

Leading physicians, celebs join to celebrate medical school grads

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The last few months have reinforced that medicine is a calling.

It stands to reason, then, that the induction of 30,000 new entrants into the physician family calls for a major celebration. That call is one the AMA, the nation's largest physician organization, is answering enthusiastically.

The AMA Tribute to the Medical School Class of 2020 is designed to be a unifying event and one-of-its-kind national celebration in honor of the next generation of physicians. Hosted by actor/comedian Brian Unger, the event features some of the most prominent names in medicine with words of advice, encouragement and inspiration. Enjoy the event on Facebook and YouTube.

The list of physician participants is a who's who of the nation's top medical minds, including:

- VADM Jerome M. Adams, MD, MPH, Surgeon General of the United States.
- Donald M. Berwick, MD, MPP, President Emeritus and Senior Fellow, Institute for Healthcare Improvement; former Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
- Esther Choo, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine, Oregon Health & Science University and the founder of Equity Quotient and #GetMePPE.
- Anthony S. Fauci, MD, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.
- Atul Gawande, MD, MPH, surgeon, writer and public health innovator.
- Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA, AMA President.
- Aletha Maybank, MD, MPH, AMA Chief Health Equity Officer.
- David Satcher, MD, PhD, 16th Surgeon General of the United States and former U.S. Assistant Secretary for Health.

"Now more than ever, the AMA believes we must recognize the young women and men who have answered a calling to science, patient care and the health of our nation," said Dr. Harris, the

Association's president. "As these future physicians enter a world with unprecedented challenges, it is more vital than ever to celebrate their decision to enter the medical profession and their commitment to heal."

A stay on celebrations

For many medical students, the chance to celebrate the accomplishment of successfully navigating medical school was limited by physical distancing measures imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Match Day ceremonies and graduations moved to virtual venues, depriving students of the opportunity to share their success with family members, colleagues and mentors.

Sheyla Medina, a soon-to-be graduate of the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, will be unable to physically graduate. Instead she will take in the ceremony from California, where she is relocating to train for residency at the University of California, San Francisco. Previously, she celebrated the achievement by going to her mother's New Jersey home and video calling family members from as far away as Peru.

"Being the first doctor in my family this is a really big deal for us," Medina said. "They were really excited, especially for my mom and brother to come up to Rhode Island and see me graduate. It's bittersweet. It means a lot to my family to enjoy the pleasure of celebrating with everyone. But at the same time, if there's any other profession that calls for flexibility it's medicine."

Medical students rising to the occasion

The flexibility Medina mentioned has been on display throughout the medical student population, extending well beyond accepting alternative graduation.

Students at most medical schools have been unable to be in direct patient contact for more than two months, but they have found other ways to contribute by caring for their communities during a national health crisis.

In a remarkable statement of their commitment to protecting the most vulnerable patients, some Class of 2020 graduates, opted to matriculate early to fight on the front lines against COVID-19.

Medical students have been inspiring these past few months. The AMA's celebration will offer them the opportunity to gain new inspiration during a time at which medicine needs it.

"Now more than ever graduating doctors and practicing doctors can continue to use their voices to



advocate where so many others cannot,” Medina said.

“[The AMA] celebration will bring the right kind of energy, an energy of reflection, an energy of gratitude for all of the people who have helped along the way, but also an energy for positive action.”