Dear PGY1 Resident,

As your Postgraduate Director, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the University of Toronto, Department of Psychiatry. You have been selected to be a resident in our Department because of your academic and clinical excellence as well as your strong interest in psychiatry. It is both an honour and a great privilege for us to have you here with us in our Department over the next five years, during one of the most defining and important periods in your professional and personal life. This past year our Department of Psychiatry celebrated its centenary. Since its inception nearly 100 years ago, the University of Toronto, Department of Psychiatry has been a leader in the training of Canadian psychiatrists and has worked to educate residents in psychiatry, human behavior and development. Our goals today are built on the ones from 1908; to utilize innovative teaching techniques to help residents acquire basic knowledge in the theory and clinical practice of psychiatry within a biopsychosocial model; to promote the development of skills in the various forms of treatment from psychopharmacological to insight-oriented psychotherapy; to help residents understand and deal with human behaviour individually, in the family, in groups, in complex and evolving health systems and in society; to teach residents an awareness of the psychosocial problems of our patients from the infant to the aged; to tirelessly combat stigma by educating other health professionals and the public about the interactions of brain and mind and mind and body; to promote the natural curiosity of our residents about the complexity of human behavior both in normalcy and disease.

With approximately 720 faculty and over 130 PGY1-PGY5 residents, we are also the largest psychiatry residency training program in North America and we train 1 out of 4 Canadian psychiatrists in 15 Toronto teaching hospitals and 3 Northern Ontario cities. I hope that you will enjoy your time with us and I am personally committed to helping you realize your full potential as a clinician, educator and researcher.

I personally congratulate you for choosing psychiatry as a career! Although not the most economically lucrative of medical specialties, psychiatry is by far the richest specialty when one considers how intellectually and emotionally satisfying it is as a profession. From an intellectual perspective, psychiatry will offer you the opportunity to study the complex relationship between the brain and the mind and the mind and the body. Although the human brain has been slow to give up its secrets, new discoveries in neuroscience are now making the internal world of the mind visible, much like X-rays reveal our bones. The most significant 21’st century developments in all of science are expected to involve neuroscience. Our medical specialty in particular will be transformed in exciting ways that even now, we cannot fully imagine.
Our profession, however, offers you more than just the intellectual pleasure; it also involves the heart and the soul. Psychiatry involves witnessing firsthand all aspects of the human condition. Our profession remains the "keeper of the flame" for the doctor-patient relationship" in an age in which the practice of medicine is becoming increasingly de-humanized by technology and economic considerations. As psychiatrists, you will be entrusted with the responsibility to care for the sickest and most vulnerable members of our society as well as their families. You will also be expected to combat stigma and strongly advocate for those who do not have the power or the influence to advocate for themselves. Never forget that this is a duty and a sacred trust. As a member of our unique specialty, you will directly experience the deep and poignant emotional connection that occurs when another human being in distress makes themselves emotionally vulnerable to you and reveals their most private thoughts, feelings and longings. Within the privacy of your own offices and interviewing rooms, not only will your patients be emotionally transformed but you will be as well.

Throughout your psychiatry residency you will acquire new knowledge, attitudes and skills but continuous learning and awareness of your own limitations must never end. For this reason, you will need to learn how to be both an active, lifelong learner as well as a self-reflective practitioner. Our residency training program will help you master these two critical professional skills.

As your Program Director, I am committed to ensuring that you will graduate with the requisite knowledge, attitudes and skills to practice effectively in an exciting time of rapid change for our psychiatric profession. My vision for our residency program includes improved training in neuroscience, evidence-based psychiatry, collaborative care, bioethics, managerial competency, social and diversity psychiatry as well as enhancing the overall quality of the learning environment through individualized resident mentoring and support. I hope to transform the educational techniques utilized in your training so that you will be able to not only acquire new critical knowledge and specific skills but also learn how to quickly adapt to a complex and constantly changing environment. I strongly encourage you to become actively engaged in your own education and view education as an extended, interactive dialogue between learner and teacher. With your participation and constructive feedback, together we will be able to make this great psychiatry training program even better in the future.

Over the next year, I hope to meet with you personally, in order to get to know you as a person and learn about your individual educational goals and aspirations. Please feel free to contact me at any time during your residency if you would like to address an issue with me or would like to share your ideas about how we can improve our residency training program.

Best wishes,

Ari Zaretsky MD FRCP(C)
Program Director, Postgraduate Education and Associate Professor
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