

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA
DURING THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE SOUTH AFRICA ADMISSION OF
CERTIFICANTS, FELLOWS AND DIPLOMATES AT ONGOPOTSE TIRO
HALL, UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO, POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY,
CAPRICORN DISTRICT

20 August 2026

Programme Director,

Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Limpopo, Dr Jeffrey Mabelebele,

President of The Colleges of Medicine of South Africa, Professor Modise Zach Koto,

Dean of School of Medicine Faculty of Human Sciences, Professor Shisana Baloyi,

Chairperson of Young Specialist Forum- The Colleges of Medicine of South Africa, Dr Nkateko Mnisi,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thobela, Avuxeni, Ndi Matsheloni, Good Morning, Goeie More

It gives me the greatest pleasure to be part of this august ceremony of admitting our newly minted certificants, fellows, and diplomates. Looking out across this room, I see the future of South African healthcare, which looks strong, brilliant and ready.

To choose the path of medicine is to answer a sacred calling, stepping into a legacy where science meets profound human devotion. You have chosen a noble career, a lifelong commitment to standing between suffering and relief, shielding the vulnerable and breathing hope into moments of despair. By dedicating your intellect and your heart to the art of healing, you have embraced the solemn responsibility of guarding the most precious gift of all: human life.

As you are formally admitted into the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa (CMSA), you join a distinguished fraternity bound by compassion, rigorous skill and ethical grace. This ceremony marks the moment your years of tireless sacrifice transform into a powerful instrument of care, ready to heal the sick and uplift the health of our nation. We honor your profound choice to serve humanity and we celebrate the enduring impact your hands and minds will bring to the world.

We must take a moment to acknowledge the steep price you paid to stand here today. Your credentials were not given; they were hard-earned through tears, sweat and unyielding grit. Behind every certificate, every fellowship and every diploma lies a mountain of unseen sacrifices. Think of the thousands of hours spent awake while the world slept, the missed family birthdays, the cold dinners and the heavy burden of exhaustion.

You have pushed your minds and bodies to their absolute limits to master your craft. This triumph belongs to you, but it also belongs to the families and support structures who carried you through the darkest hours of your training. Today, we celebrate your resilience.

However, with this high honor comes an even higher responsibility. The ultimate measure of your success will not be the letters attached to your name, but the integrity with which you carry them. Integrity means doing what

is right for your patient when no one is watching, when the corridors are empty and when you are completely exhausted.

Ethics must be the unshakeable foundation of your daily practice. We operate in a world where cutting corners is easy, but in medicine, a lapse in ethics costs human lives. Uphold the rules of our profession not as a burden, but as a protective shield. Let your ethical standards be non-negotiable and let your character be a beacon of light in the institutions you serve.

Cast your minds back to the day you first entered this fraternity and took your solemn medical oath. That oath was not a mere ritual or a poetic recital of words; it was a lifelong, binding contract with humanity. You pledged to consecrate your life to service, promising that no consideration of class, status or background would stand between you and your duty.

Now, more than ever, you must live out that promise. Keep it firmly in your mind that you are going out to provide vital services to the most vulnerable people in our society. These are our mothers, our fathers, our children, who have no private medical insurance and who rely solely on the public health system. They cannot choose their doctor; they choose to trust you. When they walk through the clinic or hospital doors, they place their fragile lives entirely in your hands.

Therefore, you must put people first, always. Respond to their call with urgency, not because it is your shift, but because it is your purpose.

To excel in this next chapter, you must truly love the work you do. Fall in love with the complex puzzles of diagnosis, the joy of recovery and the quiet grace of providing comfort. Let that love translate into absolute respect for your patients. A patient is not a bed number, a disease profile, or a routine case

file. A patient is someone's entire world. Speak to them with kindness, listen to their fears with empathy and treat their bodies with the utmost reverence.

Programme Director,

We cannot ignore the current landscape. We live in a time when public trust in the medical profession has been tested and frayed. When the society we serve no longer trusts us blindly, it becomes our absolute collective responsibility to bring back that dignity to our profession. We must rebuild that trust brick by brick, patient by patient, interaction by interaction.

We bring back dignity through our humility, our flawless clinical excellence and our transparency. Be the doctors that communities pray for and let your professionalism silence the skeptics.

So, let's wait no longer. Let us go out there and provide services to our people. The hospitals are waiting, the clinics are calling and our communities need your brilliance. Go forth with steady hands, firm hearts and unshakable spirits.

Carry the flag of the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa with immense pride. Step out into the world, change lives, restore the dignity of our calling and make us all remarkably proud.

Congratulations to the class of excellence!

Thank you, and may your journeys be extraordinary.

