

Some might wonder whether an industry bloke like me really has the necessary credentials to be president of the British Contact Lens Association (BCLA). Well, the truth is, when I was asked to carry on the outstanding hard work and contributions of previous BCLA presidents, it was a total no-brainer. More to the point, it was an absolute privilege to take on this extremely prestigious role; not bad really for an uneducated boy from the docks in Avonmouth, Bristol, where eight of us shared a two-bedroom house.

Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't change my upbringing for a million quid; it was fantastic. My one regret is that I really wasn't focused at school, as I was more interested in balls. Any shape, size or circumference, as long as it turned around! That said, the sound of blues and twos and something rather red called Dennis was where I set my original career pathway. To find out more, you'll need to be at my Presidential Address.

Career in instruments

I spent most of my early career at Keeler, predominately in the operating theatre. I was somewhat thrown in at the deep end, demonstrating the latest cryo and early vitrectomy systems, surgical instruments, proctoscopes and the like. As a single guy at that time it was extremely educational on all fronts and if I could wind the clock back right now, it was indeed one of the most educational parts of my career in instruments. It wasn't long before the optometry business became the focus of my attention and with the launch of the world's first hand-held air puff tonometer, the Keeler Pulsair (being one of my product responsibilities), my association with the optical practitioner was forged.

So, to come up to date, 'Rise of the machines...instrumentation, machinery and technology: where would we be without it?' is the title of my Presidential Address, and I really hope I can capture the impact that instrumentation has had on the world of contact lenses, along with many associated applications. Having spent 30 plus years in and around the instruments business, the changes that I have seen over that time have been immensely exciting. You might argue that instruments such as the slit lamp, keratometer, Burton lamp, trial lens set, etc, haven't really changed in 200 years – but when we look back



Rise of the machines

Andy Yorke looks forward to his BCLA Presidential Address next week. The focus will be on the latest instrumentation technology and where it is leading the optical profession

over the last 20 years, the innovations that many companies have brought to the market reflect the impact of the computerised and digital age that we all live in today.

It is open to debate, I know, but I would suggest the two instruments in the last 20 years, which have had the biggest impact on vision correction and contact lenses, are the refractive laser and the corneal topography system. I had the pleasure of being around the early refractive lasers from Summit and was directly involved with the EyeSys system back in the late 1980s and 90s. The refractive laser was really responsible for the development of a number of new technologies, as the demand to understand the detailed structure of the cornea became of paramount importance. While, of course, there was much research occurring at the same time in corneal surface measurement, Bausch+Lomb L (Orb-Scan) Eyesys, Tomey, Nidek, Zeiss and many others were driving the boundaries of product development that have led to the numerous devices we find in practice today.

So what does the future hold, and what is in development now that could have a massive impact on our

working practices? And how will this impact the contact lens world in the future? Clearly aberrometry is still in a developmental stage and has not yet been established in practice as a routine application. Meibomian gland analysis is becoming more commonplace as instruments from Oculus, Bon Optic, Haag Streit, Topcon and many others provide further gradable information about the tear film, as we pursue the ultimate solution for comfort.

Perhaps, however, OCT, which now has an established application in the diagnosis of many retinal diseases, is still yet to have its day on the cornea. The Zeiss Visante has no doubt led the way in OCT corneal imaging, but clearly this technology is moving forward at a significant pace as resolution and image quality improves. As with the early videokeratoscopes, perhaps we do not yet fully understand the place of the AC-OCT in contact lens fitting – but I hope at my Presidential Address a few of our experts will be able to give an insight into where this technology is leading us.

● **Andy Yorke** will give his BCLA Presidential Address on September 18 at the Royal Society of Medicine, London. Register at www.bcla.org.uk