

Class of 2020 Graduation celebration

4th March 2022

Graduate Speaker Dr Natasha Varshney

Vice chancellor, distinguished guests, friends, family and fellow graduates of 2021, today marks one of life's milestones; the culmination of years of hard work and determination.

I am truly humbled to speak to you all today.

On behalf of all my fellow graduates, I have a few thank you's I would like to begin with, firstly; Thank you to Professor Scott, our tutors, School staff and teams across the Trusts who facilitated our learning and helped guide us to this point and prepare us for our futures as doctors in the NHS. Thank you to the beautiful city that is Liverpool, for welcoming us, for giving us incredible memories and being our home for the best part of a decade. We were lucky enough to be present at a time when Liverpool football club won the Champions League final. It was magical. The whole city was swept up in this immense emotion of pride and celebration which didn't stop for days.

Thank you also to the year representatives and the committee members of our medical student societies who were crucial in fostering a sense of community during our time here. And finally thank you to the support team of people who saw us through, consisting of parents, grandparents, siblings, partners and friends - thanks to the mum's who's Tupperware boxes of homecooked food got us through the tricky exam seasons, thanks to the parents who ran a five star taxi and haulage service, lugging our belongings up and down the M62, thanks to the partners, friends, brothers and sisters who were our number one cheerleaders and were always there to listen to the trials and tribulations of university life.

Though our journeys over these last years are unique and personal to each of us, I'm sure many of you will remember we would scramble down Ashton Street to reach the Henry Cohen lecture theatre in the old Royal Liverpool hospital. This particular lecture theatre had very distinctive green, threadbare seats and it was almost a game of Russian roulette sitting down on them because they always seemed to be breaking; some of us also perfected the five minute dash to Lidl in between lectures which was just opposite and would come back armed with pizza rolls to fuel us through the next lecture.

We of course then also had to get through moments of uncertainty caused by the COVID pandemic; adjusting to sitting our finals online or undertaking clinical examinations in a unique hybrid of virtual and face to face clinical scenarios. But through those difficult times, the graduates of 2021 displayed selflessness and dedication; if you can recall in the winter of 2020 the North West was hit by Covid particularly hard and many of you stepped up as vaccinators,

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Covid swabbers or just as a general pair of extra hands to help things along on the wards in the pressured hospital environments.

On reflection of these moments, I hope we can all appreciate the journey we have all made and the importance of our actions, and our accomplishments.

I know for a few of us today, there are loved ones who are sadly no longer with us, and whose hearts would be absolutely bursting with pride at our achievement. Today is a day for us; when we look at the photos that will inevitably hang in our houses we should remember what this day signifies. How it marks a victory for determination and perseverance. How the challenges we faced during these years can be described as hurdles but not barriers and only serve to amplify the significance of our achievement today.

I am privileged to say that I am part of the Class of 2021 – what I consider an incredibly talented and intelligent group of individuals; I have a limited amount of time so can only highlight a few of the amazing successes these young doctors achieved during their time here; from producing sensational musicals and shows year after year, to sporting glory, carrying out amazing charity work, to achieving academic brilliance in the form of national prizes, presentations, publications and even a patent. The creativity, organisation and innovation displayed by my peers, marks them as individuals who are impossible to ignore and I am confident that the graduates sitting here in front of me will be ones to watch.

I hope you all continue to enjoy the celebrations of today and I wish you all the very best for life's next chapter.

Thank you.

