

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Valerie Lund, BACO International 2018 Master

Professor Lund is 'Master' of BACO International 2018. She was made an Honorary Fellow of the American College of Surgeons in October, the first woman in ENT to receive this. ENT & Audiology News Editor, **Declan Costello**, caught up with her to discuss the aims and ideals for this year's BACO, and for the organisation going forward.



Valerie J Lund CBE,

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What is the role of the Master at BACO?

Firstly let me say that it has been a real privilege to take on this role, but one which has evolved considerably over time. Previously the Master was the figurehead providing oversight to the many committees that organised the meeting. More recently, since the merger of BACO and ENT UK and the streamlining of the committee structure, theoretically the job should have become less onerous, but in reality the loss of the General Committee with its Chair and Secretary has led to some organisational problems in recent BACOs. Consequently many issues have arisen that have required some top-down intervention. However, I should say that I am well supported by ENT UK itself and its trustees and by a number of very high quality individuals such as Professor Vin Paleri, leading the Scientific Committee, Professor Tim Woolford, chairing the Local Organising Committee and the BACO Treasurer, Miss Catherine Spinou who has also agreed to act as General Secretary. The other main function of the Master is to promote the BACO whenever possible which with the help of our PCO, the Conference Collective, I have been able to do.

The nature of BACO is clearly evolving – how do you see it changing in the coming years?

The main issue is providing a high quality informative meeting at a time when it is increasingly difficult to get time away from the NHS and when there are so many other meetings taking place throughout the world. We have to meet that challenge by providing a broad update on all ENT/head and neck, and related topics, by offering state-of-the-art information for the subspecialist as well as useful basic

information for the trainee.

One of the most successful parts of recent BACO meetings has been the Clinical Skills Centre which first started at BACO in 2012 under the leadership of Professor Nirmal Kumar. It has proved extremely popular not just with trainees but also consultants and other professionals who attend BACO, such as audiologists, speech therapists, nursing and allied professionals.

For BACO 2018 we have expanded this section even more and we aim to engage with all those who might consider a career in ENT. There is a very active medical student group in ENT as well as those who have just qualified in medicine who we can reach through expansion of the Clinical Skills element of BACO. We also want BACO to become accessible to those still at school and considering medicine as a career. Approaches are already being made to local schools and sixth form colleges in Manchester to see if this can be offered at this year's BACO.

We also have to seriously consider the importance of public and patient engagement, by including patients in our scientific programme and by providing the opportunity for public / professional interaction over many of the clinical and 'political' issues that we face. Finally there are questions related to the frequency and the length of the meeting, as well as inevitably the cost. Even the American Academy is facing difficulties and the next BACO will be in Birmingham in only two years' time – however, we do not know if this frequency is sustainable and a three-year interval may ultimately prove to be preferable.

With such a crowded diary of international meetings, how do you attract attendees to BACO?

By making it more attractive, more relevant

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and better value than other major meetings such as the American and European Academies. We have to build on the popular elements such as cadaver dissection, live surgery, the most up-to-date simulation and practical hands-on experiences in the Clinical Skills Centre and create as much debate and audience participation as possible. Although the opportunity to listen to the 'big names' will still have a place, we need to make things a bit more exciting!

What are the innovative aspects of BACO that you are most proud of?

First of all we have rebadged the meeting, BACO International 2018. The meeting has always had attendees from abroad but we hope to increase this by wide advertising and I am very grateful to ENT & Audiology News for their considerable help in achieving this. We have actively engaged with two countries in particular – Brazil and India, and have speakers from both countries giving keynote lectures, Professor Aldo Stamm and Professor Anil D'Cruz. We hope this will encourage attendance from both these countries, each with strong interests in ENT and head and neck.

Surgery is a practical subject – the Clinical Skills aimed at all levels of expertise is a real 'jewel in the crown' at BACO. The popularity of the Paediatric ENT Skills course which I

inaugurated when I was President of ENT UK, indicates the need for providing as much practical help as technology will allow us to everyone at all stages of their career. Professor Neil Tolley is perfectly placed to organise what I am certain will be a really exciting and innovative centrepiece to the meeting.

In addition the introduction of patient and public engagement at this coming BACO is an important step forwards and I am sure will become a feature of future meetings.

On a lighter note, I am also delighted that we are going to make the social activities more relaxed and a lot more fun. The combination of a trip to Old Trafford and a full-on end-of-BACO party instead of the rather staid sit-down dinner of yesteryear will make it a meeting to remember.

Gender equality is very much in the headlines at the moment – do you have any comment regarding this in relation to BACO?

I am the first female 'Master', which is a somewhat anomalous title, but I hope that I am providing a possible role model for other women. As 'Mistress' would be equally unsuitable, perhaps now is the time to ditch this title in favour of 'President' if that does not carry too many negative connotations!

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INTERVIEWED BY



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