Thank you. It is a privilege and honor to speak before you today. As a physician I know that the strongest messages come in the form of stories. As a Family Physician I know that the most powerful of those messages come from personal stories. Today I want to share a series of stories from my personal perspective.

In 1987 as a newly minted Family Physician, having completed a very high-powered Family Medicine residency program, which I believed had prepared me incredibly well to provide health care; I started practicing in a small Maine town an hour from the Canadian border. Literally, even before the first day of practice I came upon my first clinical challenge. The challenge came in the form of a gentleman who was the lead carpenter at the site for our new office. He asked me, “Doc can you look at my knee?” When I looked around I was the only doc for 90 miles I realized he was in fact talking to me. Ultimately it turned out that this gentleman had an infected supra patellar bursa with a resistant gram negative organism. In 1987 there were no quinolones or many of the other tools that are available today. The other challenge was that he lived in the blueberry barrens and had no transportation and no health insurance. I learned quickly, in his best interest, to provide care by making home visits, giving IM gentamicin at eighty cents a dose, in the dark as he lived off the grid. There were many other challenges during the early years of my practicing including things like delivering babies to babies. The youngest being a ten year old mother. I also found rampant alcoholism and substance abuse in this very small rural community. However the challenges forced me to grow professionally as I never thought I could. I look back and realize professionally the rate of growth that occurred, because of these challenges, could not have been greater.

In 1992 I again realized these same challenges facing this rural community would also have an impact on my children. My wife and I, at that time agreed that raising our children in an environment with such widespread substance abuse and alcoholism as well as little opportunity, was not an option for our future. We moved to southwest New Hampshire for our children. New challenges occurred at that time and these were very emblematic of a two-physician household, raising 2 young children. One of my mentors convinced us early after our arrival to get our children involved in hockey. I remember him clearly saying hockey would integrate physical activity as well as being a great opportunity for socialization. He left out the fact that this was a tremendous parental time commitment. Time became a big challenge. Between my wife and I trying to remember which child to pick up, from which activity, or whose house, became the focus of our lives. Thank God I forgot only once which child was my responsibility to pick up. In all the years I only missed one concert but I am still sensitive to making sure I get to all the important things in my children’s lives. I am incredibly proud of my children, one of which will start at Tufts Medical School in the fall and the other who has a profound sensitivity to people in need and will be returning to Haiti with me for the third time at the end of the year. I look back on these challenges and realize the profound personal growth that occurred was well beyond what I would have thought possible.
About 3 years ago I made the decision to once again go back to school while practicing medicine and being administratively responsible for primary care in Dartmouth Hitchcock Keene. The challenges over the last 3 years at TDI have been tremendous. It started with trying to remember definitions and T. table usage for Dr. Gardent. It was soon followed by Dr. Welch’s ability to destroy all my wisely held beliefs around preventive care. I do want to thank him for that. And don’t let me leave out the many hours in BioEpi lab trying to figure out STATA. I thought I had challenges earlier in my life but they pale when compared to the last 3 years. I found out a fifty odd year old brain does not work the way a twenty year old one does. When I look back over the last 3 years I realize how much it complements earlier portions of my life. I once again realize how much I have grown because of the challenges I faced. It has helped me further expand my clinical perspective as well as time managing and staying focused on my family.

My point today is challenges are what make us grow. Growth is essential for personal satisfaction. And as we all move forward in our lives I would ask you to look for challenges, take them on, succeed, and grow. Each of us has been uniquely trained to do just that. Because of this we have a responsibility to positively impact the portions of the world and the people we touch.

Thank you

To my class: remember-Every system is perfectly designed to give the results it gets-Bataldan 2010