

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Uliana Gout

Interviewed by The PMFA Journal

We were delighted to catch up with **Dr Uliana Gout**, President of the British College of Aesthetic Medicine (BCAM), about her career and plans for the College.

Can you tell us a little bit about why you initially chose to study medicine?

I have always been fascinated by science and medicine, and helping people feel better in themselves and live a healthier life. I come from a family of doctors, surgeons and dentists so choosing medicine was perhaps an easy decision given I was immersed in it from a very young age. I am particularly fascinated by evidence-based-medicine (EBM) and have always tried to combine my clinical work with research, teaching and publications – something which I enjoy immensely. Innovation, safety and guidelines are concepts that stimulate me and I enjoy exploring methods of optimising the way we deliver patient care in the sphere of aesthetic medicine.

And, having qualified as a doctor, what led you into the field of aesthetic medicine?

I have always been intrigued by the concept of where science meets art in the world of medicine, and aesthetic medicine offered a perfect platform to explore this. Furthermore, as mentioned above, my passion is evidence-based medicine. When I came across the field of aesthetic medicine, it excited me hugely given it was, and still is in many ways, quite a nascent specialty and backed by a very innovative, dynamic and fast-paced industry – hence plenty of space for research, innovation and education!

I am also a social animal; I love meeting people from different cultures and different parts of the world, whether they be patients in my clinic or colleagues from around the world at our global events. When we come together, we brainstorm and learn from each other. We look at all the studies published and search for the little gaps, and we try to discover how we can fill those gaps. I love aesthetic medicine and am hugely proud of our community in the UK and abroad!

What has been the best piece of advice you have received in your career and what advice would you offer to those following in your footsteps?

The best piece of advice I received was to always read the research before making decisions to ensure safety and efficacy is optimised, which ties into the EBM concept. Being dynamic and innovative at the same time is important given our specialty is fast-paced and growing at significant speed, but then again always tying it to the evidence. This aligns with BCAM's philosophy that we have implemented this year of leading with fact not opinion.



Your field is evolving all the time; what do you think have been the most exciting developments in recent years?

The wealth of evidence-based medicine we have accumulated in recent years has been astounding and it is one of my passions to collaborate closely with my UK and international colleagues to spearhead this pathway to enable us to think more laterally, providing optimised safety and efficacy with our treatment offerings. With that we are much clearer about multi-modal treatments and how to position them together in a safe and effective protocol in one setting.

Our understanding of anatomy in relation to aesthetic medicine also continues to expand at a fast pace which is so important for us, particularly when it comes to injectable treatments.

The filler arena has also seen a dramatic shift in the way we

perform treatments – namely in the rise of cannulas versus needles. With that we are also much more holistic in our pan-facial approach and not simply chasing lines and folds.

You took over as President of BCAM early in 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic hit; how was it taking on the role in such challenging circumstances?

COVID-19 has presented the biggest challenge in BCAM's history, and we were in lockdown just two months after I became President. What a baptism of fire!

However, regardless of the situation and the multitude of issues, I was determined to take on the 'COVID-19 challenge' as we refer to it at BCAM. It was crucial for us to listen to our 400 members, to support them, stay connected and to provide them with facts not opinion (a tag line we adopted this year) to enable them to make the right choices for their practices and patients. We kept it simple and streamlined and made sure our members knew we were there for them at this unprecedented time.

How has BCAM adapted to support its members over the last year?

Like most organisations, everything has been virtual but we've still been able to offer personal support to our members and we've continued with regular updates and events throughout the year to stay connected. Our key focus was to ensure our members received the latest facts and evidence during these very unsettling months – and this has been noted and welcomed by everyone.

Our inaugural virtual conference in September was a good example of that. For the very first time we offered a six-day event which attracted over 300 delegates – something we were absolutely thrilled with. We did this to ensure everyone would be able to connect and bond over an extended period on a virtual platform. This was a very welcome initiative with lots of positive feedback. We also uploaded the conference sessions online for our members so that they could keep learning throughout the year.

We are incredibly proud to be working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Health Improvement Scotland (HIS), and to have founded the BCAM Aesthetic Medicine Regulatory and Advisory Group (AMRAG) which has allowed us to keep actively engaged in the latest developments with government and regulation. Not only that, but we have also forged a very successful working relationship with QC Robert Kellar who offered BCAM guidance on the government legislature throughout 2020 – something of great value to our members.

Our office staff have been at the end of the phone throughout to take calls, and we've held members-only advice sessions on Zoom – with record attendance numbers – whenever government guidance has changed and we've needed to provide updates.

We also held our first BCAM coffee morning-style event in November with Dr John Curran and a tax expert unravelling the complexities of VAT in our arena, and we plan to continue these throughout 2021.

Finally, we have invested time and energy in building the BCAM team. We are proud to have recruited a Head of Communications, the lovely Claire Britcher, who will help us develop our outreach to the general public as part of our charitable status. We also welcomed two new trustees – Dr Bhavjit Kaur and Dr Aggie Zatonska – to help us further develop our BCAM strategy.

2021 brings the 20th anniversary of BCAM – what do you have planned for the year and would you encourage other aesthetic practitioners to get involved?

What an exciting milestone in BCAM's history! We plan to kick off the 20th anniversary celebrations with the unveiling of the College's first new logo for 20 years, so make sure you keep an eye on our social media in early 2020. We'll also have a completely new website which will modernise all our processes, enabling members to access and update their own profiles and share public information about their practices and services. The website will be a one-stop shop for everything BCAM does, and we'll have some special 20th anniversary merchandise on offer too! We want the general public to know that BCAM is spearheading aesthetic medicine and we want to celebrate our wonderful members!

We will also be celebrating the College's rich history and its incredible founder members and other key stakeholders who really were the driving force behind aesthetic medicine in the UK. People like Patrick Bowler, Rita Rakus, John Curran, Paul Cronin, Rajiv Grover and others will share their stories of the early days of BCAM in a special section on the BCAM website.

This year we have affirmed our relationship with the DHSC and will continue to work closely to ensure our members receive the latest recommendations and news – something that has been greatly appreciated this year. We are committed to lead with facts and data, something we have focused on so carefully and closely this year and which so many of our members and colleagues have commended.

Not to forget our national data collecting audit – which we are sharing with DHSC and other key stakeholders to ensure our specialty and industry has the latest insights of the innovations, challenges and opportunities arising year on year.

We're also planning on expanding our international relations, educational conferences, as well as a range of events to engage and celebrate our community and lots more – it's going to be a fun-packed year!

And finally, if you have any spare time, what do you do to relax?

It's quite simple now, especially with the strange COVID-19 situation we're all faced with – I love long countryside walks with my two mini-schnauzers Mabel & Bubble. I also love painting which has been a long-standing hobby of mine. I've recently taken to oil painting still life pictures – hugely therapeutic particularly this year when we're on back-to-back Zoom meetings!

I love portraiture too and I think that's another reason why aesthetic medicine resonates so much with me. In fact, I've come to realise quite a lot of our colleagues in this specialty enjoy creative hobbies – and I suspect that lends itself nicely to our profession where science meets art!

Many thanks for your time!