

Welcome speech of Professor Dr Márk Kollai:

Honorable Rector, honorable Deans, dear Students, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to extend my greetings on behalf of the Council of the Semmelweis University and welcome you to the 237th academic year. For the English Language Course we start our 17th academic year. Since the initiation of this program we have accepted students from as many as 45 countries from all over the world and issued well over 1000 diplomas in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy.

Every start and finish is a moment for reflection, when it is time to ask questions. For you a fundamental question at present: *Why do I want to be a doctor, a dentist or a pharmacologist?* The simple answer is evident: *I want to help patients.* But this valuable intention is not always associated with firm ideas how to achieve this goal, and how much and what kind of knowledge is required to become a professional in medicine. It is a long way to go through basic science courses and clinical studies to the medical diploma. I often hear the question from our sometimes overburdened students: *Why do we have to know all that?*

The answer is: because medicine is a unique science. It is unique – among other reasons – because of its target, the patient. Patients are individuals, that is, they are individually different. Actually every human being is different and although, this variance of human mankind is often delightful, it makes practicing medicine more difficult. The existence of a disease enhances this variance even further, therefore in every case you have to make an individual judgment. In medicine there are no automatic diagnoses, and even when a sophisticated diagnostic machine gives out a tentative diagnosis, it is accompanied by the warning: valid only if it is approved by a trained physician. The physician has to collect a number of relevant information, like anamnesis, physical examination, lab records, sometimes results of interventions using high tech equipments then think and come to a conclusion, which has to be based on firm knowledge of every possible aspect of the physiological and pathological mechanisms involved. It is an intellectual activity of the highest level. It might be said that medical profession is not only a profession it is rather an art, and becoming a good artist in medicine is a real challenge.

This challenge has another aspect, which is very human. And that is communication. A doctor has to be able to communicate effectively with the patients, because a reliable patients'

history, the anamnesis, is crucial for the correct diagnosis. On the other hand patients rarely tell the truth if it is unpleasant or even embarrassing. So you have to make your patient to trust you in order to reveal his/her personal problems and accept your medical advice. If your communication skills are not adequate patient compliance will be poor. Use your student years for your benefit in that respect, as well. Attend the lectures of the eloquent professors, and learn from them how to present an issue effectively, be active in the laboratory where you can freely discuss with the tutor difficult aspects of the material.

Finally, part of the challenge for you is studying in a foreign country. I am confident, however, this will not present a serious obstacle, because Hungary is a friendly place with a congenial atmosphere. We have been running this program without any difficulty for the past 16 years, and I have every reason to believe that this tradition will continue. So I wish you successful years at Semmelweis University, and, also, a good time in Hungary.

Thank you.