

REMARKS FROM EDWARD KEENAN, PhD  
2010 OHSU School of Medicine Hooding Ceremony  
Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall  
June 1, 2010

**“Do Well by Doing Good for Others”**

Dr Azar-thank you for your most generous introduction and I am deeply touched by your thoughtfulness and your kind remarks.

President Robertson, Dean Richardson, Distinguished Guests, Faculty Colleagues, Family and Friends of the Class of 2010 and, most importantly , members of the Class of 2010

Thank you for this opportunity to share some reflections on this important day for you, the graduates of 2010. This day is about you. It is an extraordinary honor and privilege for me to address you at this defining moment.

In preparing these remarks I asked my family about how I should approach this responsibility and they advised me as follows: be yourself and speak from the heart. Very good advice indeed. However, they also admonished me with the reminder that all of you, the audience, really did not come to this beautiful theatre this morning to hear me speak. This day really is all about the Class of 2010.

During the past month I have also asked a number of individuals for their perspectives regarding what I should say at such an important transition point for our graduates. Here are some of their suggestions-some posed as questions to be answered including:

So- what now?

What should I do?

What should I care about?



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Other suggested messages were:

Figure out how to work together!

Make a difference!

As you will see I chose none of these suggestions. For the past 18 months I have had a unique opportunity to consider:

1. What is excellence in medicine ?
2. How does one sustain personal and professional well-being, balance and resilience?
3. What is the future of the profession of medicine and healthcare?

As the Class of 2010 knows, I prefer to teach by using a learning strategy referred to as Concept Mapping. The logistics of this venue make it impossible to construct such a map. However, I ask you to visualize a virtual white board spanning the width of this stage. On this virtual board picture a schematic representation of a pathway, road if you will, that leads to a fork in the road. The fork offers a choice between the path of self interest or the common good. The fork could also represent a path to a life of balance and well-being or a road to personal and professional burnout. Too often we are pushed to make a choice of either/or at the fork in the road. I do not think it must be this way.

You see Yoggi Berra, the great baseball player and armchair philosopher, had it right when he said “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”

So the singular point of my remarks today for all of you at this fork in the road is to “Do well for yourself by doing good for others.” In making this point I will also emphasize the significance of:

Gratitude-it is essential for securing well-being

Story- patients will tell you their stories and you must listen to truly understand their condition



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Empathy-as rules-based medicine evolves empathy will make the distinguishing difference in truly caring for patients  
Meaning- it makes a life worthwhile

Allow me to digress with a brief look backward. Nearly four years ago we came together for the first time at the White Coat Ceremony. We pledged at that time to reconvene four years hence. Here we are true to our word to celebrate the transformation of the entering class of 2006 into the physicians of 2010. In 2006 the M.D. Class of 2010 consisted of:

120 individuals (selected from 5,000 applicants)

53% are women

You were 26 years old-now you are not

70% were Oregonians-although none of you came with Lewis and Clark

Your undergraduate GPA was 3.6 and your MCAT score was 30+

One-third of you were non-science majors. Two already held doctoral degrees and 14 held master's degrees

You hailed from 68 colleges and universities

Now you have become part of the fabric of the School of Medicine and its university, OHSU. Soon you will go out to influence 65 healthcare institutions pursuing excellence in 19 disciplines within the profession of medicine.

When the medical school's Admissions Committee on behalf of the faculty selected you from amongst 5,000 applicants they did far more than merely accept you. They really made a statement that the faculty of the School of Medicine believed in you before you believed in yourself. If you doubt this perspective think back to the first time you began to see patients during the second week of medical school. Many of you had feelings like "I am an imposter" or "I am not worthy of this privilege." Year one and two of medical school brought you a fund of knowledge and your emerging clinical skills. Year three and four brought additional knowledge leading to understanding along with the further development of your clinical skills, clinical reasoning and judgment.



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You are different now. The transformation from student-physician to physician has occurred. You have earned the privilege of caring for patients and you must sustain the trust confided in you by your patients. During the White Coat Ceremony four years ago we emphasized the importance of humanism in medicine, the primacy of the patient-physician relationship, and the expectations of professional responsibility. These principles are no less important today. The faculty speaker at your White Coat Ceremony was Dr. John Hunter, Professor and Chair of the Department of Surgery and who joins us today for this celebration. Dr. Hunter surprised me then when I learned that he was an English major in college. He spoke about the importance of Story in medicine. Your patients will share their stories with you. Listen to their stories - they will provide the context and the understanding required to truly know them and, more importantly, this will permit you to effectively reduce their suffering and provide a healing touch.

As Thoreau wrote: "To affect the quality of the day-that is the highest of the arts." You have the potential to positively affect the quality of the day for so many. So "Just Do It" and in so doing Make a Real Difference for your patients and your communities.

