

Nora Nugent

We were honoured to chat to Nora Nugent, leading Plastic Surgeon and current President of the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS).

Can you tell us a little bit about what led you into the field of plastic surgery and what have been the highlights so far?

My first position in plastic surgery was as a senior house officer (SHO) during my basic surgical training scheme in Dublin. What drew me to continue in plastic surgery were the variety of reconstructive and aesthetic procedures within plastic surgery, the visual and planning aspect of our surgery and the huge impact that plastic surgery has on function and quality of life of our patients. The highlights have been completion of training and transitioning into consultant practice, being able to mould my consultant practice to align with my clinical interests, working with and sharing knowledge with some amazing colleagues both in the UK and internationally and of course, involvement with the BAAPS! My first post in the UK was at the Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead. As well as having a very proud history in plastic surgery, it was also a great hospital and plastic surgery department to work in.

Who has inspired you in your career and why?

I have worked with many in plastic surgery who have been enthusiastic and innovative as well as being great teachers. My fellowship attendings in the US, led by Dr Dave Herndon, as well as those in St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney and Victorian Hand Surgery Associates in Melbourne, Australia, have shaped my career and interests more than they know. They uniformly have all been very supportive with great advice and encouragement at the different stages that I worked with them.

What do you think have been the most exciting developments in plastic surgery in recent years?

Plastic surgery has always been an innovative specialty. At the moment, we are seeing exciting development in several areas: regenerative medicine and surgery, advancement of existing techniques to further improve outcomes such as deep plane face and neck lifting, and supermicrosurgery techniques in lymphoedema and reconstruction, as well as innovative combinations of surgery and technology. I look forward to seeing what the future holds for us in plastic surgery.

And what challenges is the profession facing?

One of the biggest challenges is the misappropriation of the term 'cosmetic surgeon'. To the lay person, this implies 'plastic surgeon' whereas, in reality, there is no legal protection for the use of cosmetic or plastic surgeon. As a result, there are many underqualified and untrained practitioners calling themselves cosmetic surgeons or claiming to be trained in plastic surgery when they have very little formal plastic surgery training and are not qualified plastic surgeons. This is a problem across all of aesthetics with many unqualified practitioners in the non-surgical



side as well and is a major patient safety issue in the UK. On the reconstructive side, the challenges include limited resources, prioritisation of procedures and long waiting times.

You are of course the current President of the BAAPS – how has your experience of the role been so far?

Busy but positive! I am lucky that I have an excellent Council and Secretariat alongside me. Along with being responsive to the issues that arise such as complications from cosmetic surgery tourism and lack of regulation in the UK aesthetic sector, we also have many exciting plans to continue innovating our educational offering and for collaboration with international colleagues. I am looking forward to the next two years.

What initiatives will the BAAPS be concentrating on in 2025?

The BAAPS will continue our work on improving safety in aesthetic surgery and medicine, patient education and aesthetic surgery education. We are also analysing the health benefits of the treatments that we provide in aesthetics and collaborating with international colleagues as well. I'm very pleased to say that BAAPS 2025 will showcase a collaboration with the Indian

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Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (IAAPS) in London on 2–3 October 2025. BAAPS Support continues to grow, and this will be a priority for us to develop so that we can reach more of our membership with direct support and benefits.

Would you encourage trainee plastic surgeons to get involved in the association?

Of course! The BAAPS very much wants trainee plastic surgeons to be members and to be involved with the association. We run regular Regional Aesthetic Training Days, an Annual Trainee Day in London and several BAAPS Aesthetic Mentorship positions as well as joint fellowships with the British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive & Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS). Membership of the BAAPS also opens the door to free membership of BAAPS Support which will help with advice and the practical considerations of setting up practice, practice development, medicolegal practice, and clinic development, amongst other benefits.

Do you think that plastic surgery is starting to change from being a traditionally male-dominated specialty?

Yes, albeit slowly. Compared to other surgical specialties, plastic surgery has one of the higher rates of female consultants (24% in the BAPRAS 2023 Plastic Surgery Workforce Planning Survey) which has slowly increased in recent years. The percentage of female plastic surgery trainees is higher so I am

optimistic that the number of female plastic surgery consultants will continue to increase.

What still needs to be done to make all surgical specialties in the UK more diverse and inclusive?

First and foremost, the working environment needs to be welcoming and respectful to all. Undoubtedly many already are in the UK, but recent reports indicate that problems still persist. After this, improved working conditions along with flexibility to retain trainees and consultants within surgical specialties are next important. One thing that we are not good at is understanding or even asking why people leave training posts or consultant posts. Whilst we can guess or extrapolate the reasons for many, good exit interviews would provide invaluable knowledge about why talented surgeons leave surgery in the UK. Recurring issues can be better addressed with this data behind them.

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

I don't have a lot of spare time at the moment! But I enjoy reading, travel mini-breaks and when time (and weather) allows sailing.

Many thanks for your time!