It’s hard to believe that as you read this our Oral Health Conference for 2013 is now a distant memory; Christmas has come and gone and we are all sheltering indoors from the winter weather, feeling guilty after the excesses of the festive period.

January is traditionally a good time to look forward and make plans for the year ahead and I shall be looking carefully at what I have to do in my last year as your President!

The conference requires such a lot of organisation - it’s like painting the Forth Bridge, as soon as it’s finished, it’s time to start again! But with the return to the fabulous venue in Liverpool this year’s conference will be bigger and better than ever. One thing’s for sure though – we’ll certainly be looking to book the Mersey Beatles again for the President’s Reception!

Birmingham proved to be a great location for the 2013 conference and all credit to Michaela and her team for putting together such an impressive programme, full of variety and enjoyed by all. I’m sure that before she takes over as President at this year’s conference she’ll again come up trumps with the programme for Liverpool.

New Beginnings – New Team

We have some new faces in the Executive Team following some changes at this year’s AGAM and joining us are:-

Helen Westley - Honorary Treasurer;
Julie Deverick - Honorary Secretary;

The Council meeting in February will see the first meeting of our newly elected Council – made up of Tutor’s Rep, Publications’ Rep, Regional Group Council Representatives as well as the newly elected members to Council - Diane Rochford and Alison Lowe. Also at this meeting, the Council will be able to elect two members from their peer group to the Executive Team for one year - so if you want to get more involved with your Society, now’s the time to start thinking about the elections which will take place later this year.

In this edition of Dental Health, you’ll have noticed that there’s a survey for you to complete - this is extremely important to us as we need to find out what YOU want from your Society and its regional group meetings. Whilst many of you religiously attend every meeting in your region, there are many more of you that never attend, and we’d like to know why that is – what are your likes and dislikes about regional meetings? So, through this survey, we’re looking for you to be open and honest in giving us your constructive criticism. Maybe we don’t need regional group meetings anymore - or maybe we just need some fresh thinking about how they run in the future - please give us your ideas and feedback!

Ongoing Projects

Since 1st May 2013 we’ve welcomed an updated Scope of Practice: we can now diagnose within our scope, and more recently, we can prescribe radiographs for our patients, if suitably trained and competent to do so. These are truly significant milestones for our profession - but there is still so much more to be done! Limited prescribing rights, problems surrounding NHS contracts, and other legislative limitations all need further thought if we are to make our lives in practice more workable.

A recent meeting with the Northern Ireland CDO threw up yet more questions. I would like to reassure you that Michaela and I will continue to weave our way through the legislation to get clear and definitive answers for you.

Business Review

Along with Penny Hardaker, our Business Development Manager, we have started to bring about changes to place your Society on more of a business-like footing. There’s still a long way to go - some of what we do is based upon long established custom and practice and whilst we won’t be making changes just for the sake of it, a review of these practices is long overdue.

We have recently appointed new accountants and carried out a systems review of our internal procedures, including how our accounts and database can interact. Penny is currently in the process of introducing a new management accounting system so that our finances can be reviewed more easily in future, and any outstanding monies chased with case.

We aim to appoint a bookkeeper shortly so that the Honorary Treasurer can become just that, Honorary – with a role of overseeing the accounts rather than being expected to single-handedly manage the finances of a Society as large as ours.

There are plans to update the contracts for all employed staff and to introduce annual performance appraisals – just as would happen in any other business - together with an annual review of job descriptions.

Representing the Society

Michaela and I continue to meet with key stakeholders, sponsors and other organisations, including the BDA, GDC, Department of Health (DoH), Tooth Whitening Action Group (TWAG), All Party Parliamentary Group for Dentistry (APPGD), and many others. Last year I spoke at numerous hygiene and therapy schools, our regional group meetings, the Dentistry Show, the BDA Conference and the British Society of Periodontology (BSP) Conference – all necessary to keep the profile of the profession and the Society raised.

We are joining with the BSP in 2015 to host the international Euro Perio
8 conference in London, and are actively involved in putting the programme together. I’m sure this will be a very exciting event for us and our partners in the BSP.

**So, what for next year?**

My first job of the New Year is to table a proposal to the Department of Health to try to gain us limited prescribing rights – something that Podiatrists and Chiropractors can already do.

The fact that we cannot write prescriptions for our patients for some of the antimicrobials and simple medicines that we come across every day in working practice prevents us from working in the best interests of our patients. With appropriate training this would mean that the long term plan of us being able to undertake work in the community and in nursing homes in order to reach vulnerable and needy groups can become a reality.

I mentioned last year about the need for us to engage more with students – the hygienists and therapists of the future - and we subsequently advertised for two student volunteers on Council. I’m pleased to report that Anjuli Baker and Derrick McCluskey will be invited to attend and contribute to our Council meetings in 2014, although they’re not entitled to vote. They will then write for the Student Page in Dental Health to keep our future members in the loop and give students their own forum within the Society.

In our endeavour to make the Society more appealing to the younger (and young at heart!) generation – we have instigated the role of a social media coordinator at each regional group, so that those members who like to connect via Facebook and Twitter can do so – many groups are now setting up their own Facebook page. This is the way forward if we are to move with the times and we have already issued guidelines around their use.

We will continue to strengthen our links with the schools and we have had further invitations into those we’ve not ventured into for many years - this is a vital link to the tomorrow members.

I would like to forge better links with the British Heart Foundation and Diabetes UK so that we can provide cohesive advice for our patients – and so this will be a priority for 2014. Anyone who has any links with these organisations, please DO get in touch with me as a contact at either organisation would be most appreciated.

I hope that my thoughts are in line with yours and that I can continue to serve you as your President for the next 12 months.

I have to take a moment at this point to thank the BSDHT Council, and the fabulous Executive Team who are always behind me, yet honest and open enough to give me their constructive feedback – they are a most dedicated and motivated team of individuals.

**Julie Rosse**  
BSDHT President