

FEATURE ADDRESS BY
MINISTER OF HEALTH, THE HONOURABLE,
Dr. LACKRAM BODOE
MBBS Oath-Taking Ceremony, Faculty of
Medical Sciences, UWI
Southern Academy of the Performing Arts
(SAPA), San Fernando
MONDAY 14th JULY, 2025
Time: 5:30 p.m.

Good evening.

It is truly an honour to stand before you today, in my role both as Minister of Health and a member of this noble profession, to witness your public proclamation to this profession, for which so many of us present here today have worked tirelessly to set the high standards in the practice of patient care. Seeing you all gathered here I am hopeful that the practices and standards of the profession will be maintained and enhanced by your contributions.

The oath you are about to take signifies your transition from medical education to medical practice. In making that transition you are publicly: in the presence of your parents, guardians, university faculty and all those gathered here today publicly proclaiming both your commitment to upholding the ethical principles and highest standards of care, as well as, your commitment to patient well-being.

Today's transition places you in the role of saving lives, improving patient well-being and contributing to medical advancement. It is a commitment to walk with people through their most vulnerable moments, to ease pain, to listen, to heal and sometimes, to simply be present when healing is no longer possible.

And while your training has equipped you with the science of medicine, experience will now teach you its art. You will learn that no two patients are the same. You'll be challenged, mentally, emotionally and ethically.

There will be days when the system feels strained and you will feel overwhelmed. But on those days, remember this: you are part of something bigger and you must be prepared to respond not just with skill, but with conscience.

As a physician and someone dedicated to public service and the broader public good above personal gain, I urge you to hold firm to your values and the ethics of the practice of medicine. Treat every patient with dignity and respect, regardless of race, religion, gender, social status, or belief. Our differences should never define the care we give; they should deepen our understanding and enrich our humanity.

Your entry into this profession comes at a critical time in national development. The role of the physician must evolve to provide

affordable, high quality treatment for non-communicable diseases, mental health and antimicrobial resistance, just to name a few.

We must no longer consider it enough to treat illnesses. The role of the physician must evolve and expand to understand our communities, advocate policy improvements, engage in research and embrace innovation.

We must not only engage in the practice of medicine, we must provide leadership to the society in improving the standards of healthcare thereby improving quality of life.

Graduates, as you take the oath today, do so with pride but also with deep awareness. You are joining a sacred and noble profession. Let integrity be your constant, compassion your daily guide, and excellence your standard.

Finally, never underestimate the power of humility and teamwork. You will find that medicine is best practiced in partnership with nurses, pharmacists, therapists, administrators, and, most importantly, patients. Listen to your colleagues. Learn from your patients. Share your knowledge generously.

I encourage you to stay rooted in service. Volunteer. Mentor. Speak up. Be advocates for those who cannot advocate for themselves. And, when the road gets tough, and it will, return to your 'why'. Remember the reason you chose medicine in the first place.

In Trinidad and Tobago, we are on a journey of healthcare transformation. The Ministry of Health continues to focus on strengthening primary healthcare, improving digital health infrastructure, and tackling the social determinants of health. As new doctors, you will have the opportunity not just to work in the system, but to shape it. Your voice matters. Whether it is contributing to quality

improvement initiatives, participating in policy consultations, or engaging in community outreach, your leadership can help to build a more resilient, equitable healthcare landscape.

But what does that responsibility look like in today's world? It means adapting to a changing healthcare environment, one shaped by global health threats, evolving technologies, and complex patient needs. It means taking the initiative to keep learning, whether that is through specialisation, public health, or academic research. Lifelong learning is no longer optional; it is essential.

As you cross this threshold from student to professional, you will also become part of a legacy, a tradition of excellence cultivated by this very Faculty of Medical Sciences at The University of the West Indies. It is a

legacy that includes some of our region's most respected physicians, researchers, and health leaders. Upholding that legacy is now your responsibility.

In closing, I urge you:

- Let your education be your foundation, but let your compassion be your compass.
- Let science guide your hand, but let empathy guide your heart.
- Let your voice, your values and your vision make a difference not only in hospitals and clinics, but in villages, schools and policy halls.

The Ministry of Health stands ready to work with you, to support your continued development, to create opportunities for research and

advancement and to shape a healthcare system that is responsive, equitable and people-focused.

To the families and faculty who supported these graduates, thank you.

Your belief, sacrifices and encouragement have made today possible.

To the Class of 2025, congratulations. You have earned the right to wear the white coat with pride. But remember: the oath you take today is not a destination. It is a lifelong promise.

Go forth boldly. Heal wisely. Serve humbly.

Thank you and may your journey in medicine be one of purpose, progress and profound impact.