

Discours de cérémonie de remise des diplômes, USJ, 5/7/2024.

مساء الخير

أصحاب المعالي والسعادة والسيادة، حضرة رئيس جامعة القديس يوسف في بيروت البروفسور الأب سليم دكاش
حضرات أعضاء الهيئة التعليمية والإدارية، الضيوف الكرام، أهالي وعائلات الطلاب المميزين،
الزملاء خريجي جامعة القديس يوسف للعام 2024 ،

أحييكم جميعاً أحر تحية ويشرفني أن أكون بينكم في هذه الأمسية المميزة وأشكركم على دعوتكم لي للمشاركة في حفل تخرجكم

Honorable Rector, vice-rectors, deans, directors, professors and faculty, members of the administration and staff of the USJ, esteemed guests, parents, families, and friends of the graduates, and most importantly to the exceptional graduating students in Pharmacy, Nutrition, Medical Laboratory Technology, Dental Medicine, and Nursing, it is my great privilege and pleasure to be with you on this day of celebration to share this special moment with you.

Your graduation today takes me back to that beautiful and unusual sunny spring day in Boston in June 1997 when my classmates and I were graduating from Harvard Medical School. Our proud families, like yours, looked on as we listened to the Commencement speeches congratulating us and giving us advice for our future. We were eager to commence working as new doctors in our crisp white coats but also anxious about the unknown future. **I will now share with you four lessons** that I have learned on my journey as a doctor and researcher.

The first lesson is to be prepared. Louis Pasteur, the French pharmacist, chemist and microbiologist who made many important discoveries such as treating milk to stop bacterial contamination in a process that we call “pasteurization”, as well as in vaccination and the germ theory of disease, said during his welcoming speech in 1854 as the Dean of the new Faculty of Sciences at Lille:

"Dans les champs de l'observation, le hasard ne favorise que les esprits préparés" ("In the field of observation, chance favors only the prepared mind").

What does it mean to be prepared? Over the past several years, the outstanding education you have received at USJ has prepared you, and prepared you exceptionally well, for this day when you will obtain your diplomas and launch your professional careers. But you will be a lifelong student, because learning in the healthcare profession – whether you are a pharmacist, a dentist, a doctor, a nurse, a nutritionist, or a laboratory technician, is a lifelong process that will continue for the rest of your lives.

And if you are truly prepared, chance will – one day- favor some of you who are sitting here today, and you will make some of those life-saving discoveries, as in the example of your Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy, **Professor Marianne Abi Fadel**, herself a graduate of the Faculty of Pharmacy of USJ, who was working on her PhD in a laboratory in Paris in 2002 when she discovered the function of a novel protein called proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type 9 (**PCSK9**) in regulating cholesterol levels in the blood. This important discovery – one that is worthy of the Nobel prize – led to a competition between several top pharmaceutical companies that then developed new biological drugs that inhibit this protein, which we now use clinically in order to lower cholesterol levels of our patients, prevent heart attacks, and allow patients to live longer.

The second lesson is to be resilient to change and unexpected events. The healthcare profession is continuously changing and advancing, with many discoveries and new lifesaving therapies that have given hope and years of life to many patients and their families. There have been many remarkable successes in the past 25 years, but the entire healthcare field today is transforming and evolving at an unprecedented rate with changes coming in rapidly with advances in artificial intelligence, genomics and other omics fields, big data, bioengineering, and the development of wearable devices that will transform healthcare. Your jobs tomorrow will likely be very different in 10 or 20 years because of these advances. Your professional life will not be a smooth road. You will experience challenges, stress, and sometimes disappointments. And I know you know this well, not just because of the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, but because of the resilience and strength that has grown in you as a result of all the disruptions to your studies, from the 2020 Beirut port explosion which many of you directly suffered from, to the turbulent financial crisis of the past few years, and from the past and current instability and wars that have left their mark on all of us. For as the German philosopher **Friedrich Nietzsche** said in 1888: “***Out of life’s school of war— what doesn’t kill me, makes me stronger.***” Your resilience will be like the resilience of the **Lebanese fig tree**, which survives difficult hot summers with minimal water and is resistant to many harmful diseases. And when it burns or is cut down, the fig tree grows back again because it has deep strong roots that can tear the rocks apart.

The third lesson is to be responsible and to care for your patients and the people around you. You are fortunate to have studied at one of the most distinguished universities in Lebanon and the entire Mediterranean region, a university that was established 150 years ago and which has been a leading center of education, enlightenment, and empowerment for our ancestors, for us, and for future generations in Lebanon and beyond. As you graduate today and commence your professional lives, you will now belong to an elite group of professionals and leaders in the healthcare field. But remember that with opportunity comes responsibility, and **with great opportunity comes great responsibility**, as the common proverb says.

Your responsibility is not just to yourself or to your family members – in particular your parents who have sacrificed and worked so much for your sake, but your responsibility is to every one of your patients, to your profession, to your country, and to humanity. For you are the “**frontline heroes.**” As the COVID-19 pandemic reminded us, it is an honor, a privilege, and a moral responsibility for us to serve our patients and communities, sometimes even at risk to our own lives in completely unpredictable circumstances. You will be rewarded with the trust of the patients you serve and with positively affecting their lives and contributing to your community.

We are fortunate that healthcare is a team effort and every one of you will be an important part of this collaborative mission. **And that is the fourth lesson. You are not alone but work as part of a team.** Always give your best effort, even under difficult circumstances. Be like **Kylian Mbappé** playing for *Les Bleus* even while suffering from the pain of a broken nose!

To the USJ graduates, I wish you happiness, success and continued achievements.

Je clos ce discours en vous souhaitant mes meilleurs vœux de réussite dans vos projets professionnels et personnels. Une nouvelle porte s’ouvre à vous, qu’elle vous soit prospère et généreuse. C’est à vous maintenant de saisir les opportunités pour atteindre vos objectifs de vie. Bonne chance à toutes et à tous.

في الختام، اكرر شكري لكم لدعوتي لهذا اللقاء الرائع مع أعضاء الهيئة التعليمية والزملاء الخريجين، وأهنئهم مع أفراد عائلاتهم بقطف ثمار جهودهم وتضحياتهم وأتمنى للخريجين دوام النجاح والتوفيق في تحقيق أهدافهم المستقبلية وأودعكم بقول **ميخائيل نعيمة** في كتابه **مرداد**:

"أنتم بناءة سفن كل على طريقته وأنتم بحارون كل في سبيله، ذاك هو العمل المعد لكم منذ الأزل: أن تمخروا عباب ذلك المحيط اللامتاهي الذي هو أنتم لتظفروا منه بلحن الوجود الصامت الذي هو الله"

عشتم وعاش لبنان

Samia Mora, MD

Professor, Harvard Medical School