



Ollscoil na hÉireann
National University of Ireland

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN IRELAND
A RECOGNISED COLLEGE OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

CONFERRING CEREMONY

Thursday, 4 June 2009 at 6.00 pm
in the National Concert Hall

Address by Dr Maurice Manning,
Chancellor, National University of Ireland



President, Pro-President, Colleagues, new graduates, ladies and gentlemen,

As Chancellor of NUI, I am delighted to be here this evening for this RCSI conferring ceremony in the National Concert Hall. I look back with a certain amount of nostalgia to the days pre-dating the National Concert Hall when this complex was the main campus for University College Dublin where I studied and have taught for many years. It's good to see Earlsfort Terrace still being used for NUI conferrings.

This evening Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees of the National University of Ireland have been conferred on students of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – one hundred and eighty-eight degrees in total. These are the first NUI degrees I have conferred since becoming Chancellor of NUI earlier this year. I am delighted to have the opportunity to welcome our new graduates to the growing community of NUI graduates, whose members – particularly in the medical profession – are spread across the globe. This is a happy occasion but undoubtedly our thoughts and sympathies go out today in a very special way to the families of the three young doctors who graduated just two years ago and who died so tragically in the Air France disaster.

Medical Science is one of the most highly sought after disciplines in the University. Places are limited and entry highly competitive. The undergraduate programme of studies is rigorous, its duration one of the longest in the university. Those of you who have graduated today can feel proud that with your medical qualification you have achieved something that is highly prized in society. This is true not only of Ireland, but also, I imagine, of the many countries represented among today's graduates. In studying at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland you have been educated at a distinguished and prestigious institution, which is a leading centre for medical and healthcare education in Ireland. While you may not always have felt so in the course of your studies, you are a most privileged group and will go on to occupy positions of considerable power in society.

Power and privilege are not natural bedfellows of humility and humanity, yet these latter qualities are ones that will stand you in good stead in your professional lives. The purpose of your expensive education and training has been to equip you to provide services to humanity at its most vulnerable, both individually and collectively. Your patients, no matter what sector of society they come from, will be anxious and frightened, dependent of course on your expertise, but looking to you also for reassurance, for comfort, for hope.

The public at large will be looking to you for reassurance that public health systems are geared appropriately to cope with the increasing threat of a pandemic. Speaking as one of the few non-medics on the platform, I can say to you with conviction, that while your knowledge and skills will of course be of paramount importance to your practice, your patients or potential patients, will also place a high value on your human qualities, your capacity for empathy and fellow feeling. You should always be aware that the way you communicate, the language you use and the manner of your address, all speak volumes about your regard for those entrusted to your care.

Having finished my sermon, I wish to offer my warmest congratulations to all of those new graduates who have been conferred today. I wish you every success as you embark on what I know will be challenging, and I hope, fulfilling careers in medicine and healthcare.

To those of you who have been conferred with postgraduate qualifications I offer my congratulations on your further achievement. The increased prominence of RCSI as a centre for postgraduate studies and research is reflected in the graduating cohort today, with just 10% of the graduates qualifying at doctoral level, whether with PhDs or MDs.

For the parents, families and friends who are here, the conferring day is also a great occasion. You too have earned the right to celebrate today and be proud as you see these graduates successfully reach new milestones.

For the President, Registrar, Dean and all the staff of RCSI, together with the members of RCPI, this is also a joyous occasion with the satisfaction of seeing another cohort safely through and on behalf of the university, I extend my congratulations to you also.