

British Laryngological Association – Cutting Edge Laryngology 2024

BY VALERIE KIM

It's always good to know which conferences are the best for trainee experience. Here, Valerie Kim reveals why BLA Cutting Edge was so worthwhile.

I had a wonderful time attending the British Laryngological Association (BLA) – Cutting Edge Laryngology Conference, which was held at the Royal Society of Medicine in London from 2–4 October 2024. The Royal Society of Medicine is a fantastic venue with a beautiful atrium which hosted the breaks and posters, and allowed great opportunities to discuss presentations with other attendees and presenters. The large lecture hall held all of the sessions and the central location made travel and accommodation easy to arrange.

In total, 270 delegates from 23 countries made this a very international conference. The speakers were not only leading laryngologists in the field, but included a diverse range of backgrounds such as radiology, gastroenterology and speech and language therapy. This was a truly multidisciplinary meeting and a great opportunity to share thoughts and approaches to management of a wide range of conditions. Several international speakers shared valuable insight on how different countries manage different conditions and the challenges faced in various healthcare settings.

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Topics covered

The sessions were divided into the following subtopics:

- Idiopathic subglottic stenosis
- Acoustics: why, what and does it change what we do?
- Vocal cord paralysis
- The oesophagus and dysphagia
- Laryngeal dysfunction
- Voice
- Gender affirming vocal care
- Paediatric laryngology
- Vocal cord granuloma
- Glottic stenosis

Who is it pitched to?

I remember attending conferences as a medical student or junior trainee and feeling out of my depth, particularly when more complex subspecialty topics were discussed. However, one of the highlights of the BLA meeting was that almost of all the sessions I attended started with a clear, very basic description of the underlying pathology and how to diagnose this clinically. The presentations were always accompanied by clinical images demonstrating the pathology. This allowed for all stages of trainees to learn about new conditions and I don't think I would have felt out of my depth as a junior trainee.

As a senior trainee, this was an excellent opportunity to learn about new conditions and procedures I had not heard of or seen, and extremely useful for FRCS preparation. I really recommend this conference to any level of trainee interested in laryngology.

Which aspects did I enjoy?

The range of topics was really comprehensive. I felt that I was able to obtain a broad view of laryngology and learn about areas I have never heard of before. I particularly enjoyed hearing about the history of laryngology from Prof Marc Remacle, who gave a keynote lecture on his experience of 30 years in laryngology. It was also exciting to hear of the advances in laryngology, such as the role of artificial intelligence, and new surgical techniques. I found the panel-led case discussions invaluable because many of the cases felt clinically applicable to day-to-day practice. The panels were also often multidisciplinary, and it was useful to hear the opinions of all of team members. I will certainly apply the learning from these sessions to my clinical practice.

I had the opportunity to network with a number of speakers and other delegates throughout the conference. It was useful to receive career advice, hear how different

TRAINEE MATTERS

countries manage different conditions, discover approaches to laryngology training and meet new people!

Opportunities to present

There were a total of 18 oral presentations and 70 electronic poster presentations delivered at the conference. I was very grateful to be able to deliver an oral presentation on the UK laryngology curriculum and found the opportunity to discuss our work with the other delegates really rewarding. This also has helped me to consider further questions for our ongoing research. The topics for oral presentation were very broad, including lab-based research through to surgical approaches. I would really recommend any trainees with an interest and research projects in laryngology to submit to future BLA conferences.

Takeaway points for trainees

The BLA is one of the most beneficial subspecialty groups I have joined to date as a trainee. As a member, not only do you get a discounted registration fee for the conference, but you have on-demand access to all the sessions following the meeting, as well as from previous conferences. This opportunity to go

back and revise knowledge is invaluable, considering the volume of high-quality talks. In addition to this, at the time of writing the membership is only £35!

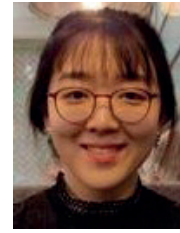
There were a number of resources referenced by the speakers, which I felt was helpful for signposting trainees to continue their learning. The following recommended podcasts are excellent:

- *BLA Connections: A Clear Voice* is the official BLA podcast with Natalie Watson as the host (<https://britishlaryngological.org/podcast-archive>)
- The *UEP Voice Box* podcast is from the Union of European Phoniaticians hosted by Shiyang Hey (www.uepvoicebox.com)

Final points

The BLA Cutting Edge Conference is an excellent meeting, which provides opportunity to hear from and network with a diverse and international group of delegates. The learning opportunities as a trainee are vast and it was really exciting to hear about all the advances in laryngology. This was my first time attending Cutting Edge Laryngology and it certainly won't be the last!

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