

Graduation Speech – On Professional Trust

June 8, 2025

Good evening, and welcome to Graduation 2025!

Hello, everyone, here and on Zoom. It's good to see you.

Let's start with thanks.

To our spouses, partners, children, parents, siblings, family, and friends: Thank you for the encouragement, love, patience, meals, and phone calls. Our residents' success reflects the values of those who nurture them. Let's hear it for the families!

To our staff (Brett, Tatianna, Liz, Seanna, Julia, Nicole, Aliyah, Mary Sarah, Denise, Joanna, and others): You fuel our engine. You ensure our residents are fed, paid, scheduled, evaluated, recruited, and celebrated. You complete the forms, keep the records, and anticipate our needs. And let's give a special round of applause to Brett Marks, who choreographed tonight's celebration.

To our Department, Hospital, and GME Leadership; Firm Chiefs, Clinic Directors, and Faculty: Thank

you for supervising and teaching our residents, for your leadership on committees, and for your support as research mentors, career counselors, and MACs. Thank you for being role models, for welcoming resident feedback, and for embracing our pilots and innovations. Thank you for knowing when to step in and when to step back, and for always believing in our residents. Please also join me in a special thank you to Dr. Gary Desir, who will be complete his tenure as Chair this summer. Under Gary's leadership, we diversified our residency, weathered a pandemic, and accelerated our commitment to the marginalized and vulnerable. This fall, when we welcome our new Chair, Dr. Wolfram Goessling, he will join a thriving, proud department, which soared under Gary's leadership.

To our Associate Program Directors (Matt, Jackie, Cindy, Shaili, Isabel, Ben, and Mahalia): Where do I begin? Your contributions vastly exceed your role, shepherding residents through training. You support trainees facing illness and personal crises. You chair key committees. You speak up when we disagree, and you come together so we can speak as one. We share

a commitment to innovation, a love for education, and a faith in the worth of every resident. Thank you for the laughter, the problem solving, and for answering phone calls at all hours on all days.

To our Chiefs (Mary, Soumya, Sanju, Ritu, Josh, Deanna, Ben, and Jody): Again, where do I begin? You gave a year of your lives to our program, and you transformed us. You switched us from a cryptic, outdated scheduling system to QGenda. You led retreats, M&Ms, education half days, and teaching conferences. You orchestrated the best recruitment in residency history. You elevated AI and simulation, and you coined a new moniker for our program—"change forward"—while setting a record for pilots and innovations. You glued our leadership group together with your "Question of the Week." You handled staffing crises with equanimity and commitment to being fair. You bravely advocated for residents at department meetings, and you welcomed and addressed hundreds of resident "pebbles." To the last day, you ensured the Rising Chiefs were prepared to succeed. For your effort, you have developed priceless

leadership skills, and you earned the love, respect, and devotion of your residents and faculty.

To our residents: Our residency has had only three program directors in its history: Rosemarie Fisher, Cyrus Kapadia, and me. You're the reason program directors stay in this position so long. Not a day passes that I don't hear about a resident who went above and beyond to partner with a nurse, lead a difficult code, teach a medical student, answer a family's challenging questions, or comfort a frightened patient. If there's a primary reason applicants choose Yale, it's you.

To our graduates: Your moment has come! Just three years ago, you were afraid to order Tylenol, unsure why patients should follow your advice, and shocked that seniors and attendings believed the information you gathered. Three years later, you've mastered procedures, absorbed troves of facts, and earned respect for your skills and judgment. You've been recognized in raves and shout-outs. You've won prizes at national meetings, and you've served on committees and distinctions. Most importantly, you've

always done the right thing, even when no one was looking, even while knowing that your most important work won't gain public recognition. You provided the best care imaginable and you improved patients' lives. Your impact on our program will be felt long after your names fade into residency lore. I hope many of you will return some day as faculty to teach the next generation of Yale Traditional Residents.

So, what does it mean to “graduate?” I remember being a new attending in clinic, thirty years ago, facing my first patient with interstitial lung disease. I was comfortable with asthma, COPD, pneumonia, and ARDS, but when it came to ILD, I was clueless: simultaneously board certified and out of my depth. It was time to phone a friend, a senior faculty mentor to walk me through the challenge.

If you remember anything from my remarks tonight, let it be this: graduation is not a culmination but the start of your lives as trusted physicians.

You are now internists. You can sit for the Boards. After this month, your notes will no longer need to be co-

signed. We trust you to make life and death decisions, and to know when to seek help. We trust you to honor your commitments: to return phone calls and messages, and to show up when your presence is expected.

You are ready for professional independence. We trust you to study, stay up to date, hone your skills, know your limits, and learn from mistakes. We trust you to prioritize the needs of your patients and avoid conflicts of interest.

We trust you to take care of yourselves: to eat, sleep, exercise, and socialize. To take care of your patients, you must take care of yourselves.

We trust you to promote quality and safety, advocate for vulnerable patients, and speak up when something is wrong. And when you do speak up, identify yourself as a physician and leverage your knowledge and credibility.

We trust you to speak honestly, accurately, politely, and compassionately. As the role of AI in medicine grows, it will be up to you to distinguish truth from

hallucination. As AI helps us become more efficient, remember the notes you sign are your responsibility; your signature says you endorse the words above your name.

Of course, there are limits to self-regulation. The ABIM will test your knowledge this summer and throughout your careers. You will be required to meet the requirements of licensing boards, privilege committees, and future employers.

But you will exceed expectations, just as you have from the start of internship. Your knowledge runs deep. You are sophisticated clinicians and superb teammates. Your ethics and communication skills are beyond reproach. Your patients are fortunate to call you their doctor. You've become exceptional internists, not because you were told to do so, but because you set those expectations for yourselves.

You are starting your careers at a challenging time, during an era of social disruption, uncertain research funding, and fragile support for a fragmented and

fragile healthcare system. But with the contributions you are bound to make, better days will come.

In your long careers, you will encounter changes beyond anything we can predict tonight. But whatever changes come, we trust you to uphold the timeless principles you mastered during residency: to promote science and social responsibility, to teach, to collaborate, to grow, and above all, to put patients first. In the proud tradition of our residency, may you always uphold our cherished motto, to be “as good as any, nicer than most.”

Thank you, and congratulations, everyone!