Charlie Brown in the Peanuts comic strip described your circumstance this way: "There is no greater burden than that of a great potential."

Emerson wrote "The reward for a job well done is to have done it." You have done a wonderful job!

Let me remind you on this occasion of the value of gratitude. None of us here today has gotten here alone. This theatre is filled with individuals, who have been there at critical times if not defining moments. Family, friends, faculty, patients and many others. Be certain to express your gratitude to these significant individuals in your lives. The expression of gratitude is a key element of well-being and happiness. Dedicate your work to someone else-this will provide purpose, meaning and excellence in what you do.

"Do well by doing good for others."



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Let us look now to the future. We confront the fork in the road: self interest versus the common good. You are now on the threshold of doing something no other generation has achieved. The stage is set. You hold the potential to make the people of this country the healthiest on this planet and to improve the health of the people in the developing world.

To do so will require a transformation of our health care delivery system. Simply stated we need a new operating system and you are the programmers. The time is now. In 2011 the Baby Boomer Tsunami will begin to beach-80 million people overall. In 2014-just a year after many of you complete your residency training-32 million Americans currently without health coverage and access will require care. Frankly, we are not ready for this responsibility, but I am confident that you can be the needed difference if you so choose.

What are the issues in healthcare today that we must face in order to achieve better health? They include the following:

- Access-too little

- Cost-too much

- Utilization-too much and too variable

- Safety-not enough

- Quality-can improve

- Patient experience-can improve

- Cost of physician education-too high

- Health professionals workforce-must be expanded and realigned

How well are we doing in delivering health? Quite simply and certainly based on what we spend for healthcare the conclusion must be that we are not doing all that well. Amongst the 30 most developed countries in the world we just don't compete effectively with respect to nearly all of the commonly accepted health outcome measures. Basically we rank 25th or lower. There is a singular exception. We rank ninth among the 30 developed countries in "longevity from the age of 65." What conclusion can one reach based on this observation? Coverage and access to healthcare matters for our more senior citizens. So should it matter for all of our citizens.



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At present the apparent focus of healthcare reform appears to be to provide universal access to an unsustainable system, which fails to improve the health of the public despite significant public subsidy resulting in cost shifting rather than cost reduction.

WE CAN DO BETTER in this regard and we can with your leadership.

Let us set some goals for health to aspire to such as the ones recently outlined by Tor Dahl, a leadership and productivity consultant. Such goals, all measurable, could include:

The longest life expectancy with the highest quality in the world

The lowest maternal and infant mortality in the world

Elimination of health system-induced disease and death

Priority where possible on prevention

Using patient-centered strategies to gain on our biggest killers: smoking, substance abuse, obesity and accidents

To achieve these goals will require first and foremost the full investment in the education of our people, the development of more effective social policies to raise socioeconomic status and address disparities, and the transformation of our healthcare system to one that delivers health rather than one that represents a financing process. Our goal is to become the healthiest people in the world. Achieving this goal will require your commitment.

Accordingly, I urge you to become servant leaders, as described by Robert Greenleaf. In meeting the needs of others you will live well and with meaning. Let me share with you the words that Robert Kennedy shared shortly after declaring his candidacy for President of the United States in 1968. He said the following: "The gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country. It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."



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In short, this is not about the money, it is all about the meaning. “Do well by doing good for others.” This will lead to great meaning and value in your lives.

The attributes of servant leaders are well aligned with the attributes of outstanding physicians. Let me explain. Some of the attributes of servant leaders that come to my mind in this context include:

Listening and Reflection-this leads to insight, wisdom, understanding and growth

Awareness-being sharply awake to but reasonably disturbed by concerns, which are observed

Empathy-a distinguishing characteristic-the world may be flat but technology will never replace it nor will it ever be outsourced-your patients will depend on your empathy

Healing-the ultimate goal is to make people, organizations and communities whole

Persuasive-not coercive

Commitment to others-nurturing the success of patients and colleagues-it really is not all about you

I encourage you to serve others with the skills of a servant leader and consider making the moral commitment to improving the health of the public including our most vulnerable citizens. We will be better for your good work. As a result you will find meaning and fulfillment-that is to say both personal and professional well being.

In closing, I share with you words that I encountered now more than 40 years ago about the time I graduated from college. They have encouraged me and perhaps inspired me. I do not know the source to whom I should attribute them so I reluctantly consider them mine. You have been asked to remember a great deal already and such will continue to be the case in your future. I share them with you because they have been a good guide for me.

So remember the value of time, the success of perseverance, the dignity of simplicity, the worth of character, the influence of example, the obligation of duty, the virtue of patience, the power of kindness.



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Remember also to “Do well by doing good for others.”

Thank you and God’s speed.



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