# dear residents

**The Emotional Journey of Care** **September 1, 2024**

**Dear Residents,**

Greetings from Karachi! I arrived on Wednesday and will be back in Dallas next Friday. I seem to have caught the tail-end of the monsoon season—humid but cool, with rain each day. The city is lush with greenery, but some roads are impassable. Karachi has grown into a chaotic and bustling metropolis, almost unrecognizable to me now. Yet, I am grateful to return to my childhood home.



Next week, I plan to visit my medical school. Interestingly, the current principal was a medical student when I was a house officer. She quickly recalled that her first clinical rotation was in the same ward where I was posted (Medical Ward II).

My first patient in Medical Ward II was a young woman from a remote village, presenting with a stroke complicated by aphasia. She had underlying rheumatic heart disease, leading to infective endocarditis and a subsequent embolic stroke. It was a challenging start for both of us—she could barely speak, and I barely knew what to do. I could tell that she was dismayed that her assigned physician was of the opposite gender. Over time, she seemed to adjust. She remained in the ward for six weeks to complete IV antibiotics and was then taken home by her parents. Her family, always at her bedside, seemed lost—far from home and speaking a dialect that made communication difficult. I brought clothes from home for her, persuading my sisters to part with them. At discharge, she silently acknowledged that I was her primary caregiver and that I had tried hard to help her. As she left the hospital, she still couldn't speak but was able to walk on her own. If she is alive today, she will be around 60 years old. I remember exactly where she spent those six weeks. I wonder if the ward still looks the same.

Each of you will have memorable patients, often not because of an unusual diagnosis, but because of the emotional connection you formed in caring for them. Her mother would often ask, *Who will marry my daughter? Will her speech return? Will she walk again?* These questions troubled me as well. Early in my career, I learned a hard truth—that we may not always restore our patients to full health. It was a lesson that hit me deeply. You will all experience these transient yet powerful encounters with patients you may never see again.

Ours is a remarkable profession. So much trust and hope are placed in us. We are granted permission to partake in the most intimate moments of life. To honor this responsibility is a sacred duty.

Happy Labor Day. I hope some of you will enjoy a long weekend. I am grateful to those who will be on service.

Best regards,

Dino Kazi