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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT  
(Rochester, New York)

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REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
DEDICATION OF THE FAMILY MEDICAL CENTER, HIGHLAND HOSPITAL  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

September 5, 1975

It is a great honor to be here today with my old friends in Rochester -- and that certainly includes you Congressman, Frank Horton, at whose invitation I have come here from Washington.

You've elected Frank to Congress seven times now -- and that's an important measure of the high esteem in which we all hold him.

Now when some people talk about medical excellence and Rochester they may be thinking of Minnesota, with its famed Mayo Clinic. But when New Yorkers think of medical excellence and Rochester we are talking about this justly proud city in the Empire State. The Family Medical Center which we are here to dedicate today is a perfect example of that excellence. It represents a bridge linking what was good in the medical practice of the past with what is exciting in the age of the heart transplant and space medicine.

The old country doctor who went out in sleet and storm in the dark of night to remote farm houses set the pattern for dedication and devotion to his patients. That is a marvelous American tradition. Every American family wants one physician who is like a member of that family; one physician who knows the medical history of everybody in the family; one physician who can treat a broad range of conditions and one physician who knows best how to arrange for the specialized treatment that he or she does not provide. This physician-friend, beyond any question, is the most valued member of the medical profession in the eyes of American families.

The need for a family doctor is as strong as ever. But, let's look at what has been happening. In 1930, general practitioners and part-time specialists made up 75 percent of all practicing physicians in this country. By 1973, this figure had declined to 16 percent of all physicians. This situation is the result of a common occurrence. The solution of old problems in one area often creates new problems in another area. The United States is the foremost nation in science and technology. Nowhere is our creativity more evident than in medicine. But our progress made medical specialization highly attractive to medical school graduates. The result is that the first and foremost contact point in good medical care -- the family doctor -- has been in increasingly short supply.

Fortunately, the Nation's medical leaders recognized the seriousness of this shortage. The American Medical Association recently recommended that 50 percent of all U.S. medical graduates ought to go into family practice and other forms of primary care, such as pediatrics. The Academy of Family Practitioners recommends that one out of every four medical school graduates ought to go specifically into family medicine.

Fortunately American medicine has developed a positive response to fill the need. The new specialty of Family Medicine has been developed. This specialty prepares the physician to provide family care after the most relevant training and in the most modern setting. At the same time, this specialty retains that invaluable person-to-person intimacy and trust which always existed between the general practitioner and the patient.

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This program here at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Highland Hospital is a pioneer in this new specialty of Family Medicine. In fact you were one of the first to get into this vital business -- five years before the Federal government began to provide financial assistance for Family Medicine training.

That to me is the beauty of this country. Our free, pluralistic society encourages fresh, imaginative thinking and innovation wherever there is talent. And then, when the merit of a new idea is recognized government can come in, give that idea support, and spread its value to other parts of the country.

This new home for your Family Medicine program is an inspiring example of this kind of private and public partnership in action. There is private money in the program, for example, from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. There is direct support from the resources of Highland Hospital. There are Federal grants from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. And, of course, I am delighted that the major financing of this new facility comes from a State program for Family Medicine education which we originated while I had the honor of serving as Governor. You made a powerful case for the need, and we were inspired to go to bat for the program.

This to me is an inspiring example of the direction America ought to be following -- not only in medicine -- but in solving so many of the Nation's domestic problems. Here we have a sound American tradition -- the family doctor. We also have had the experience of rapid change sweeping away the environment in which the family doctor of yesterday practiced. And here we have the best of both worlds. The concept of the family doctor has been preserved. And it has been enhanced by the new specialization of Family Medicine. The families of America will all rest better knowing that they can count on a concerned family physician. Thanks to centers such as the one we are dedicating today, they are going to have that assurance

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