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To My Patients: A Thank You from a Graduating Resident

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Thank you. I have learned so much from you over the past three years, and while I will never be able to fully express my gratitude, here's a healthy start.

Thank you for being my teacher. I know you were nervous about that bright-eyed, bushy-tailed intern taking care of you. You asked if it was my first day on the job. I laughed but, actually, it was. Thank you for being patient, kind, and encouraging. "She did great!" you told my attending after my bedside presentation. I beamed. Thank you for letting me listen to your heart for a good two minutes. I really wanted to know if that was a murmur. It wasn't. Thank you for waiting while I patiently typed discharge instructions. Patient-centered language? Check. Important information bolded? Check. Size 18 font. Check.

Thank you for being my first central line, my first paracentesis, my first LP. My first code. Sitting here now, I can remember you self-extubating, the fellow and me running into the room, her telling me to lead the code. We got a heartbeat, but the



oxygen saturations stayed low. This is where I have to thank your family, especially your three young children, for trusting me to care for you, to try to save your life, even if I couldn't. For letting me cry with them during their most vulnerable moment, as I shared the news, even if it was unbearable hearing your son scream out for his mommy. That moment is permanently etched in my mind, me hugging them, sitting in silence, later crying even more with my fellow. Then crying in the car as I drove home. Calling my own mom and telling her I loved her. Hugging my husband just a bit tighter that night.

Thank you for trusting me, for allowing me to change around your medications even though you really didn't want to give up the pantoprazole. Your previous doctor put you on it, and why mess with a good thing, right? You didn't need it then, and you still don't need it now (no matter what the doctor after me says). Stop eating cheeseburgers at 11pm and you'll be fine. Thank you for keeping an open mind when I wanted to talk about insulin. You knew the appointment was going to be a discussion about starting Lantus, and you still came to it. And when I told you why it was important (your A1c was over 10%), you told me, "I trust you". That meant the world to me then, and it still does today, even though you're gone.

Thank you for allowing me into your home. You weren't happy about it and that was the first time I got to meet you. Who knew that you would become one of my favorite patients (don't tell the others!). I'll never forget when you broke down and cried during one of our visits, telling me that

you felt depressed. Hopeless. We sat and talked. And after several months of medications and long conversations, you felt better. Thank you for showing me what resilience and strength look like.

Thank you for being respectful, compassionate, understanding. I wasn't always on time in clinic, but I was always sorry. I know you were frustrated. So was I. Thanks for not leaving.

Thank you for allowing me to spend time with my new son. For saying that you didn't mind seeing another provider while I was on maternity leave. (I know you did, and I'm happy they didn't restart the pantoprazole.) Thanks for asking me how I was doing when I walked in the room. And if I was sleeping (spoiler: I'm still not, and neither is he). We're here to talk about you, but you genuinely want to know how I am. Thanks for caring.

I wouldn't trade our moments together for anything. Even the challenging ones. Even the ones where I questioned whether I was a good doctor. Being a good doctor: it's not about knowing the textbook inside and out, it's not about never making a mistake. It's about listening. Being compassionate. Not being afraid to say "I don't know", but then finding the answer. Thank you for shaping me into the doctor I am today. If you were a starfish washing up on the beach, I would pick you up, and toss you back in the ocean. Because if I can make a difference to just one of you, that's all that matters.

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Gratefully yours,
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