**Sosan Speech [EZ Speech No. 16441]**

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Remarks by Medo Sosan at the White Coat Ceremony for the 2019 class of the Health Science Dept. of the University of Toledo.

fellow students . . . parents . . . faculty and staff of the department of health science . . . dean [name] . . . and distinguished guests:

i feel both humbled and priviledged to have been asked to speak with you today. it’s a real honor, and i’m enormously grateful for it.

i’m also grateful — as I hope and believe all my class-mates are — for the wonderful education we’ve been given here at the university of toledo. we’ve been blessed with a wonderful faculty of teachers, who’ve made learning fun for us and who’ve given us all the tools we’ll need to succeed in our chosen field. so thank you, one and all, for your brilliance, your dedication to excellence, and your tremendous caring for each and every one of your students.

a famous baseball umpire once said of the job he had that *“this is the only profession where you’re expected to be perfect on the first day of work . . . and then get better!”* well, mr. luciano, i’m here to tell you that umpiring isn’t the only profession that’s like that, for exactly the same thing can be said about the field we’re all entering, the field of respiratory care.

up till now, our education’s mainly been about book-learning and simulations. nobody was at risk. the only thing our mistakes might’ve cost us was, maybe, a “b-minus” instead of an “a”. but now, as we begin our clinical rotations, the stakes are much higher. now, lives will be at stake. now, any mistake we make can have really serious consequences. this, of course, is true about many occupations in the healthcare field. but when you’re dealing with the very breath of life, mistakes can be deadly.

now, i’m sure we all realized this when we decided on a career path that would ultimately involve life and death decisions. but until now, this realization was mainly intellectual. soon, we’re going to experience first-hand the visceral and emotional reality of holding another person’s life in our hands. that’s a whole new ballgame, with apologies to mr. luciano. and i think that, if we’re not at least a little be scared at this prospect, then there’s probably something wrong with us.

i think it’s a good thing that we’ll never lose that fear a hundred percent, for complacency is the mother of mistakes. we’ve got to keep just enough of that fear — enough of the realization of what’s at stake — to make us keep our edge.

now, as you know, there are many times in life when it’s right and proper for a person to take a risk, to go out a limb. but caring for patients in need of respiration therapy isn’t one of those times. one of the lessons that’s been drummed into me during my studies here at the u of t — and i’m sure most of you have had the same exerience — is that if you ever have the even the slightest, teenniest, most minuscule doubt about what’s the right thing to do in a given situation, the right thing to do is . . . ***ask!***

we’ve learned so much in our studies here so far. but we obviously don’t know everything. we don’t know everything because we haven’t ***seen*** everything. as we start our clinical rotations, we’re going to start seeing a lot of things we’ve never encountered before. that’s when it’s most important for us to have the courage to ask, to have the courage to admit at some point that we don’t know what to do or how to do it. the biggest mistake any of us can make is to believe we have all the answers, that we’ve mastered all the skills, that we’ve learned everything there is to know about our profession. because in fact, we’ll ***never*** stop learning, never stop deepening our reservoir of knowledge, and never stop improving the way we interact with patients.

we’ll never be perfect . . . none of us will. but we must never stop ***striving*** for perfection. and as i look out at my fellow students here this [morning/afternoon/even-ing], and knowing you all as well as i do, i’m absollutely confident that none of us will ever stop striving, never stop asking, and never stop improving.

finally, i would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge, on behalf of all of us graduates, the tremendous debt of gratitude we all owe to our parents, without whose love, guidance, support, and encouragement we’d none of us be where we are today. so thank you, all you moms and dads out there, for everything you’ve done for us. I’m sure that most of us would agree with michael jordan, the basketball player, when said: *“My heroes are and were my parents. I can't see having anyone else as my heroes.”*

thank you for this honor.

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