

**ADDRESS BY PROF. TSIRI AGBENYEGA, DEAN, SCHOOL OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES, KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI AT THE OATH-SWEARING CEREMONY OF NEWLY QUALIFIED DOCTORS AT THE GREAT HALL, KNUST, KUMASI ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2008**

The Chairman, University Council  
The Vice-Chancellor, KNUST  
Otumfuo's Representative  
The Vice-Chancellor, University of Ghana  
The Vice-Chancellor, University for Development Studies  
The Chairman and Members of Ghana Medical and Dental Council  
Hon. Ministers of State  
The Registrar  
Provosts, Deans, Directors  
Dean of the University of Ghana Medical School  
The Dean, UDS School of Medicine  
The Vice Dean, School of Medical Sciences  
Chief Executive, Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital  
President, Ghana Medical Association  
Heads of Department  
Senior Members, School of Medical Sciences  
Nananom  
Staff and Students  
Members of the Press  
Ladies and Gentlemen

As always, it is my pleasant duty to welcome you to another Oath Swearing Ceremony. This is the 15<sup>th</sup> in the series and it's being held for the graduating class of 2008.

This time around we are welcoming into our fold 117 doctors, bringing to a total 1286 made in Kumasi doctors. Out of the 114 swearing their oath today 41% are female. At SMS, the girl-child has always been given equal opportunities and we pride ourselves in being leaders in the University, when it comes to gender balance.

Much as we would want to admit anyone who applies for admission into School of Medical Sciences, it is mathematically impossible to do that. Only a lucky few will be admitted every year. We should all come to accept that the days of "medico or suicide" are over. Let us learn to explore other options. Parents should not force their children to follow in their footsteps or to live their dreams. The fact that you are a doctor or wanted to be one does not mean your son or daughter should be one.

Now, permit me to advise our newly acquired colleagues and by that, I mean these brand-new doctors. You should strive to become very good at what you do and you should continue to learn.

Learning is a process not an event. For those of you who think that learning would be over after graduation ... well, think again!!! You should never stop learning. Indeed, it gets easier

to learn once you're out of school because it's easier to see the relevance of what you learn and the pressure is never there.

You should also aim to be, not just good doctors, but great doctors. To quote *Alberta Lee Cox* "It is not enough to be very good if you have the ability to be great".

But as doctors you must also remember that "Greatness is not standing above your fellows and ordering them around, it is standing with them and helping them to be all they can be." *G. Arthur Keough*.

Over the years, the cost of running the Medical School has been increasing steadily. Financing medical education is not easy. The three missions of the medical school, namely research, education & training and service are not profitable missions. You rarely can make any money at all in the short-term, the medium and even long-term in research. And you certainly cannot make money in the training of young physicians.

We should therefore, look for alternate sources of funding. Corporate bodies with the exception of a few have not been very good to us. Let it not be said that corporate bodies are only interested in funding beauty pageants and sports events. They should help us with the funding that would enable us create a more congenial environment for teaching and learning.

Till we are able to afford all the nice things that will make us an exceptional Medical School we have to keep dreaming as the "Future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams". Eleanor Roosevelt.

Our pecuniary state notwithstanding, we continue to make great strides in Medical Education. We have a crop of dedicated teachers who continue to put in a great deal of work for scant reward. We all wonder how long we can sustain this altruism?

You have to be very patriotic to remain a teacher in the Medical School when your colleagues who may be much junior than you enjoy a salary which is twice yours, all because he or she works in a hospital.

We are gradually moving towards a situation where there will be an internal migration of highly qualified personnel from the Medical Schools to the Hospitals if this great injustice is not corrected. And please, do not tell me a teacher's reward is in heaven. What if he/she does not make it to Heaven?

Finally, let us all resolve, at the beginning of our working life, to serve our nation better. Have fruitful careers and God bless each and every one of you.

**Prof. Tsiri Agbenyega**  
**Dean, School of Medical Sciences**  
**KNUST**

**ADDRESS BY DR. K.O. ADADEY, CHAIRMAN, MEDICAL AND DENTAL  
COUNCIL, AT THE SWEARING IN CEREMONY OF 2008 GRADUATES OF  
KNUST-SMS ON WEDNESDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER, 2008 AT THE GREAT  
HALL, KNUST**

**SALUTATION**

**CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE**

Mr. Chairman I have themed my address 'Doctor, Do No Harm', courtesy Dr. Andy Ayim's article in the July-September, 2008 issue of the Ghana Medical Association Focus Magazine. In the said article he vividly explains the four ingredients of professional negligence as the professional owing a duty of care to the client, the breaching of that duty of care, that the client suffered an actionable harm or damage and that the damage was caused by the breach.

