

**Address by the Honourable Dr. Lackram Bodoie
Minister of Health
UWI Faculty of Medical Sciences, School of Nursing
Oath Taking and Pinning Ceremony
Couva Multi Training Facility
Friday 18th July, 2025 @ 10:00am**

Good morning,

It is a true honour and privilege to address you on this significant occasion, your oath-taking ceremony. Today marks the culmination of hard work, personal sacrifice and unwavering determination. The late nights, rigorous training and countless hours of study have all brought you to this moment of achievement and, for that, I offer my heartfelt congratulations to you.

A strong healthcare system is built on the foundation of well-trained and dedicated professionals. Key to producing such professionals is the provision of quality education and accessible training. I therefore take this opportunity to sincerely thank the lecturers, clinical instructors, and educators who played a pivotal role in guiding you to this milestone.

We must also thank the clinical placements that gave you a variety of experiences that helped to shape you in becoming the nurses of the future. As an alumnus of this very institution, I know firsthand the calibre of work that is fostered within these walls. We therefore

have great expectations of you, for we know the standard to which you have been held.

When I first began my own journey in healthcare at Mt. Hope, one of the earliest pieces of advice I received was this: "Listen to the nurses and do as they say." This was not said in jest. It reflects the deep respect and vital role nurses play, not only in patient care, but also within the wider healthcare team.

Your insights, your attention to detail and your presence make all the difference in patient outcomes. So I encourage you too, as you embark on a wonderful, exciting and fulfilling career, that you listen to your seniors in the clinical areas for as they did for me in my early career; they will share their expertise and guidance with you and that will help to be a great professional.

As we look ahead, the Ministry of Health, under the stewardship of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, remains committed to advancing our health system. We are strengthening primary healthcare, improving digital infrastructure and addressing the social determinants of health.

As part of our ongoing initiatives to better manage non-communicable diseases, we have extended the opening hours of health centres with the support of a Registered Nurse and an Enrolled Nursing Assistant. In many communities, this is a new and significant step and therefore the utilisation of this service will help determine the level of additional staffing as needed in each area. Ultimately, this initiative plays a key role in improving access to

care and supporting patients in managing their conditions more effectively.

We have established a dedicated committee to address surgical waiting times at our health facilities. This effort will help improve time management and overall efficiency of many of our institutions, which is essential for supporting our hardworking nurses.

Plans are also in discussion for developing catheterisation labs across major hospitals to support a nationwide “90-minute policy”, ensuring life-saving intervention within 90 minutes from heart attack to stent placement.

While the country faces challenges in the nursing sector, I wish to assure you that the Ministry of Health is listening and taking action that will ensure your safety, comfort and security in your career. To support this effort, we have identified the existing vacancies across the Regional Health Authorities and have requested funding in the upcoming fiscal year to facilitate the recruitment needed to fill these positions.

These developments are not only significant improvements for patients, but they also create new opportunities for you. Opportunities for employment, professional growth and specialisation.

Florence Nightingale, the pioneer of modern nursing, once said, “let us never consider ourselves finished, nurses. We must be learning all of our lives.” Therefore, I challenge you today: do not

stop here. Let this achievement be the foundation, not the finish line. We encourage you to continue your studies, so that when you pass the Regional Examination for Nurse Registration, you are eligible for recruitment by your employer of choice, and begin to make the difference as a nurse.

I also urge you to discover your passion, whether it is oncology, critical care, paediatrics or research, and pursue it with the same commitment that brought you here. Conduct research. Innovate. Contribute to the body of knowledge that will shape the future of healthcare in Trinidad and Tobago.

To this end, we will remain steadfast to prioritising continuous training and development for our healthcare workforce, working closely with institutions like the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, the University of the West Indies, COSTAATT and the University of Southern Caribbean to ensure our nurses have the tools, resources and support to develop professionally. This includes training programmes in the required specialisations.

Today's pinning ceremony is more than symbolic. It is a sacred commitment to uphold the highest standards of your profession, to provide compassionate care and to honour the oath you are about to take. I have always proclaimed that nurses are the backbone of the healthcare system. You are the ones who stand at the bedside, who offer reassurance in moments of fear and who bring healing

not just through skills, but through presence, patience and empathy.

As you step into your new role, always remember your patients are your clients. Treat them with courtesy, dignity and kindness. Illness is a difficult time, emotionally and physically, and your warmth and professionalism can make a tremendous difference in a patient's journey toward recovery. Like Florence Nightingale, be remembered for how you look after patients.

Let today's oath be your enduring promise to deliver excellent care, to lead with compassion and to serve with integrity.

Once again, congratulations to all of you. We welcome you to the health sector and we look forward to building, together, a future of world-class healthcare for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you and may your journey in nursing be fulfilling and impactful.