

IN CONVERSATION WITH

# Dr Uliana Gout

We recently caught up with **Dr Uliana Gout**, re-elected President of the British College of Aesthetic Medicine (BCAM), about the College's 20th anniversary year, its plans for 2022 and how it has supported members throughout the pandemic.

## Are you enjoying being BCAM President so far?

I have been incredibly proud to be BCAM President over the past two years at a time of exciting change and growth, not least rising to the COVID-19 challenge and providing BCAM members with advice based on facts not opinion – our buzz phrase throughout the pandemic.

The first lockdown started just two months after I became President, so we were thrown into an unprecedented situation where our members relied on us more than ever for help and guidance. The BCAM Board and Professional Services Team pulled together to ensure members were fully supported and we looked to leading experts and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to provide information that they could rely on. This was important when there was so much uncertainty and so many opinions being shared.

It has been amazing to lead an organisation that really stepped up to the plate during the pandemic. Many of our members – and indeed Board Trustees – volunteered as COVID-19 vaccinators or returned to the NHS frontline to help tackle the relentless onslaught of the virus so they were very much in the thick of it throughout. Being part of the BCAM community at this time and leading the Board through one of its biggest-ever challenges has been a real honour.

## 2021 saw the 20th anniversary of BCAM; how has this been marked?

Celebrating BCAM's 20th anniversary has been such an incredible milestone and we've been thrilled to be able to work with some of the College's founding members throughout the year on some exciting projects.

The 20th anniversary has been a time of transformation and modernisation for the College. We set up the BCAM Founding Members Branding, Website and Logo Committee to help develop a new logo and branding – the first redesign in the College's history – and launched a new website with improved member interactivity and public education.

Improved communication and connectivity were two of our key aims in our anniversary year and this has certainly been achieved through the refreshed fortnightly members' newsletter written by BCAM Communications Coordinator Claire Everett and the appointment of new Membership and Education Coordinator Helen Calkin who has forged strong relationships, especially with members sitting the first-ever BCAM examination which was launched in September.

The Masters-level MBCAM exam is the culmination of two years' work, led by consultant plastic and aesthetic surgeon Dalvi Humzah, who chairs the BCAM Examination Board, and



coordinated by BCAM Trustee Dr Catherine Fairris. The exam is the new progression pathway from Associate to Full Member and sets the standard for aesthetic medicine in the UK – what a fantastic way to mark the College's 20th year!

BCAM's global connectivity has been further extended this year with membership of UIME (Union Internationale de Médecine Esthétique), a prestigious international association comprising 32 member countries, an initiative led by BCAM Trustee Dr Aggie Zatonska. The BCAM Regulation, Ethics and Professional Standards Committee was formed, chaired by Dr John Curran, and BCAM has been reaching out to stakeholders including the JCCP and MHRA to discuss regulatory issues.

The BCAM 20th Anniversary Mindfulness and Wellbeing Initiative was launched to help members cope with the many challenges presented by COVID-19. Wellbeing questions were added to doctors' appraisals to provide an outlet for them to share their concerns and to allow BCAM to respond to their needs. This initiative was led by BCAM Trustee Dr Bhavjit Kaur, who is also a BCAM appraiser.

The 2021 BCAM Virtual Annual Conference in September was an outstanding success, attracting record numbers of delegates who enjoyed a wide variety of presentations plus panel discussions on complications and regulation of the aesthetic medicine sector. BCAM Events and Partnerships Coordinator Dawn Larcombe did an exceptional job to pull together a fantastic array of speakers and sponsors for the event.

We once again conducted the Annual Clinical Review, the only data collection exercise of its kind in the UK, and the College embarked on significant new stakeholder engagement in 2021, building relationships with others in the sector and working together on key issues. This will continue throughout 2022.

We wanted to make sure that BCAM's 20th anniversary year was packed with events and initiatives to celebrate this amazing achievement and to propel the College into the next 20 years with a refreshed, modernised image. I think we have achieved that!

