

OHSU School of Medicine
Medical Student Message – 6/4/12
Mathew Snodgrass, MD

Thank you Dr Jones for your kind introduction. Thanks also to the faculty for their incredible guidance and mentorship. Thank you, Dr Fields for giving me a shot as you have so many other premedical students. Thanks to family and friends in attendance for your tireless support. And thanks to the class of 2012 for your Farm fresh eggs, dapper menswear, and sacrificed ankles and ACLs on the intramural basketball court. Thanks to Dr. Magarian for a wonderful recitation of the Oath of Geneva. During my journey through medical school I learned that it is not always easy to uphold this time-honored Oath.

Near the end of my second year of medical school, I was eagerly awaiting the clinical clerkships where *real-life* patients would test what I had learned over the past two years in didactics. With a month to go before the start of third year at 12:30 am in the morning, my wife went into labor. Unfortunately for her, I saw it as a perfect opportunity to practice my vast medical knowledge on my very first patient.

She didn't sign a consent form.

My wife woke-up in the middle of the night with mild, regular, and rhythmic sensations. Four hours later, my wife's "sensations" were getting painful and more frequent. I figured the only real way to assess her progress was to do the requisite cervical exam.

How hard could it be, right?

I made my best guess as to how much she had progressed and decided to call the triage nurse. Over the phone, the nurse was surprisingly casual when I started proudly with, "I have a G1P0 at 39&1 in active labor currently at 2-3cm, 100% effaced, and at 0 station. What do you recommend?" I barely knew what I was talking about.

Without asking who-the-heck she was talking to, she responded, "it sounds like your wife is progressing well, you can stay at home or come in. Your choice."

She totally bought it.

Emboldened with unfounded confidence, I said, "I think we'll continue here." I thought of the Oath of Geneva:

I pledge PRACTISE my profession with conscience and dignity and, apparently, blind confidence.

Over the next hour-or-so, my wife's contractions increased in intensity and frequency until she said, "I think I have to push." Despite some skepticism, I figured it was probably time to head to the hospital. But not before I arranged my self-made doula bag, made the bed, and fed the cats.

THE HEALTH OF MY PATIENT will be my first consideration, except if the cats are hungry.

When we arrived at the hospital 15 minutes later, the triage nurse kept insisting she not start pushing. She was wheeled quickly into a birthing suite, stood-up, and started pushing. Three pushes later, her water broke. Three more and my son Beckett came into this world with his mother standing above him.

Forty-eight hours later as we were leaving the hospital, our nurse in her parting remarks told us, "next time, when you think you might-sort-of-possibly be in labor, come here immediately." I reassured her with, "next time it will be way different. I'll be an intern."

Our daughter is due in two months. And, honey, we're good. I'm a doctor now.

Despite having progressed to this point today, I'm still incredibly humbled by the journey we have all taken together. Because of our shared experiences, another important element of the Oath comes to mind:

I pledge that my colleagues will be my sisters and brothers.

Class of 2012 you have made this pledge far easier to uphold. Thank you so much for how you have helped my family welcome our son into the world. You have incredible integrity, compassion, and professionalism. I am so proud to stand before you to see what amazing individuals and physicians you have become. I will miss you all incredibly. I hope to cross paths with you next year when we are scared out of our minds as interns.

Class of 2012, Team, thank you.