



Address by Professor Patrick Murray, Dean of Medicine & Head of School at the

UCD Medicine Clinical Commencement 'White Coat' Ceremony 2018

Friday 9th February 2018, UCD O'Reilly Hall



Your Excellency, Ambassador Anizan Siti Hajjar Adnin, Ambassador of Malaysia, ladies and gentlemen, faculty members, students and guests, both on site and online.

I would like to welcome you to the 9th Annual White Coat Ceremony of the UCD School of Medicine. My name is Pat Murray, and I'm honoured to lead this ceremony as Dean and Head of School.

The tradition of the White Coat ceremony was established in the USA, in 1993 at Columbia University NY, by Dr. Arnold Gold. In most American schools, this event takes place at medical school entry. At UCD, where the ceremony was established in 2009 by my predecessor as Dean, Prof. Bill Powderly (who incidentally was last year's White Coat Ceremony keynote speaker), the White Coat ceremony is a clinical commencement event, marking the transition from a predominance of pre-clinical, university campus-based learning of medical science, to a period of clinical education with patient contact in hospital sites and in the community.

Before addressing your transition to the clinical environment, it's important to recognise that today is equally a recognition of the extensive knowledge of biomedical science that you have mastered to date, under the tutelage of our expert faculty (several of whom are on stage here tonight), which puts you in a position to apply this knowledge of the scientific basis of health and disease in the clinical arena. In UCD, we think it is important to mark this transition formally, and this tangible marker of career progression is very much appreciated by students and family members alike.

I would like to specifically acknowledge the contribution for Dr. Frank Bonner, a 1970 UCD Medical graduate, formerly based and practicing in Philadelphia (now retired in Florida), who has generously supported this event since its inception.

The awarding of a white coat is both practical and symbolic; in addition to the obvious protection of clothing, the white coat represents the increased professional privileges, but also the responsibilities that accompany this transition. In addition to meeting the expectations for professionalism in your practice, conduct, and ethics, you are also joining a medical community in which it is a doctor's primary responsibility to be a strong advocate for their patients, above all other considerations (personal and otherwise). This is particularly important in a period of shrinking healthcare resources, in which you must reinforce the standard of evidence-based best practice to guide management of patients under your care. The latter also mandates development of leadership and teamwork skills, which we will also



seek to develop before your graduation and beyond. Finally, it is important that your behaviour in the clinical setting is geared toward protecting patients and optimizing their outcomes, whether it's by rigorous hand hygiene, up to date vaccination against communicable diseases, or other aspects of evidence-based, scientifically-guided clinical practice.

To help you in what can be a stressful transition, we provide you with multiple resources, including the *UCD School of Medicine student's guide to learning on clinical sites* (prepared by Dr Suzanne Donnelly -Associate Dean for Programmes & Educational Innovation). We have also provided you with the Medical Council guide for medical students on ethical standards and behaviour. I'd like to convey the regrets and personal best wishes of Prof. Freddie Wood, President of the Medical Council, who is a regular visitor to the School, and a recent keynote speaker at this event, but could not join us tonight. He wishes you well.

Perhaps most important, in addition to written and electronic resources, you will have the guidance of your supervising medical colleagues, in what is truly a clinical apprenticeship. You will find that the consultants, GPs, and house staff you work with are an overwhelmingly bright, hardworking, dedicated group of professional experts who advocate for their patients every day. You will also work in interdisciplinary teams, another change for many, and you will learn to work with groups of equally professional and dedicated colleagues in other health care disciplines, who similarly have much to teach you. Please be assured that in this challenging period, you will have the support of your peers, medical colleagues, and university counsellors. It is the ultimate goal of everyone involved in your medical education to provide you with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and mentorship to prepare you for clinical practice, beginning with graduation and becoming an intern, but also continuing as a lifelong learner and medical professional. It is our goal in UCD to make sure that each of our medical graduates reaches their full potential, exemplified by our keynote speaker today.

As I draw towards a close, it is with profound sadness that I remember the untimely passing of your classmate Ruth Potter, in late November of last year. In Limerick at her funeral, I saw first-hand how she was valued as a classmate and friend to many of you. I also know that your presence there in Limerick was a great comfort to her family. Others in the UCD School of Medicine community have suffered recent bereavements of family and friends. For these reasons, we in the School are always conscious that your early clinical exposures may stir up difficult emotions. Please share your burden with us, and we will provide you whatever supports you need. Before we proceed, I'd like to have a moment of silence for Ruth.

[Moment of silence observed]

Thank you very much.

In closing, I congratulate all of you on achieving this landmark, and we look forward to welcoming you to our clinical sites. I'm sure that your families are equally pleased to see their children, siblings, or partners progress to this important transition point, and we thank them for their support. I would like to give them an early, interim, pre-graduation round of applause, which I am sure you'll join my in. I look forward to seeing you all on the wards!



Introduction of Key Note Speaker, Professor Ronan O'Connell by Professor Patrick Murray

Before we come towards the end of the evening, I want to introduce our keynote speaker for tonight who, truly to anybody in the School whether they are staff or students, genuinely doesn't require an introduction.

Professor Ronan O'Connell recently retired as longstanding Professor of Surgery and Chair of Surgery at UCD and at St Vincent's University Hospital. An international leader in surgical research and education, it was a momentous occasion and we had a wonderful festschrift when he retired during the year. He has continued in clinical practice as St Vincent's University Hospital as a colorectal surgeon and, hot off the presses, has become the newly elected Vice President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and I would like to congratulate Ronan on that achievement.

[Applause]

Professor O'Connell has particular insights into the education of medical students in the clinical setting not just from his practice and his teaching of surgery but also from his chairmanship of the MDC3 Clinical Curriculum Committee for many years in the School where he took care of all the cases of students who were, indeed thriving in most cases, but in some cases struggling and in other cases striving for excellence. He helped make sure that the clinical environment was optimal for that purposes. So it is with great pleasure that I ask him to give us his comments on what he learned from his role in UCD and I would like to just finishing before I give you the floor, Ronan, by also congratulating him on becoming an Emeritus Professor of UCD, so that you will always be associate with the University. Thank you very much for coming.

[Applause]