



Office of  
the Prime Minister

**Oath Swearing and Robing Ceremony to Welcome the New Medical Graduates of  
The University of The West Indies School of Clinical Medicine and Research**

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**HON. PHILIP DAVIS, QC, MP  
PRIME MINISTER & MINISTER OF FINANCE  
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

**BAHA MAR CONVENTION CENTER**

**MONDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> AUGUST 2022**

Learned, Honoured and Distinguished Guests,  
Graduates of the UWI School of Clinical  
Medicine and Research,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Good evening!

At one time or another, so many young  
children dream of becoming doctors.

In fact, my father dreamed of me becoming a  
doctor.

In the childish imagination, doctors are almost magical figures of healing, figures of great power and authority.

In the experience of many adults, doctors are trusted figures, especially at moments of great personal crisis, when they are seemingly gifted with the ability to determine life or death.

And so we salute you, the ladies and gentlemen, whose commitment to this noble vocation has brought you to this moment, the

taking of the oath and the donning of the white coat.

I was surprised to learn about the origins of the practice of doctors wearing the white coat.

I imagined that this had always been the case, given the obvious associations with cleanliness and safety.

However, it turns out that, up until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, doctors only wore black.

Apparently, this was meant to give them a serious, sombre presence, and usefully

disguised the necessary dirt and stains of the profession.

As scientific advances made clear the need to operate in sterile, germ-free environments, the black coat was changed to white.

Even then, Doctors understood the need to promote trust between themselves and their patients, as well as the general public.

The 'Hippocratic Oath' which you swear, is also noteworthy, in that it is focused on 'ethics': not on science, not on individual

medical practices, not on biology, chemistry or physics, but 'ethics'.

And what is the study of ethics?

Put simply, it is a consideration of 'what is the right thing to do'.

And so this evening's ceremony, the moment when you officially become doctors, is characterised by symbols of 'ethics' and trust'.

Symbols dignify the occasion.

They bring solemnity to the moment.

Matters of 'trust' and 'ethical consideration' are two of the areas of great conflict and challenge in these times.

And they both draw from the same well in answering the question: 'at any given time, what is the right thing to do'?

When I received the Instruments of the Office of Prime Minister, I spoke of the need for productive partnership between the government and the Bahamian people.

This was my prescription for addressing the erosion of trust in the body politic.

I extend the same thought to you this evening.

One of the best ways to ensure the good health and wellness of our nation, is for there to be productive partnership between the government and members of the medical profession.

Given the role that doctors play, it almost goes without saying that you must be at the forefront of that partnership.



If ever we were ignorant before, through the experiences of the pandemic and Hurricane Dorian, none of us can be in any doubt as to the valuable roles you play in securing the health of our people.

We should never tire of saying 'thank-you' for all that doctors have done, and continue to do, to help our people.

But we know that doing so has taken a terrible toll on members of your profession.

We understand how doctors gave and sacrificed, through the bouts of repeated Covid infection, the overwhelm and near collapse of our healthcare system, the stress and mental burnout of long hours and limited resources, not to mention the long absences from loved ones.

We also understood how, during the height of it, many felt under-valued and under-paid.

This was why, as a matter of fundamental principle, one of the first acts of my administration was to resolve the issue of

outstanding pay, which soured relations between the government and doctors.

I appreciate that many have been left feeling uncertain and demoralised, unsure that the government will fully play its part in the partnership.

As long as I am charged with the leadership of the country, you have my word that, we will.

We are truly at an inflection point in history, not just here in The Bahamas, but around the world.

Environmental, economic and political upheavals have challenged, and are changing the old way of doing things.

We cannot carry on as before.

For too long we have spoken of change – now is the time to act.

We have already set in motion some of our plans to implement some big changes in health and wellness.

But first we need to get to grips with the basics.

I should point out that even though they are basic, they still require substantial investment.

For example, we are already investing in two new, state-of-the-art hospitals in Grand Bahama and New Providence.

This is a major step forward in upgrading the infrastructure of our healthcare.

We have also expanded the provision of specialist Family Medical doctors, so that we are well on track to ensure that every

government clinic has one, including those in the Family Islands.

And we are also continuing to move towards the provision of universal health coverage.

This is a foundational change in the way Bahamians can access healthcare services.

These exciting developments are happening now, at the beginning of your careers.

You have the opportunity to be a part of it, to help guide and shape the future, such that

healthcare in The Bahamas can form part of each of your personal legacies.

The government is playing its part in providing a structure and framework to promote good health and wellness.

At each stage and step of the way, we must squarely answer the question: what is the right thing to do?

What can you do?

I trust that each of you already has a vision for your career; that includes how you help those who seek your care.

Apart from the personal, there is much that you can do to support national development.

For example: social media has done much to undermine confidence in some established medical practices.

For many decades in this country, we have taken vaccines against polio, mumps, measles and so many of the viruses which killed



millions of children and young people before us.

These immunisations were part of a worldwide effort to wipe out the scourges that had afflicted generations.

And yet the immunisation against the Covid-19 virus, one of the great, collaborative efforts of our time, is undermined by misinformation transmitted via voice notes and YouTube videos.

You can play a critical role in helping to restore trust, to promote evidence and reason.

You can help your patients and the wider public to understand the best way forward.

This is a small, but pivotal example of the impact that you can have.

In fact, you have already entered into partnership with the Bahamian people.

Through the government subventions which supported your education, you have already agreed to give back in terms of service to public health.

I hope that the satisfaction of this obligation is not viewed as a chore, but as an

opportunity to practice your profession among and on behalf of your fellow countrymen.

In so many ways, The Bahamas, and indeed the whole world, is in need of healing.

By your oath and the symbolism of your white coat, I pray that you bring your best selves to play your part in that effort.

Congratulations, and thank you.

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