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A Letter to Our Graduates from CPTA President, Rick Katz, PT, DPT

With more than 30 programs, California is the home to the most physical therapist and physical therapist assistant education programs in the country. This month there will be well over 2,000 new PTs and PTAs graduating and becoming eligible to sit for your national licensing and state law exams. However, this is not a normal year. This is a year where many of you had to finish your didactic work online. You had to say goodbye to your cohort of students abruptly and virtually. One day you were together in person and the next, Zoom! You have been denied the celebrations that would have included the reflection of personal experiences, the joys of test taking, the sharing of unmentionable events and the personal sorrows that occur when being part of a created family. Many of you were pulled from existing clinical rotations and others had your upcoming final rotations canceled or changed. It has been traumatic for you and your faculty.

This has not been easy for you. However, I can only fast forward five years and ask each of you to reflect on the most positive parts of your educational experience. I bet that 2020 will be up there on your list. You are entering the profession like no others before you. You are becoming part of a medical community that fully comprehends how to provide outstanding care in a changing and even dangerous environment; that understands the value of being able to assess, react and adapt. You have learned new technologies, new ways to communicate with and motivate your patients. Many of you have been forced to rejoin your families and now understand how important that support structure will be in molding your future.

Yes, there is sadness in not being able to celebrate a lifelong accomplishment. Knowing many students personally (I live with a third year PT student), there will be an opportunity to celebrate, to give a real hug and to reflect on what each of you has accomplished as you enter a new world. I welcome each of you to our profession. Just hang in there a little longer. It is worth the wait.