

Respected Rector Professor Bigda, Deans and Members of the Senate of the Medical University of Gdańsk, Distinguished Guests, Families of our Graduates, and – first and foremost – you Dear Graduates of the year 2022.

First of all, Dear Colleagues, thank you for the invitation to your Graduation Ceremony. It is an honour and a pleasure to share this special moment with you all. Today is your moment of glory, your victory day, time to celebrate the beginning of your new chapter, in the role of a physician. It is very appropriate now to quote one of three canonical ancient Roman poets, Ovidius of Sulmona, known in English as Ovid. Attributed to him is the famous phrase “Finis coronat opus” – “the end crowns the work” or “the true value of an undertaking or a work of art cannot be fully discerned until it is finished”. Voila! You have finished your ambitious project of becoming a physician. Congratulations! On the way you have taken classes on about or over a hundred subjects and you have taken many lessons. One of them is certainly on how much can be achieved over relatively short time, if only we truly dedicate ourselves, our time and effort, to a certain mission, like you did over the years. We all know and keep repeating: „time flies”, „nothing ever happens twice”. Very true. Always true, but worth emphasizing today, on this special, unique and high-caliber occasion, when moments are so saturated with high and positive emotions and sense of achievement. Let’s follow the advice from Ovid’s contemporary, another great Roman poet Horace who wrote “Carpe diem” – “Seize the day” – receive the PRESENT from the future and make the most of it before it sinks and freezes in the past. For you today or this week, this famous phrase most certainly translates as “Let’s celebrate!” or “Let’s party!”

Next to congratulations, I also wish to thank you. For choosing medical studies at the Medical University of Gdańsk and staying with us, 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.

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!”

Amid the joy and excitement of this day, I would like to share with you a deeper thought as well. It was October 2017 when I first met you as your teacher of physiology. And, one of the first messages you got from me was: details are important, details are necessary, but always be sure to see or build the BIG PICTURE. Now you have a lot more pieces, a lot more contexts and connections to discover and understand the big picture. Like thousands of other doctors around the globe, you are or will soon be able to link the dots, which might seem unrelated. BIG PICTURE is essential in doctor’s practice. An internist, a neurologist, a psychiatrist, and any other medical specialist will build the understanding of the patient’s condition on the bits of information from patient interview, but also from the way they walk in, their posture, the way they speak, the colors of their face, hands and skin elsewhere, the shape of their fingernails, and so many other signs and symptoms, ultimately complemented by a range of results of diagnostic tests and procedures.

Health, understood as the state of physical and mental well-being, is known to be affected and dependent on a wide range of factors, many of them environmental and beyond the control of an individual patient. This alone, is a sufficient reason to think of another BIG PICTURE that doctors should be aware of and be able to embrace.

The human world is very complicated and a living paradox. We search for the unachievable or unnecessary, while neglecting what’s absolutely essential. We seek the divine particle in large hadron collider and think of a mission to Mars or Earth 2.0, while millions of people lack drinking water, access to basic healthcare or

elementary education. Herbert George Wells Time Machine scenario coming true? More and more people around the planet seem not to understand what is going on and what life on human-inhabited Earth is all about. You yourselves have the experience of studying medicine in the period of a pandemic, recently topped with a barbarian invasion and war behind the border, but affecting people on all the continents, one way or another. Needless to say, the global inequity, combined with mindless overexploitation and contamination of the natural environment are major issues, whose consequences are in the scope of interest of doctors of all specialties. A good starting point to acknowledge and appreciate the links between medicine and everything else around would be to read books and papers by such medical experts as Prof. Hans Rosling of the Karolinska Institute, author of „Factfulness”, among others.

Today, equipped with theoretical knowledge on a wide range of medical disciplines and well-trained in self-learning, you are entering the restless world of ours as physicians. Physicians, those who know how to diagnose problems and how to resolve them. Those who listen first, before rushing to conclusions. Those who don't discriminate or exclude. Those who are knowledgeable, skillful, true and have robust principles. Those who are empathetic, sensitive and caring, but also organized, focused and able to make decisions and take actions. Physicians, for so many safe havens, source of hope and support. Sometimes the physician is one of very few or the only person who would listen to the desolate and abandoned patient, a person in need.

Well, this all sounds very serious, heavy, almost too much. Whenever you need to boost your motivation, think of how much the world, both globally and locally, needs people of such qualities and competences. Your mission is very needed. You can do a lot of good to individual patients, but also get involved in repairing our ailing human world at various levels, from the local community through regional, national and international panels and expert groups. Use your potential to the maximum to make patients' lives and life on Earth healthier, safer, better.

For tasks like these, you will need to take good care of yourselves to stay physically, mentally and emotionally fit and balanced. You will need sports, recreation and entertainment. I am sure you have been practicing them well during your studies here in Gdańsk. You will also need powerful and everlasting sources of energy and motivation. There are two: love and friendship. I am sure you have made fantastic friends over the last several years, your brothers in arms, companions for life. As to love, we all know how important and powerful it can be. Love of your Parents and all your Dear Ones brought you all to where you are today and kept you strong at times of despair.

Here I will accept some help from the third of the great Roman poets - Virgil: Amor vincit omnia, et nos cedamus amori – Love conquers all, and we surrender to love

Have lives filled with love and friendship and enjoy fruitful and rewarding medical careers, to your patients' benefit and your own satisfaction.

Last but not least, 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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