

Respected Rector Professor Gruchała, Deans and Members of the Senate of the Medical University of Gdańsk, Distinguished Guests, Families of our Graduates, and – first and foremost – you Dear Colleagues, Graduates of the year 2021.

I wish to thank for the invitation to this Graduation Ceremony of the English Division Class 2021. I am most pleased and honored to share this special moment with you all.

Well, it seems like yesterday when we were meeting at the physiology classes or cooperating on various occasions afterwards. And now? You're about to leave.

So, accept best congratulations on making your way successfully to this point of educational climax, when your home University is attesting your aptitude for the medical career with the Medical Doctor diploma. This is your passport to the world of professional medicine and your key to multiple gates of postgraduate training, which will make you self-standing doctors, and eventually maybe also tutors and teachers to younger generations, or medical researchers and innovators. The formal power of the diploma is obvious.

However, considering all the years of studies it summarizes, the precious document of MD diploma, seems just too concise. For each of you, behind the diploma stand the multiple, diverse, eye-opening, breath-taking, mind-boggling, but sometimes also heart-breaking experiences you have had over the several years of medical studies. From the admission to graduation there is a long, narrow, steep and winding path, with no express shortcut route. Actually, at times it was probably close to a survival trip. You were struggling to make your way forward through the jungles and moorlands of demanding subjects with giant amounts of information to absorb and understand, with complex names, structures, pathways, procedures, diseases and therapies. You were making meaningful stops to reflect and contemplate the experience of the suffering, pain and despair of patients of various ages, gender, origin and social status, whom you met on your way in the clinical setting. Then, you were running fast and diving deep, driven by your enthusiasm at the moments of your personal success or when healthcare team's competence was bringing patients back to life and health, restoring the hope and joy in them and their dear ones, and boosting your motivation. You were taking the extra effort of climbing steep ridges to reach the peaks of performance and summits of dedication, as you invested your time in doing research, publishing and participating in students' scientific conferences or engaging in charity and social support. Last but not least, you were flying high on the wings of friendship and love that evolved during your years spent together at our University and in our city and region, and which have made you so close to each other, so reliable partners, companions for life.

I am sure all this abundant experience has shaped your knowledge, skills and attitudes, left an imprint on your mental, and reinforced your motivation to become able to provide those in need with quality medical assistance, help and advice. And certainly, you know best how much joy, entertainment, fun and crazy things there happened on the way during all those years, making this time and experience truly unforgettable. So, today we congratulate you all a lot and celebrate your success with you. Congratulations on your persistence and multiple choices to expand your competence in medicine by enrolling with yet another webinar, tutorial, talk, presentation or workshop, which so frequently meant you were sacrificing a lot of your work-life balance.

Next to congratulations, I also wish to thank you. For choosing medical studies at the Medical University of Gdańsk and staying with us in the first place, for enriching our academic community and making it more diverse, more lively, and more open. Your presence and your involvement in student organizations, SLFs, ANSA, Phi-Delta-Epsilon, Resource Team, Students Scientific Society, Student Parliament, IFMSA and others have been making our environment more vibrant and dynamic, helped students both in studying and enjoying each other, and were bringing students and staff closer together through a number of initiatives.

We owe thanks to so many of you for your willingness to cooperate at making good things happen at our University. Very special thanks go to all of you who volunteered to help in various ways in providing medical assistance or logistics support throughout the exceptionally challenging period of pandemic of COVID-19.

I wish to personally thank each and every one of you who willingly communicated with me over the years, exchanged messages and engaged in conversations, offered feedback, advice or just a friendly chat. This list would be quite long, so please accept a collective "Thank you!"

In 1623, an English metaphysical poet John Donne fell ill with a fever. Upon recovery he wrote a series of 3 prose writings. In the first of them, entitled *Meditations*, under No. 17 he wrote:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main;

And further

...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee

These words have become famous quotations, emphasizing the immersion of each and every person in the life and death of the humanity as a whole, the organic interrelationship and interdependence of all humans. Even though the same message is clear in many Holy Scriptures of most religions, it just seems many of us on Earth have been forgetting this universal truth. Global issues like climate changes and the currently experienced coronavirus pandemic appear to remind us all how much interconnected we all are. With your medical education you have much more evidence and many more arguments in support of this global perspective of each individual life. May your knowledge of what a human's health and well-being depend on, bring enlightenment, comfort and positive changes in the lives of those you will be looking after in your medical practice.

On behalf of our University and myself, I wish you best of luck, health and safety, never-ending drive in the quest for truth and understanding, patience and persistence at developing and refining your competence and skills, your patients' trust and your supervisors' generous support and appreciation. Enjoy successful medical careers and remember us here, keep in contact and share with us your feedback for us to continue improving as a medical university and academic community. I look forward to making connections with you on LinkedIn and other social media, and maybe meeting you live in Gdańsk again or in your home country. Good luck to you all!

Thank you.

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