

BAOS Feature

Back to Life, Back to Reality

It seems to me as though we have been living under the shadow of Covid for far longer than 2 years, and the changes we have had to make in all aspects of our lives seem incomprehensible.

The challenges of continuing to provide treatment for our patients, navigating our way through the unknown risks of Covid, adapting the way we work, the PPE we use, the way we interact with friends and colleagues and last but not least getting to grips with the language which has come to define our new Covid affected lives. Of all of these, I have found the change in our social interactions the most challenging change to tolerate, in particular, not being able to meet up with friends and family as freely as we used to be able to.

These challenges also affected BAOS. As an organisation we have always actively engaged with our membership via regular CPD events run by our Regional Representatives. These meetings were not only a chance to achieve useful CPD points but also an opportunity to meet with colleagues. In addition to this, our annual conference was always a popular event, with great educational content and even more networking opportunities. Covid effectively stopped all of these face to face meetings and we found ourselves in a situation where we had to adapt the delivery of our CPD events. Luckily, our admin team, Council members and Regional Reps were more than ready for this challenge and quite quickly, we were able to provide a series of webinars and on-line learning events. These have been well received, were incredibly useful during the lockdowns and highlighted the many advantages to online learning, not least the convenience of being able to dial in from wherever you are. However, for me, after the last 2 years, I feel on-line learning has lost its appeal somewhat. As a delegate, I find myself easily distracted by the images of my colleagues, admiring their backgrounds and decor and despairing of the clutter in my study! As someone who has delivered online learning, I can tell you it's far more difficult than standing in front of a room full of people. As the lecturer, you can't see the people you are speaking to, and are therefore unable to judge if you are making an impact or are sending everyone to sleep. Personally, I need to see that people are enjoying what I'm

talking to them about and are engaged with the subject, otherwise it feels like a very hollow experience.

Therefore, I for one, am desperately pleased that our annual conference will be going ahead in November! As a Council, we have spent many hours debating the best time to reschedule the conference, all of us concerned that it would have to be cancelled due to a resurgence of Covid. We finally came to the conclusion that November 2022 feels like an "educated" safe bet. We have a fantastic co-hort of speakers planned over our 2-day program, aptly named "**Back to Life, Back to Reality**" and apologies for planting this tune in your head for the rest of the day. As usual, we will have our open paper and poster competitions and a formal dinner planned to allow everyone to have a chance to meet-up with old friends. We are anticipating a huge interest in this event as it is our return to Edinburgh after a break of 4 years and because I am sure many people will be as keen as me to return to "in-person" learning. Therefore, if you are interested in attending, please sign-up promptly as we do have a limit on the maximum number that can attend. I look forward to seeing you there.



Rhian Jones
BAOS President Elect

Don't Be Backward About Coming Forward

With the pandemic coming to an end (according to Boris!), I thought I would look back at the unsung heroes of the NHS - Volunteers.

We are all aware of them, but do we think about how integral they are to the NHS?

During the Omicron surge before Christmas, I joined the ranks of volunteers for a busy but fulfilling weekend.

The call went out from our local GP practice as they were really ramping up their vaccination centre and needed volunteers.

I have volunteered with youth and charity organisations for many years, so I rang them to see what I could offer. Once they realised I was a clinician, and had trained in the first wave as a vaccinator, it was decided that was the role for me.

The days were rewarding. I was one of 12 vaccinators and administered over 100 vaccines each day, with the centre doing upwards of 1200 per day. Apart from the duty pharmacist and the odd GP, everyone there was a volunteer.

A throughput of over 1200 people per day needs military precision. All involved with this were volunteers. Car park stewards, queue management, each vaccinator had a data entry person to ensure all vaccines were recorded appropriately on the national system. The St John's Ambulance had oversight over all the vaccination centres in our area. All these people giving up their time on that cold weekend before Christmas. There was a real camaraderie and feeling that we were doing something for our local community. None of it would have been possible without volunteers.

Now when I look around our hospital, there are volunteers everywhere. The meet and greet teams for patients on the way in, way finders at major points through the hospital, A&E buddies, RVS coffee shops, and many more all supporting us and our patients.

There are many ways we can volunteer, not just in the NHS. [Volunteer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) gives links to databases of volunteering opportunities. If you've never done it, give it a go.



Adrian Curtis
BAOS Council Member

Oral Surgery never changes

It is easy to say this when you continue through a normal day taking the most difficult teeth out and the referrals continue to arrive on your desk. But this is not necessarily true. The commissioning of services continues to be shifted from secondary care into primary care with the use of practitioners who are adequately trained.

The issue is that primary care is not ready for even Tier 1 oral surgery with referrals into secondary care at a record level and the new graduates experience of oral surgery along with the persuasion to not undertake procedures due to the litigious world we live in.

In Wales we have started to address these issues utilising the Strategic Advisory Forum (SAF) - which is the precursor to an All-Wales Managed Clinical Network for Oral Surgery. Two of BAOS Council are deputy chair of this forum.

Firstly, we have developed an accreditation process for Tier 2 oral surgery with a training pathway allowing practitioners to be upskilled to prevent stagnation and feeling trapped in primary care. These accredited practitioners will be entered onto a National Register of Tier 2 Dentists with Enhanced Skills.

Secondly, we need to train our new graduates to the required level of oral surgery as set out in the 2006 Regulations for General Dental Services. Identifying practitioners who need support to be upskilled to the basic level of oral surgery preventing onward referral into secondary care. The SAF has developed a programme to enhance and improve these practitioners, which is the ethos of prudent healthcare.

Lastly, as the specialist oral surgery workforce is reducing in number, due to retirements from the specialists list, we continue to lobby Health Education and Improvement Wales that we need to train more oral surgeons that will support the health of the Nation into the next decade.

The wheel of change is often so slow and not always seen as beneficial. But important to remember that progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.



Adrian Thorp
BAOS Honorary Secretary