**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**SHABNAM KASHANI**

Hello everyone!! It’s a great honor to be here today, to acknowledge and congratulate those graduating from the OB/GYN residency program here at Bridgeport Hospital. Each year, as I do my part to mentor and work with the residents in the program, I am encouraged and heartened by the caliber of talent, intelligence, and dedication I witness in those I mentor and guide. It really has to be said, however, that, as we all know, this past year has been rather... **exceptional**... exceptional in the way we all endured a global pandemic and prevailed.... exceptional in the way we witnessed the sheer grit and determination of our medical staff and students.... exceptional in that, through it all, there were lights that shone way brighter than the glare of the extraordinary challenges we faced. One of the brighter lights that evidenced itself throughout the residency program was... and **IS**... that of Dr. Janice Soto Morales.

Janice’s presence in our practice, by my side, whether in the OR or while seeing patients, never failed to impress and teach **ME**. I believe the sign of an exemplary physician is one who pays attention, no matter what, strives for perfection, demonstrates an eagerness and passion to learn in greater depth and to perpetually improve technique, to seek out and absorb knowledge, both of a technical and humanitarian nature, and to constantly examine and fine tune communication with both patients and staff. That’s **A LOT** of balls to juggle and Dr. Soto Morales manages her mandate with ease, compassion, and an incredible amount of care. A truly **FINE** doctor has a deep reverence for **life** and no one I know demonstrates that better, in every facet of her life.

Her skills are impressive... her command of robotics inspires.... her ease in communicating with patients sets the bar at new heights, and her ability to converse and explain conditions, procedures, and treatment in both Spanish and English has eased many an anxious, concerned patient and family. She’s a wizard of sorts.... and while some of you have seen her walking around in her green scrubs, that’s not the only thing green she brings to life..... I probably shouldn’t admit this, because, well.... you know.... but there’s a secret I rarely share.... while some may think I have “golden hands...” don’t look too close or you’ll see my “black thumb...” not **REALLY**.... but, let’s just say, I don’t do well with plants. Okay... it’s worse than that. They kind of don’t thrive in my presence.... Patients??? Challenging surgeries???? Unraveling the mysteries of hi-tech robotics??? I’m good with all of that.... Ferns??? Snake plants??? Rhododendrons???? You’ll probably find a **Wanted** poster at (**name the local nursery)** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with my picture, front and side views..... but Janice???? She’s the darn **PLANT WHISPERER**!!! She once came to my home and saw some straggly plants... okey. They were **DEAD**. They were in the garbage... Janice just couldn’t let them go. She brought those poor, miserable discards back to life!!! I’ve seen the miracles... I have the proof!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Now that she’s leaving and going back to establish a practice in Puerto Rico, she’s agreed to sharing “joint custody” with me and her green foster babies.... **REALLY JANICE??? REALLY???? (Wait for the laugh**). I just told everyone you **CARE**!!! I also have to now admit that seeing this wizard in action has changed me... I have infinitely more compassion for vegetables.... **(Wait for the laugh**).

Her love of life doesn’t stop with patients and flora!!! Janice doesn’t only rescue plants and people... just ask her beloved cat of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I doubt a luckier or more loved animal ever lived.... Janice... just please keep her away from the plants!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Dr. Soto Morales loves her family, her friends, and her work. She demonstrates her humanity, commitment to her profession and care for her patients in everything she does... and sometimes the lines get a little blurred. Just ask Janice’s sister, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who recently gave birth.... and guess who was the attending physician??? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Janice were always close as sisters, but the birth experience provided an opportunity to see each other in new light... As \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ entered motherhood, she observed of Janice, “... She had a tone that I rarely heard.... calm yet assertive...I felt safe... I had the opportunity to see her in her element, where she felt most comfortable. That’s when I understood this profession was her calling in life. ... what was an ordinary day for most doctors, was the experience of a lifetime for sisters.”

As I congratulate Dr. Janice Soto Morales, possibly for the last time in person and in front of all of you, I want to congratulate and acknowledge her family.... her mother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, her sister,\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, her niece, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and of course her fiancé, Dr. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for sharing this treasure with us, even for such a brief time, and thank you also for providing the love and support that allows Janice to do what she does so brilliantly. In this era we live in, as we see women deservedly come to greater prominence in the world, and especially in medicine, it is reassuring to know there are strong, confident, capable women like Janice, who will serve as leaders to the women who follow in her footsteps. While I hope it doesn’t sound too cliché, remember that “empowered women empower women...” May that circle not be broken.

Albert Einstein said, “Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.” Every day, Dr. Soto Morales proves that adage. Janice, on behalf of everyone here at Bridgeport Hospital, we wish you nothing but the best in your future. May you and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ continue to fulfill your purpose in Puerto Rico.... and may you bring your very special touch to serve and heal your patients. Thank you for your dedication, your light, and your constant quest for perfection in all you do. We will miss you!!! Thank you!!