

# dear residents

**When People Ask About Your Residency**

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**Dear Residents,**

As you prepare to graduate, many of you will soon enter new institutions, new fellowship programs, new hospitals, and new professional environments. Some of these places will feel immediately familiar. Others may feel very different from the culture in which you trained.

It is interesting that both the beginning and end of residency are marked, in some ways, by solitude. You entered the Match as individual applicants navigating uncertainty alone while trying to find a place where you might belong. And now, as graduation approaches, you again prepare to separate from the group and enter new systems, institutions, and professional identities.

Yet the years in between are anything but solitary. Residency gradually transforms a collection of individuals into something larger. A shared culture, shared memory, shared vocabulary, shared standards, and shared responsibility to one another. Along the way, you are shaped by the group, but you also shape it yourselves. Every residency class leaves fingerprints on the program that trains it.

At some point, someone will ask you a simple question: “What was your residency training like?” You may be surprised by how often that question arises. Sometimes the question will be explicit. Other times it will quietly emerge through comparisons in workflow, expectations, supervision, teamwork, or culture.

And in those moments, whether you realize it or not, you will become ambassadors for the program. Not in a promotional sense, but in the deeper sense that you will carry forward certain assumptions about what medical training should feel like, what professionalism looks like, and how physicians should treat one another.

You trained in an environment that attempted to balance rigor with humanity. An environment that believed psychological safety and high expectations could coexist. An environment that tried to preserve resident autonomy while recognizing the increasing complexity of modern medicine. An environment that emphasized teamwork over humiliation, curiosity over fear, and growth over performance alone.

This does not mean the program was perfect. No residency program is. Training remains difficult. Medicine remains demanding. There were frustrations, disappointments, exhausting stretches, and moments where the system undoubtedly fell short of its aspirations.

But culture matters. You will likely come to appreciate this more clearly as you encounter different systems and training environments.

You may notice differences in how residents speak during rounds. How comfortable trainees are admitting uncertainty. Whether people ask questions freely. Whether mistakes are discussed openly or hidden quietly. Whether feedback feels developmental or punitive. Whether residents feel interchangeable or genuinely known. These things shape physicians more than we sometimes realize.

Our hope has never been simply to train knowledgeable internists. Many programs do that exceptionally well. The larger aspiration has been to help develop physicians who are thoughtful, trustworthy, collaborative, adaptable, and capable of caring for both patients and one another within increasingly complex systems.

As you move into the next stage of training, I hope you carry that forward. Not as institutional loyalty, but as professional inheritance. And when people ask what your residency training was like, I hope part of your answer reflects not only what you learned, but how you learned it.

Best regards,

Dino Kazi