we will certainly repeat in the future.

One of the key missions of the CNIO is to ensure the most productive scientific environment for our personnel in training. This is a main commitment of our faculty, since over 60% of the work force at our institution are undergraduate students, postdoctoral and postdoctoral fellows, medical residents and a broad spectrum of visiting scientists. We also have a variety of exchange and visitor programmes. In this context, we are most grateful to the Fundación Jesús Serra, for their continuous support to strengthen career development programmes at the CNIO.

As for other research centres, and as is the case for the population at large, the COVID-19 pandemic has represented a challenge for the CNIO. We had to set safety measures, reorganise our teams and prioritise efforts but, still, our commitment to our investigators remained undeterred. After a short break, our weekly Progress Report seminars by students and postdocs proceeded in a virtual format, allocating time and resources for formal feedback sessions afterwards. Distinguished speaker seminars were also reinstated, so CNIO personnel could attend in a remote manner. We recognised, however, that this SARS-CoV2 situation took a personal toll. Therefore, we organised a Meet-the-Expert online session with a professional coach precisely on the topic of “Recognising and overcoming stress at the workplace”.

The Lab Day proceeded with additional Awards from the Dean’s Office for the Best Oral presentations and the Best Posters. The closure included yet another additional Award for T-Shirt Design, this year to Alberto Cascón for an emotive “Imagine a world without research”. It was beautiful allegory that illustrated the impact of science on human health (whether in SARS-CoV2 infections or cancer).

In summary, the COVID-19 pandemic certainly impacted our Groups personally and scientifically, but the commitment at CNIO is to continue being at the forefront of research in cancer, and to strive in our commitment to promote our young investigators and help them succeed.