The article surely stresses the three basic requirements to be a successful medical or dental practitioner. These are acquisition 'of the required knowledge, the development of adequate skills and above all attitude and temperament to soak the direct and indirect pressures of the work. The Medical and Dental Council, through its mandate to 'ensure that the courses of study and training in medicine or dentistry at any medical and dental school or University in Ghana are, such as can sufficiently guarantee possession of knowledge and skills needed for the efficient practice of medicine and dentistry' has ensured that the minimum standards have been met by KNUST - SMS and your teachers who also deserve tons of congratulations have laboured to bring you thus far in terms of the level of knowledge required. Also the Medical and Dental Council has reviewed the Housemanship training to make it more relevant focus and attractive to equip you with enough skills to be let loose on the good people of this country. When it comes to the third issue which is the attitude one is confronted with a lot of problems. It is even coming up whether during the intake of students into the medical schools some aptitude or psycho-social kind of test could be applied. Again even during the course itself some kind of elimination based on psychosocial instability could be undertaken. This is because as the saying goes you cannot teach an old dog new tricks. What it means is that the cultivation of the right attitude to the practice of medicine and dentistry should be right from the beginning and to be continually built upon as one goes along and that it is not a one off affair and worse of all be left to the tail end of the training. It, therefore, behoves on all of us in the profession whether ancient or modern to work hard on this aspect of the practice of our profession.

Young colleagues, I need not remind you of the steps to go through for good management of patients, that's good history taking, thorough physical examination, conducting the appropriate investigations and providing effective and the right treatment. Whilst a misdiagnosis per se may not constitute wrong doing, negligence can be proved at any of these stages for which a practitioner can be found liable. It is therefore extremely important that you use the Housemanship Training to further polish up your competencies in all these areas.

Now what are some of the implications of unethical practices. Unethical behaviour will not be tolerated; at the public level we stand focused and condemned; at the professional level, complaint may be lodged at the Medical and Dental Council with the practitioner being condemned, reprimanded, asked to apologise, or worse of all and painfully, withdrawal of license, and finally at the legal level either civil or criminal proceedings may be invoked.

Mr. Chairman, ethical dilemmas are part and parcel of our work, and healthcare practice demands more than etiquette so capacity building in ethical decision making is key. Medical paternalism is over as such medical decision are subject to scrutiny, by the healthcare professionals, courts, theologians, social commentators and the current vibrant at times overzealous media both the print and electronic. Overwork, poor facilities and inexperience are not in themselves defences in cases of clinical negligence or unethical practice. Neither is the ignorance of the law an excuse. It is important therefore that Professional Councils and Associations make positive efforts to assist health workers by producing education and clear guidelines/protocols in common ethical and legal challenges.

Now what are some of the proven guides to ethical dilemmas. First the autonomy of the patient. Respect your patients as autonomous agents capable of making informed choices. Beneficence in whatever you do in your practice do or promote the good of your patients. Non-maleficence-as far as possible do no harm to your patients. Justice-Treat all your equal patients equally and unequal patients unequally and fairly as human persons. In addition, the following factors can help you. The God factor as God doesn't approve of wilful wrong doing. The conscience factor-satisfy your conscience that you are doing your best under the circumstances. The Moral factor, are you in tune with what is generally accepted in society as morally right. Unfortunately, if you escape all these, knowing perfectly that you are doing wrong, nemesis may catch up with you as the last factor which is the legal factor may not spare you by which time you can only murmur ah! Had I known which is always at last.

Let me also mention the issue of teamwork and leadership role you are expected to play. You will find yourself as the team leader and don't let the enormity and the challenges it brings along be lost on you. A leader must be visionary. A leader must inspire and gain full confidence of his teammates each of them irrespective of their roles should be accorded the greatest respect. A leader should be able to take his people along and lead by example.

Now on the brighter side, you are entering a profession the future of which the sky is the limit. Silver spoon is being put in your mouth and you must derive the maximum benefit from it by applying yourself diligently to the rules and regulations and I assure you, you will never regret. It is a profession second to none and carries with it all the dignity, respect, honour, trust and will put food on your table always.

The Council and its collaborators particularly the Ghana Medical Association are always ready to assist you to succeed in your practice. As the Council's shared value states it will continue to guide the practitioner and play its strong advocacy role for all stakeholders particularly your employers to provide the enabling working environment for you.

As you may have realized it is not only the Hippocratic oath that you have taken. The council has a very soft spot for patriotism and hence added the recitation of the National Pledge. Also the famous patriotic song of one of the most celebrated arts and culture and songwriter legend, late Ephraim Amu has been given prominence. All these encomiums have been deliberately added to remind you of your responsibilities to the people of our motherland Ghana first and foremost and always.

Finally let me draw your minds to the last sentence of the oath that you have just sworn and you should say it once again after me ... These promises I make freely and upon my honour.

If that is your commitment to the people of this land then once again I will leave you one more of the sayings of our famous Hippocrates.

‘Now if I carry out this oath and break it not may I gain forever reputation among all men for my life and my art, but if I transgress it and forswear myself may the opposite befall me’.

Thank you for your attention.

