

Respected Rector Magnificus, Members of the Senate, Distinguished Guests, Dear Graduates, Academic code requires that my speech be no longer than those of the higher-rank academic officials before me. All those who know me at least a little realize how difficult my position is right now. To make my speech as short as I can, I have it written here.

Dear Colleagues Young Doctors, celebrities of the day: accept my thanks for the invitation to participate in this graduation ceremony. I am pleased and honoured to be here today and share with you the pride and joy of this special moment. Also thank you for the friendly interaction at year 2 and for the signs of respect and appreciation that came afterwards.

If you recall, back in October 2007, at the first lecture on physiology at year 2, I showed you a slide with a picture of a sort of a round pie with one piece missing. Yes, I mean the PacMan! In fact, the PacMan of your 6-year medical studies. Forgive my being brutal, but now the pie is all gone. You are absolutely excused to sentimentally shed a tear over so many years of your prime time having become history. If you need to shed a tear, do it now.

And then? Quickly shake off the futile longing for all the tomorrows that turned to yesterdays, look up with hope and confidence built upon the knowledge and skills you have managed to acquire, take a deep breath of fresh iodine-saturated Baltic Sea air, flex your muscles, spread your wings, and feel your hearts beat faster with excitement about the unknown, but most certainly intriguing and promising future. Oops, it starts to sound a bit like an excerpt from a lecture on autonomic nervous system, doesn't it? And set off for the lifelong journey of practicing the art and science of medicine.

The plain fact is that 6 years ago you enrolled with this university to study medicine and proudly conclude your studies with MD in your hands, to become doctors. The magic reality behind it is that by doing so you voluntarily and deliberately submitted your entire selves to a process that was guaranteed to change you forever. As you were getting deeper and deeper into medicine, medicine was soaking into you and penetrating your minds, leaving a permanent mark on your way of thinking, on your priorities and attitude to other people. Believe it or not, medicine has already contributed and will continue to contribute greatly to your emotional and social maturity and ability to responsibly play important roles in your communities, wherever these are going to be. Obviously, the role of a physician, but also the roles of a teacher, personal counselor, knowledgeable advisor.

On your graduation day I sincerely congratulate you with the first success you've made – completion of your medical studies. Bravo! You are now about to embark on a new, major mission. Equipped with theoretical knowledge of the basics of medicine, trained in the essential medical skills, you are entering today's world as doctors. However, unlike earlier generations of young doctors, from the first days of your medical career you personally are also equipped with impressive instant and continuous access to a variety of valuable medical reference resources around the globe. Many hospitals and clinics, including those where you will work and continue your postgraduate medical education are centers of advanced technology which greatly supports medical professionals in diagnosing, treatment and

prevention of diseases, as well as in ongoing research into the nature of life, disease and death. The diagnostic and therapeutic potential of contemporary medicine, built upon discoveries and inventions in chemistry, genetics, molecular physics, computer and imaging sciences and even space technology is awesome, fascinating and admirable. In humanity's never-ending quest for immortality and disease-free life no invention seems too difficult or too expensive. This has turned medicine into a big business. In fact, one of the biggest of all.

In spite of the increasingly technical and commercial faces of today's medicine, please never forget that the roots of your profession and the main reason for all the progress in medicine has always been a human being looking for help and support, seeking hope, comfort and understanding, an individual person who suffers and needs relief, advice and guidance. Remember to take time to listen to your patients, talk to them, be honest with them. And give them a smile. These will not cost you much and mean more than you expect.

So, enter our imperfect "COM" world: COMmercialised to the bone, with much COMpetition and too little cooperation, with much COMmunication, but too little understanding, with many conflicts and COMbats over COMmodities or resources, with COMputer gadgets replacing true personal contact and corrupting healthy interpersonal relationships. Enter it bravely. Be persistent at learning and training, be assertive and confident when you know for sure you're right, but also be humble and self-critical as doctors' errors can be very grave. Be open for discussion, listen carefully to your more experienced colleagues. Reason logically and act righteously. Be accurate. Be professional. Keep doing your best to make the world around you a healthier, safer and more humane place through your own 3 COMs: COMpetence, COMpassion and COMmitment. Anytime and anywhere. Regardless of ethnic, religious, cultural or wealth status of your patients.

Enrich the world with your common sense, your sensitivity and human touch.

Take care and good luck!

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