

Occasional Address to University of Canberra
Faculty of Health Graduation Ceremony, March 2022
Dr Paresh Dawda

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Ngunnawal people and pay my respects to their Elders, both past and present and any First Nation's people that are with us today.

Chancellor, Professor Tom Calma
Vice-Chancellor - Professor Paddy Nixon
Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health – Professor Michelle Lincoln
Academics from the Faculty of Health
UC Council members
UC Executive staff members
Families and Students

First and foremost, congratulations to each and every one of you graduating today and to your families. It is indeed a milestone to be proud of and celebrate.

My own graduation was thirty years ago, 1992 in London. I recall the day well. I felt ecstatic, celebratory and a true sense of achievement for me as did my family. I also felt a nervous excitement as I embarked on the next steps of the journey in my chosen career.

A cause for celebration for many reasons. For me it was about having graduated and finished medical school against the odds. My family left Uganda as refugees in the early 70s, after a short period in India, we arrived in the UK. As a seven-year-old in the East End of London I went to an overcrowded under-achieving school, was unable to speak English and in remedial groups for most of my lessons. A drive to learn and commitment to hard work paid off true to the words of Benjamin Franklin "*an investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.*" You will all have your own personal story about your achievement that has led to your graduation today. Reflect on it and hold it close and always remember it.

A nervous excitement because I'd just finished a milestone and the future and indeed the next milestone was unknown. However, the same formula of a drive for growth and commitment to hard work I knew would see me through. It did and it certainly has not disappointed. I've enjoyed thirty years of growth in my career; growth as a clinician, as an educator, as a researcher and as a leader. That growth has seen me work in UK and in Australia. It has offered the opportunity to contribute to and advise policy in Australia and overseas as well as provide leadership internationally in the broad and diverse areas of quality, patient safety, clinical leadership, value-based healthcare, digital health, aged and palliative care. An active clinical practice has kept me grounded in the reality and those experiences have been able to shape and inform the broader agenda.

What is certain is that the healthcare of tomorrow will be very different to the healthcare of today.

The nature of the problem we're dealing with is changing. The last two years has seen the world live through a pandemic, changing the way we live and interact as a society. You of course have experienced an adaptation of education to living with COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has been responsible for over 6.1 million deaths across the world. There is however another silent pandemic – that is one of chronic diseases – it leads to 41 million deaths every year. As we grow older as a society more and more people are living with multiple conditions. To tackle this silent pandemic our healthcare systems and we as individuals working in health will need to change and embrace new and emerging models of care.

The next 30 years in health will I believe see an exponential change far greater than the last 30 years has seen. We will see changes in how we work, see changes in technology and in particular digital technology and how we use them to deliver better health care. We have already started to embrace this in our clinic in Deakin.

The complexity of care will see us working more together, more in teams and with changing scopes of work. The non-technical skills, the softer inter-personal skills, the science of teamwork and collaboration will become a hallmark of those who are most successful. In our practice in Deakin, the floor plan and workflows have been designed to encourage teamwork, all consulting rooms have a team and patient door, the team comes to the patient, there are team collaboration areas deliberately designed to encourage natural encounters throughout the day and facilitate collaboration.

Health technologies, near point testing, genetic testing will all continue to grow and become central tenets to individualised care and precision medicine. Individualised, enabling, relationship-based and coordinated care will be the definitional elements of person centred care.

Digital technologies are transforming how we work and deliver health care now. When I graduated 30 years ago desktops were only just becoming affordable and for many people using a computer meant a trip to the library and booking a computer lab. We today hold a more powerful computer in the palm of our hand in the form a smart phone than the desktop of 30 years ago. This I believe will transform the way we work. For example, we have just finished a pilot study of using advanced telehealth equipment to improve access to care for people with disabilities and who are housebound. We can use virtual care equipment to listen to heart sounds, breath sounds, check temperatures, look in ears and throats, undertake a skin examination and more – all virtually – that's 80% of the examinations we undertake as GPs. There are apps which can listen to a cough and more accurately diagnose a pneumonia than emergency department physicians. Given the law of accelerating returns tomorrows technology will be much more powerful than today's technology. I was privileged to only last week be involved in two blue-sky sessions on how we can apply emerging technology to enhance care for our ageing population and how we can use technology to support our healthcare

professionals to adapt to flexible ways of working. It is imperative we prepare for a future where we can purposefully use this technology to enhance the experience of care, to enhance the access of care, to join up and integrate care and to enhance the outcomes of care.

Practicing clinical medicine, leading, reforming and achieving success happens because of environments that are supportive. For me that support providing mental resilience and a buffer has been my incredible wife and family; tolerating my absences from home but also celebrating achievements with me and together providing me with the balance so necessary.

As I close, I'd like to leave you with three thoughts. Be proud and celebrate your success today. Reflect on your personal story to this day. It is what has got you to where you are today, and it will help you reach your aspirations for the future.

Embrace the changing ways of working, adapt to the technology, and seize the opportunities for growth as they arise.

Remember the purpose and reason you choose your profession and career. The purpose will be your anchor and your north star – guiding you as you grow and shape your career.

In the words of Malcolm X "*Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.*" You have prepared, tomorrow belongs to you. Congratulations and I truly wish all the very best.