



Report of the GSCN non-PI Meeting

Online, 22 Sept. 2020, 15:30 – 19:30 h

General comments:

This year's non-PI meeting went also in full-online mode. That was a particularly tough yet interesting challenge for the organizers, as - akin to the Annual Meeting – this was the first time to be in this format and we (the organizers) were uncertain until the last moments how well (or bad) it would develop. Happily, the meeting took place without major difficulties and in even acceded our expectations. The four hours long get-together was planned to allow open discussion between junior scientist in an informal setting about technical and conceptual challenges in the fields of stem cell research in which they research, as well as methodological troubleshooting. Participants exchanged the main ideas of their research project, critical information about protocols and procedures, latest technologies, reagents for cell culture and molecular biology. Further emphasis of the meeting included networking, cooperation building, and career planning. In particular, it was very interesting to learn from our peers about their future plans, their experiences and strategies at different points in their careers.

Thirteen persons registered for the meeting. This means that the number of participants was actually to the previous year, indicating that despite using an online format, numbers did not change (as was feared). Nine scientists came from research groups in Germany, and the rest (four) from Switzerland. This is, in contrast to last year (1 participant from Switzerland only), a notorious increase, which could mean that the (non-PI) meeting is slowly getting more international reach. Certainly, this could also mean that more researches from abroad would be willing to join if physical presence is not strictly necessary. This year, all attendees were in the category PhD student or post-doc, but unfortunately no starting PI and undergraduate students. We were joined, however, by a post-doc working in the pharmaceutical company, that enriched the meeting with interesting and detailed information about the life as a scientist in the industry. Furthermore, we could not resist comparing how different people and research institutions reacted to COVID-19 pandemic, and how the new normality looks like for each one. Notably, within Germany and Switzerland some institutions had more strict measurements completely stopping all laboratory work, while others were more flexible allowing scientists to still perform experiments (with limitations of course), showing the heterogeneity/broad spectrum of science not only on scientific but also politic level. In summary, the information acquired by the participants through the meeting is an absolute invaluable good essential in the career of junior scientists, and will certainly help them and their labs progressing in their objectives.

We ended the meeting with an online escape room game. Here, five participants joined to find the code for a lost recipe of a vaccine.

All in all, the participants reflected a good format and timing. The number of persons for a full-online meeting was adequate, allowing a fluent communication by all members. We estimate that four hours in the afternoon fitted perfectly, as aiming a longer online-meeting with more people could have had an adverse effect and call for abstaining for joining the

meeting in first place. However, ideally and logically as many people as possible should join as this could certainly further enrich the meeting. In the future, to encourage the participation of more people while keeping a reasonable extent, one could enable researchers to join remotely if they cannot join physically.

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