### **What was your personal highlight of the anniversary celebrations?**

For me, the involvement of our founder members in shaping the College's future was the highlight of the year. We formed the BCAM Founding Members Branding, Website and Logo Committee involving Dr Rita Rakus, Dr John Curran, Dr Paul Cronin and Dr Mike Comins who helped to guide us through the process, sharing their extensive experience and expertise and ensuring we paid homage to the College's heritage.

Not only did they get involved in the rebranding, they also joined us for the launch of the new logo and website, recording videos and taking part in the live press launch. We are so grateful to all the early members of BCAM who still play an active role in the College, mentoring and guiding those who are new to the aesthetic medicine community. BCAM is one big family and we look forward to 2022 when we can hopefully bring everyone together in person once again at our annual conference.

Dr Rakus and Dr Cronin have also joined the Regulatory, Ethics and Professional Standards Committee, sharing their years of experience and knowledge to help shape the College's future and advise on regulation issues.

### **And what was the biggest challenge during the year?**

The biggest challenge for our members and the BCAM team was communication and connectivity, with another year of COVID-19 leading to the Professional Services Team working from home for much of the time and many of our members reporting the many challenges they faced in their professional and everyday lives. We rose to the challenge to provide a seamless service and launched events and initiatives that enabled us to stay connected – if only virtually.

### **COVID-19 continued to affect everyone during 2021; how did it impact on BCAM's plans?**

It soon became clear that COVID-19 would still have a big impact in 2021 so we made an early decision to hold our conference virtually once again and to organise numerous other online events throughout the year.

In 2020 BCAM was the first organisation in its sector to hold a virtual event, which attracted a record number of delegates over six days and was an acclaimed success. The two-day 2021 Conference was equally successful, with a number of high-profile speakers plus panel discussion sessions on key issues such as complications and regulation.

Board meetings and other committees continued virtually until November, when we finally met in person in London for a full day of planning for 2022. We also launched a stakeholder engagement initiative to bring organisations together. BCAM worked hard to ensure members were supported and our services such as appraisals and revalidation continued as usual, despite not being able to meet in person.

### **How has BCAM continued to support its members during this tough time?**

Supporting our members was central to everything throughout our anniversary year, and we launched a number of initiatives including the 20th Anniversary Mindfulness and Wellbeing Initiative and a programme of virtual educational brunch sessions on various topics. These regular live online events, plus a bank of wellness resources in the members area of the BCAM website, provided much-needed support and guidance.

We continued to lead with facts not opinion, seeking advice and guidance from a leading QC and the DHSC to ensure our members were kept informed.

Under the guidance of BCAM Trustee Dr Paul Myers and College Secretary Dr Philip Dobson, BCAM appraisals were adapted to include questions about personal wellbeing during COVID-19 and the BCAM Professional Services Team under the leadership of Office Manager Kim Gear was always at the end of the phone to answer any questions and signpost resources for members.

### **Can you tell us what is to come for BCAM in 2022?**

After a busy 20th anniversary year that has seen BCAM transformed and modernised, we plan to maintain momentum with more events and initiatives in 2022. We have appointed new Trustees to the BCAM Board – we're delighted to be joined by Dr Darren McKeown and Dr Sophie Shotter – and plans are already in place for an in-person BCAM Annual Conference at Church House, Westminster on Saturday 10 September.

Our stakeholder engagement will continue with three events in the calendar, led by BCAM Trustee Dr John Elder, and we'll be holding more educational virtual brunch sessions for members on topical issues – we have a few lined up already!

We were delighted to be able to celebrate the success of Laura Trott MP's Private Members Bill that saw a new law introduced banning toxin and filler treatments for under 18s. Regulation of filler treatments is very much on the BCAM agenda for 2022 and we will be working with stakeholders to press the government for change.

### **And finally, what would you say is the best thing about being involved with BCAM?**

The best thing about being involved with BCAM is the people! Working in aesthetic medicine can be very isolated so having the support of the BCAM community is of great value and it's something that our members frequently report. Indeed, TV doctor Hilary Jones said being a member of BCAM gave him great comfort throughout the pandemic as he knew he always had someone to turn to.

It has been a huge honour to be BCAM President during the College's 21st anniversary year. Having just been re-elected for a further two years, I look forward to steering BCAM into its next exciting chapter.

### **Many thanks for your time!**