



COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS, 2010

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MOUNT SINAI
SCHOOL OF
MEDICINE

Innovation at Mount Sinai: Past, Present, and Future

Welcome, honored guests, distinguished faculty, family, and friends.

Sitting before you are the 2010 graduates of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, who are among the most accomplished graduates of any medical and graduate school in the world. They have distinguished themselves in the classroom, in the clinic, in the research laboratory, in our Harlem community, and in disadvantaged regions throughout the world.

You cannot achieve this level of success by yourself. As Bruce Springsteen says, "You need a band." Or as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton observed, "It takes a village."

So I want to congratulate the parents, grandparents, other family members and friends of our graduates for providing the roadmap that brought our graduates to this momentous day. We should also all acknowledge the wonderful educators, sitting behind me and in the audience, who have dedicated their professional lives to training and mentoring Mount Sinai students.

Graduates, today you look toward the future with great expectation, but it is also a time for reflection.

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." Luke 12:48

Sometime in the future, when all has been said and done, you will look back over the course of your career and ask, "Did I fulfill my responsibility?"

You will be measured by your answers to questions such as these:

- Did I reach my potential?
- Was I passionately dedicated to my patients?
- Did I show integrity and courage and stand up for what is right, even during tough times?
- Did I push the envelope of science—and myself—to make the discoveries that truly made a difference?

As one of the world's great medical institutions, Mount Sinai — like the graduates it trains — bears great responsibility. Indeed, in 1866, the hospital was named Mount Sinai after a passage in the Bible that describes Moses' journey to Mount Sinai and how the Lord said, "I, the Lord, am thy Healer." Exodus 15:26

From its inception until the present day, Mount Sinai has been committed to being a healer, providing the very best clinical care to all who enter its doors. We remain devoted to teaching and mentoring, which is at the core of our mission. And we have always been a wellspring of scientific innovation and discovery. More diseases and clinical syndromes, such as Tay-Sachs and Crohn's disease, have been named after Mount Sinai physicians than any other medical center.

Combination chemotherapy for cancer was pioneered, and the

link between asbestos exposure and the development of cancer was identified, by Sinai doctors. Numerous instruments, devices, tests, and methods, including the cardiac stress test and the radioimmunoassay method, were developed by Mount Sinai physicians and scientists. The first separate pediatrics department in a general hospital in New York City and first geriatrics department in a medical school in the United States were established at Mount Sinai. I could go on and on.

Today, the innovation continues. Mount Sinai-based research breakthroughs will improve the treatment for diseases of the brain and heart, cancer, viral infections, and many other maladies. The opportunity for innovation in biomedicine has never been greater. There is strong evidence that investments in biomedical research can improve the health of the nation, can bend the health care cost curve, and revitalize the economy.

Why is the opportunity currently so great? A major reason is the investment made during President Clinton's tenure to sequence the human genome, and the accomplishments of Craig Venter and others that enabled completion of this historic task.

Physicians will diagnose disease and provide personalized treatment based upon genetic data. By knowing the genes that cause human disease, prevention of illness will become a reality. The classification of human disease based upon genetic profile will accelerate the discovery of safer, more effective therapies.

Mount Sinai is currently implementing a two and a quarter billion dollar Strategic Plan, including the construction of a fabulous research building, the Center for Science and Medicine. The measure of success of our Strategic Plan will be simple: Have Mount Sinai physicians and scientists made discoveries that fundamentally changed the practice of medicine and improved the health and well-being of our patients?

To accomplish this, we are assembling the best and the brightest — multidisciplinary, highly collaborative scientific teams to identify targets of opportunity and break down the barriers to translating the findings from genomics to the bedside and the exam room.

Our formula is great leadership; superb, creative scientists; teamwork; an inspiring mission; and the resources and freedom to accomplish our goals. We intend Mount Sinai to be at the forefront of biomedical research in the 21st century, when genomics transforms human health the way physics transformed the 20th century.

Graduates in this room, you are likely to participate in the most profound biomedical revolution in history. You will stand on the shoulders of giants, of those who came before. You will witness and participate in advances that many of us who trained you will never see, and your generation will improve human health to a degree that most of us could only dream about. We envy you. And we know that the future is in good hands.