**Dr. K.O. Adadey**  
**Chairman, Medical and Dental Council**

**SPEECH READ BY PROFESSOR KWASI KWAFO ADARKWA, VICE-  
CHANCELLOR OF KNUST, AT THE GRADUATION AND OATH SWEARING  
CEREMONY OF NEWLY QUALIFIED DOCTORS HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24TH  
SEPTEMBER, 2008 AT 10.00 A.M. AT THE GREAT HALL**

**SALUTATION**

Honourable Minister of Health  
Chairman, Medical and Dental Council of Ghana  
Director General, Ghana Health Service  
Regional Director of Health Service  
Chief Executive, Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital  
Chairman, Board of Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital  
Nananom  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor  
Registrar  
Provosts  
Chaplains of the University  
Deans & Heads of Department  
Distinguished Invited Guests  
Senior Members of Staff  
Newly Qualified Doctors  
Ladies and Gentlemen

**Introduction**

I am extremely happy to welcome all of you to the 15<sup>th</sup> Oath Swearing Ceremony of the School of Medical Sciences of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

Oath Swearing, as we all know in our Ghanaian traditions, is to make a solemn declaration to abide by the principles and regulations, of an office or association. Therefore, to swear an oath is a very serious responsibility one has to take and I trust that you appreciate the full import of what we have assembled here to witness you to partake.

**Significance of Oath Swearing**

We shall at this ceremony witness the passing out of 117 dedicated and qualified medical doctors who are ready and prepared to take the "PHYSICIANS" OATH or the HIPPOCRATIC OATH before all of us gathered here. Hippocratic oath is an oath traditionally taken by physicians pertaining to the ethical practice of medicine. It is widely believed that the oath was written by Hippocrates, the father of medicine in the 4th Century B.C. or by one of his students. This signifies the importance of what you are about to do: As an old and time tested tradition, it is not something that can easily be overlooked in the medical profession, even though it has seen some modifications over the years in various forms in various part of the world.

Our new doctors will thus be promising solemnly to commit themselves wholly and totally to the cause of mankind to cure the sick; to save lives, to uphold the good name of the noble profession of medicine and to keep and protect its principles and regulations. The important fact of this ceremony is that it concerns a 6Quntry (Ghana), where the training and retention of doctors have become a major national problem which needs to be addressed.

### **Training of Doctors at KNUST**

KNUST recognizes the delicate nature of the doctor's work and has accordingly taken measures and will continue to do so to ensure that the training of doctors is not compromised in any way. For that reason, the University has ensured that all clinical students have comfortable accommodation at Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital. The latest accommodation for clinical students completed at the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital as at a very high cost; thanks to GETFund. I believe that our new doctors will appreciate all the sacrifices the University, their parents and guardians, as well as government have made to make their training possible.

### **Expanding intake of Doctors into KNUST**

Being well aware of the unacceptable doctor: patient ratio in Ghana against the WHO standards, the KNUST is doing everything possible to increase the intake of students in the Medical School. This manifest in the number of students that have enrolled into the programme in the recent past: 2006/2007 - 142, 2007/2008 - 118 and 2008/2009 - 161. From the above, it is clear that there are many potential students willing to read medicine but we are constrained by the availability of facilities. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to appeal to government, and the Ghanaian society in general, to come to our aid by providing us with some of the needed facilities to enable us train more doctors for mother Ghana. This will help to address the shortfalls in hospitals and bridge the gap in doctor: patient ratio the country is experiencing now. Eventually, we may have to seriously consider a cost sharing formula that allows the University to increasingly provide more of its needed facilities on a sustainable basis. Hopefully, this will be done by "*communion consensus*", or by common consent.

### **Achievements of SMS Staff**

KNUST is proud of the achievement of the faculty, technicians and all other staff of the School of Medical Sciences. You have defied all odds; you have overcome all temptations; you have sacrificed a lot to make SMS one of the top class medical schools. My congratulations to you all.

### **Words of Advice and Encouragement**

We wish to congratulate all our newly qualified doctors for reaching this far. You are about to commence your professional journey. You will hold the topmost positions of the nation; managing and controlling corporations and organizations not only in Ghana but the world over. Many of you will return to be professors in KNUST and Africa's universities. You will become successful in your lives but you should never forget to give back to society what it has given you. The people of Ghana are still crying to the doctor trained with the Ghanaian tax payer's money to stay in Ghana and serve his/her people. The best "thank you" you can say to the society is to stay in the country and work, at least for some years. Work diligently and with humility at all times, and you will surely emerge victorious in life. Be guided by the oath you swear to "apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to your ability and judgment and keep them from harm and injuries". I believe you will live up to expectation and appreciate what society expects from you as well as all the ethical and moral dimensions of your practice.

I wish you all a very successful life.

Thank you and God bless us all.

**Prof. Kwasi Kwafu Adarkwa**  
**Vice-Chancellor, KNUST**