2021 was undoubtedly a year in which the hottest scientific issue in the news was the Covid-19 pandemic and all SARS-CoV-2-related topics. The Communications Department at the CNIO worked hard to draw attention to the latest developments in cancer research – a disease that continues to be among the leading causes of death worldwide. However, honouring its commitment to public service, the CNIO conducted Covid-19-related research, and the Communications Department publicised the projects carried out in this area, such as the blocking mechanisms of the coronavirus infection and the treatment of associated conditions.

CNIO’s scientific news attracted the attention of the main media in Spain and other countries, such as France Soir and Forbes in Mexico, and also hit the front pages of local and national newspapers, such as El Mundo and Faro de Vigo. News items included the discovery of the main genes that increase the risk of breast cancer (Javier Benítez, Anna González-Neira and Ana Osorio, NEJM); a potential new treatment for kidney fibrosis (Maria A. Blasco, Nature Aging); the discovery of a molecular switch that allows the body to adapt to fasting (Alejo Efeyan, Nature Communications); a drug already in use in humans that corrects obesity in mice (Nabil Djouder, Nature Metabolism); the finding of the cause of neuronal death in a large proportion of familial ALS patients (Óscar Fernández-Capetillo, The EMBO Journal); and a mechanism involved in the early stages of melanoma metastasis (Héctor Peinado, Nature Cancer).

For the occasion of World Cancer Day in February, the CNIO launched #CNIOStopCancer, an awareness campaign aimed at raising funds for cancer research. This year’s campaign had the support of culture and sports celebrities like actor Carlos Hipólito, mountaineer Edurne Pasaban, and World and Enduro Champion Laia Sanz. The campaign received broad media coverage, with impacts on Canal 24 Horas, Telemadrid and other TV channels.

In September, the CNIO celebrated World Cancer Research Day with an open public event entitled “Vaccines Against Covid-19 and Cancer Control”. The event, supported by “la Caixa” Foundation, featured a keynote lecture by virologist Mariano Esteban, who highlighted the role of research in the fight against SARS-CoV-2 and its impact on the study of other diseases like cancer. Hundreds of users were able to follow the lecture via live streaming, and it appeared in leading media like Canal 24 Horas and the EFE news agency.

CNIO Arte, a ground-breaking project that explores the common ground where scientists and artists act and interact was again greatly successful in 2021. The project featured two exceptional figures in this 4th edition: computational biologist Sarah Teichmann and artist Daniel Canogar. The spectacular work created by Canogar (consisting of 12 LED screens, computers, cables and metallic structures) based on Teichmann's research was featured in major media outlets, including ABC Cultural, El País and RTVE. The media impact of this initiative, organised with the support of Fundación Banco Santander, is vital to raise funds for cancer research through the sale of the artworks created by the artists who take part in CNIO Arte.

In alignment with the EU Directive to replace, reduce and refine the use of animals for scientific purposes, in 2021 the CNIO signed a cooperation agreement with Fondation Franz Weber to engage young PhD researchers in research projects of excellence that use alternative methods to animal testing. The agreement was announced by media like the news agency EFE at the national level.

These are some of the initiatives in which the CNIO Communications Department participated, adding value to the endeavours and achievements of the Centre’s researchers and highlighting the importance of science as a driving force to build a better society.
PRESS CLIPPINGS

1. La Razón, January 17, 2021
2. El Diario.es, January 21, 2021
3. La Tarde, Canal 24h, February 1, 2021
4. Faro de Vigo, February 23, 2021
5. Forbes, March 12, 2021
6. El Correo Gallego, April 7, 2021
7. La Voz de Galicia, April 12, 2021
8. ABC, April 16, 2021
10. La Razón, July 4, 2021
11. News Medical Life Sciences, July 8, 2021
12. El Mundo, July 16, 2021
13. El Español, August 23, 2021
14. France Soir, August 30, 2021
15. El Faro, Cadena Ser, September 6, 2021
16. La Tarde, Canal 24h, September 24, 2021
17. El Periódico, September 26, 2021
18. National Geographic TV, October 4, 2021
In 2021, Spain’s Minister for Health, Carolina Darias, held a technical meeting with the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella Kyriakides, during a visit to the Spanish National Cancer Research Centre (CNIO). The meeting was also attended by Raquel Yotti, Director of the Spanish Institute of Health Carlos III (ISCIII); María A. Blasco, CNIO Director; and María Jesús Lamas, Director of the Spanish Agency of Medicines and Medical Devices (AEMPS). Those appearing in the picture are from left to right: María Jesús Lamas, Stella Kyriakides, Carolina Darias, Raquel Yotti, María Blasco and Cristóbal Belda (Director of ISCIII). July 9, 2021.

Although the use of animals is necessary for the study of certain pathological processes, the development of techniques that are alternatives to animal experimentation will make it possible to reduce the use of experimental animals and replace them with these techniques. That was made clear at the “III Workshop on Philosophy and Science: The use of animals in science. Ethical and epistemic problems and alternatives” that we organised with the support of Banco Sabadell Foundation. This meeting took place at the CNIO and was attended by more than 300 people who registered online. Scientists Manuel Valiente, Lluís Montoliu, Raúl Rabadán and Maria A. Blasco debated with philosophers Fabiola Leyton, Marta Tafalla and Guillermo Repetto, and journalist Lucía Arana. November 23, 2021.

On International Women’s Day, the CNIO, IE University and the British Embassy organised the colloquium discussion “Women in Power,” featuring three great leaders in their fields: Mary Beard, Professor of Classics at the University of Cambridge and Princess of Asturias Laureate; Maria Blasco, molecular biologist and Director of the CNIO; and Susana Torres, Professor of Humanities at IE University, along with journalist Fiona Govan as moderator. During the colloquium, which took place via Zoom, these 3 leaders highlighted that, despite the progress made to incorporate women into different social spheres, there is still a long way to go to achieve real equality and outlined the challenges that remain. March 9, 2021.

CNIO participated, for the 11th year in a row, in the European Researchers’ Night, which is funded by the EU Framework Programme for Research & Innovation, Horizon 2020 - Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions. In Madrid, it was promoted by the Department of Education and Research and coordinated by Fundación madri+d. In this special year, the meeting had to be held online, but the distance did not diminish the enthusiasm of the researchers nor that of our 300 attendees, who had a lot of fun conducting a scientific experiment in their homes. September 24, 2021.