



Cleveland Clinic Graduation: Opportunities and Challenges 2011

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
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This speech was presented to attendees of the Cleveland Clinic graduation ceremony on June 4, 2011.

I want to thank Cleveland Clinic, and congratulate the Faculty and leadership for their hard work to make this day possible.

My message to you, graduates: build trust and respect for your profession. I relate to the Cleveland Clinic personally. I spent many difficult hours in the Ohio facility as both my parents received critical care there. It is to this point that I will return.

I represent a university that recently made a significant effort to open a medical school. Today, we have a partnership with the Clinic of which we are proud. There are so many commonalities that we share – particularly in providing broader access to health care, and improving the quality of health care. So today, I represent our 44,000 students, our thousands of faculty and staff, and our Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine.

Candidates for graduation, as you pass through this milestone, undoubtedly, there is much running through your minds. You live in an era in which the only constant is change. The world of work is being rapidly transformed by globalization. The medical profession, particularly, in this country is changing as a result of public policy initiatives that could have a profound impact on health finance and the practice of medicine. Information and knowledge in your profession is growing – almost exponentially. Every day, new secrets of human health are being unlocked. Ray Kurzweil, a futurologist who I study, argues that we will soon witness the integration of human and machine cognition. Of course, life extension initiatives exceeding anything we have done to this point are right around the corner.

All of this, a brave new world on our doorstep, presents us with enormous opportunities, and enormous challenges as professionals. But here is where it gets interesting – no matter your mission, no matter your purpose, you, in the medical profession, are subject to the same forces of accountability as virtually every other group in society. By 2015, the shortage of doctors in our country across all specialties will quadruple, complicating this of course will be unprecedented baby boomer retirement.

So you might be thinking: “Wow! Aside from providing excellent care, there are a lot of challenges out there that I must confront.” And you might also be thinking that as individuals you really cannot do much one way or the other to have an impact on these larger macro-developments.

As you sit here today, I want to challenge you to consider the following: What will hold your profession together, what will give your work credibility in the midst of these challenging times, is what brought my parents back to the Clinic time after time – namely, their trust in your work as professionals; their trust in YOU. In so many ways, then, the challenges are not so much out there. The challenges are how you on a day-to-day basis carry yourselves professionally and personally. How you on a day-to-day basis manage your professions. How you on a day-to-day basis build trust. Because you as professionals, in your license, are essentially self-managed and self-governed, the everyday acts that you perform professionally and personally as it relates to your profession will be cumulative across your profession. Reason is a slave to emotion. Trust is emotional, not rational or scientific.

Remember what Maya Angelou, the poet reminds of us: “People may not remember what you said or did, but they certainly will remember how you made them feel.” Trust in your work, in you, and in your profession depends on the cumulative impact of your work. Here, I am reminded of Helen Keller’s observation: “The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of tiny pushes of each honest worker.” You are the honest workers of your storied profession. You have the opportunity to do good for our society.

But this opportunity carries with it the responsibility as well as the obligation to carry yourselves well. This opportunity carries with it the responsibility to ensure that you and your profession build the trust and respect that will steel it through – in this time of volatile uncertainty. No doubt your experiences at the Cleveland Clinic have prepared you well for the challenges ahead. You can be the masters of your professions’ fate: one patient, one fellow doctor, one fellow nurse, one fellow staffer and one research innovation at a time.

On behalf of my colleagues at FIU and our Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, congratulations for achieving this milestone, and thank you for allowing me to be but a small part of it! Build trust and respect for your profession.