

A Fresh Start Introducing BSNA's new CEO

In February, I was excited to join the British Specialist Nutrition Association (BSNA) as Chief Executive Officer. The good news is that two months in, I am still excited to be here!



The BSNA gives a voice to those companies working in the fields of infant and early life nutrition: medical nutrition (tube feeding and oral solutions), parenteral nutrition and other aseptic intravenous medicines – such as chemotherapy and antibiotics. More importantly, it champions the needs of the healthcare professionals, patients, carers, consumers and families who need those products and services.

I started my career as a scientist. However, after a PhD spent in the laboratory, I realised I enjoyed talking and applying science far more than I enjoyed wearing the lab coat! I am lucky, therefore, to have found and enjoyed a 20-year career in the specialised nutrition industry. It has such a broad and significant impact on health and lives. I can't think of any other sector that spans so many different types of people and their needs – from healthy babies to end of life care, allergies and metabolic conditions to people living with cancer, COPD or neurodisabilities.

Hippocrates said (apparently): *“Let food be thy medicine.”* Without nutrition, the best drugs in the world or the most talented surgeons are rendered irrelevant. Dietitians and nutritionists are therefore pivotal to healthcare and public health. Yet we still have a long way to go to ensure that nutrition is at the forefront of health policy in the UK. We are living longer as a nation, survival rates across many diseases such as cancers and cardiovascular conditions have increased significantly over the last 50 years – particularly due to earlier detection and better treatments. However, that does not mean we are living healthier, in fact with our ageing population we have more comorbidities and chronic conditions than ever before. Nutrition must play a critical role. Access to information, access to timely and appropriate nutrition support, innovation in products and services are all key to helping us support our changing population needs.

A good friend of mine has a daughter who is fed exclusively on enteral nutrition. She was not expected to live beyond 10 years old and has recently celebrated her 45th birthday. This is a humbling reminder of why we need to get it right. Industry must work with the NHS to support individuals and their families. If we keep innovating, keep doing things better, we can achieve remarkable outcomes and change lives.

One month in, I am enjoying getting to know our members better and working with our fabulous team of scientific, policy, public affairs and communications experts, who I would like to thank as they are being very patient with me as I learn the ropes! I would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing Director General, Declan O'Brien, who has led the association for over ten years.

Lastly, I am keen to ensure our organisation continues to listen to and collaborate with organisations and individuals. I for one am open to learning as much as I can from the dietetic community.

About the British Specialist Nutrition Association

BSNA is the trade association representing the manufacturers of products designed to meet the particular nutritional needs of individuals; these include specialist products for infants and young children (including infant formula, follow-on formula, young child formula and complementary weaning foods), medical nutrition products for diseases, disorders and medical conditions, including oral nutritional supplements, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition, as well as companies who aseptically compound chemotherapy, parenteral nutrition and CIVAS.