The ‘CNIO Friends’ initiative celebrated its first two years of existence at the end of 2016, and it did so by looking towards the future with all the enthusiasm, commitment, and effort it received from its donors. Since its inception, the community of Friends has continuously increased and more and more people decided to renew their commitment, and thereby their loyalty and trust, to the Centre’s scientific research. We closed 2016 with a community of about 800 Friends, in addition to inheritances and legacies from individuals who decided to support the CNIO’s cutting-edge research; our challenge now is to get our message across more effectively with every announcement we make.

In 2016, thanks to our Friends, we launched the first three cancer research postdoctoral contracts after a competitive assessment process based on scientific excellence. The first two were allocated to sponsor the researchers Paulina Gómez, from the Genetic and Molecular Epidemiology Group, and Vera Pancaldi, from the Structural Computational Biology Group. The former will be working on an international project aimed at analysing the relationship between multiple risk factors and pancreatic cancer, one of the cancers with the highest mortality rates today; the latter will be studying how DNA structures affect tumour aggressiveness, among other factors.

Both researchers stressed “the crucial importance of philanthropy as a driving force in scientific research and their surprise about the difference between the Anglo-Saxon system - where philanthropy is fully integrated - and our country’s system.” Indeed, philanthropy is a sign of commitment to a cause, as well as a tool for individuals and society in general to support cancer research regardless of the economic circumstances.

The third contract came from the Juegaterapia Foundation and their famous ‘baby pelones’ toys, by which they underlined their commitment to childhood cancer research. Last June, the CNIO welcomed one of the most acclaimed popular music stars in our country, Alejandro Sanz, to commemorate the collaboration between the Juegaterapia Foundation and our Centre. Thanks to this grant, the CNIO will host a researcher in 2017 in the Epithelial Carcinogenesis Group who, together with the CNIO-Hospital Niño Jesús Clinical Trials Unit, will study neuroblastomas – the most common tumour type in the first 2 years of life – and tumours of the central nervous system, the most common solid tumours in children.

Businesses also joined our community of Friends in 2016. Indeed, the CNIO signed a collaborative agreement with ASISA Vida in relation to a new product launched by the insurance company that offers specific coverage for gynaecological cancer. Thanks to the insurance company’s commitment to this cause, 5% of the premiums of this product will be donated to the ‘CNIO Friends’ initiative to fund cancer research. Another agreement was formalised with Grupo CLH, the leading company in Spain for the transportation and storage of oil products.

Our CNIO volunteers are another highly valuable asset. Dozens of them came out last November to meet new Friends at the La Vaguada Shopping Centre, where they installed a mini-laboratory to introduce the initiative to the residents and visitors of the popular Barrio del Pilar district in Madrid, where the centre is located. This initiative was one of many examples that helped raise funds for research: there was the event organised by the secondary school IES La Encantá de Rojales, Alicante, consisting of a charity run in May to raise funds for CNIO’s research; the Edinburgh Marathon for which participants put on their running shoes in name of cancer research; and the charity tuna music festival at the Madrid Polytechnic University. Thanks to all of you for supporting our work!

The latest cancer survival figures are encouraging – some types of cancer, such as breast cancer, now exceed 80% – however, there is still a long and difficult road ahead. Our Friends are key in the effort of finding new solutions to fight this disease. Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to each and every one of them.

“CNIO FRIENDS

Our Friends: a key partner in our mission of conquering cancer.”
‘CNIO FRIENDS’ POSTDOCTORAL CONTRACTS

Paulina Gómez is an expert in Genetic and Molecular Epidemiology. Her research mainly focuses on PanGenEU, a large European study involving six countries that delves into the relationship between multiple risk factors and pancreatic cancer, one of the carcinomas with the highest mortality rate today. These studies are aimed at defining the population with the greatest risk of suffering from pancreatic cancer, and thereby facilitate the early diagnosis of the disease.

“CNIO Friends is crucial for raising public awareness about the importance of research and for fostering the responsibility we all have for actively participating in our future.”

Vera Pancaldi is an expert in Computational Biology. Specifically, she focuses on the study of how the DNA structure affects tumour aggressiveness and how it helps us to understand the context and impact of genetic modifications in patients. These studies could be used as a basis for improving tumour diagnosis and for developing personalised therapies in the clinic.

“This financial contribution has enabled me to ensure the continuity of this project without having to worry about looking for new external funding; it gives me the necessary independence to develop this research.”

At the beginning of the year, the CNIO organised the first recruitment programme funded by donations from the ‘CNIO Friends’ philanthropic initiative. After a thorough selection process of the candidates, the first two grants were allocated to sponsor the researchers Paulina Gómez, from the Genetic and Molecular Epidemiology Unit, and Vera Pancaldi, from the Structural Computational Biology Group.

In July, the Juegaterapia Foundation, which helps children suffering from cancer, signed a collaboration agreement with the ‘CNIO Friends’ initiative to fund a 100,000 euro grant that will be dedicated to research projects related to childhood cancer. Alejandro Sanz came to the CNIO as Juegaterapia’s Goodwill Ambassador to commemorate this agreement. The singer visited the facilities and obtained first-hand information on the research being carried out. “The fight against cancer is a war and I am a soldier”, he said during his visit to the CNIO.
One of the most exciting events held in 2016 was the ‘Jornada Amigos del CNIO’, which took place in mid-May and welcomed our donors/CNIO Friends in order to bring CNIO science closer to them. Our donors spent an afternoon with us and once again demonstrated their great enthusiasm for being part of the important mission of conquering cancer.

Last but not least, we would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the anonymous benefactors who have donated their legacies to support cancer research at the CNIO (around €361,000 this year), in doing so they have contributed to society for generations to come.
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DONATIONS TO THE CNIO

505,000€
TOTAL CNIO DONATIONS 2016

100,000€
ATREMEDIA
2015 100,000€

248,000€
CNIO FRIENDS
2016 64,000€
2015 100,000€
2014 4,000€

100,000€
LEGACIES
2016 381,000€
2015 400,000€
2014 23,000€

44,000€
DONATIONS BEFORE LAUNCH OF CNIO FRIENDS
2014 10,000€
2013 25,000€
2012 3,000€
2011 6,000€