

The Battle Continues: Alumnus Who Served Continues to Fight for Veterans

Dr. Sudip Bose raises awareness and money on behalf of veterans with post-traumatic stress, depression and suicidal ideation.



A decade ago, **Sudip Bose, '99 MD**, was a physician in the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division, one of a handful of doctors in Baghdad, Iraq, treating soldiers fighting on the front lines.

Today, Dr. Bose is an emergency room physician with the Medical Center Health System and serves as medical director for the city of Odessa, Texas. He also holds the title of associate clinical professor of emergency medicine at the University of Illinois College of Medicine. In addition he continues to raise awareness—and funds—for the mental health issues plaguing veterans of the war in Iraq and previous wars through his nonprofit organization, The Battle Continues.

"We're trying to make a bigger impact on veterans' health care and other issues," he says. "We just don't want to forget about our soldiers once they return to civilian life."

After finishing the HPME program at Feinberg, Bose completed an emergency medicine residency at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center in Fort Hood, Texas, which is the highest-volume emergency department in the military. During his final year of medical training, the 9/11 attacks occurred and he volunteered to remain at Fort Hood, attached to a mechanized infantry unit.



Dr. Sudip Bose treated thousands of soldiers while he was stationed in places like Baghdad, Iraq, over the course of his military service from 1995 to 2007.

"I thought enlisting was a no-lose situation because I wanted to do emergency medicine. The military is a great way to see the world, get great skills and serve," explains Bose, who was in the military from 1995 to 2007. He also has a family history of military service. His great-grandfather, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, was a prominent independence leader in India during the 1940s, and is memorialized both on Indian currency and as the namesake of Calcutta's international airport.

Dr. Bose spent 15 months in Iraq in 2004 and early 2005 as part of the second wave of soldiers out of Kuwait, known as Operation Iraqi Freedom 2. He was honored with The Bronze Star for serving one of the longest combat tours by a physician since World War II. He vividly recalls events like a bombing in the middle of a busy street, resulting in hundreds of casualties. "How do you take care of all those people? How do you prioritize and treat everybody?" asks Bose. "It's tough." The experience made him realize the importance of training medics and the resulting multiplier effect that came from spreading his knowledge.

While the Army captain spent most of his time in Baghdad during the peak of the Iraqi insurgency, he also served in other areas including Fallujah, treating several thousand U.S. soldiers. Perhaps the most memorable encounter was handling the basic medical checkup for Saddam Hussein after the Iraqi strongman was captured.

"You don't want to be the physician who misses a critical diagnosis on Saddam when he's in jail," Bose explains, noting that he needed to put his personal feelings aside when doing the exams. "You're not the judge, jury nor the executioner. You just have to focus on your job. ... In the end, he was a patient we had to treat." While some patients need to be sedated, Saddam "ended up being pretty cooperative," he adds.



Dr. Bose in his U. S. Army uniform.

Brooke Langlois, a charge nurse who works with Dr. Bose in Odessa, says he is a low-key, upbeat leader. "He brings a different vibe when he's around," she says. "He takes charge. He knows what he needs to do, when he needs to do it. Even in the most intense moments he's not intense, and yet he still gets the job done."

The casualties of war

The U.S. soldiers Bose treated were able to endure horrific injuries, like the loss of limbs, which they probably would not have survived in earlier wars, he says. "In the Korean War, if you were an amputee, you were pretty much dead. In this war, amputees were coming back home. Medicine has definitely advanced." Often patients would be flown to Germany "with their bellies open" for further operations after Dr. Bose did "damage-control" on the front lines to stop the bleeding.

The fact that soldiers have been prevailing over such physical trauma has led to a new round of mental and emotional battles, which Bose refers to as the "invisible injuries" of war. An estimated 23 veterans per day commit suicide, he says, and many more struggle with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.



Shortly after he returned from Iraq, Bose began speaking publicly about veterans' mental health and donating the speaking fees to veterans' causes like the Wounded Warrior Project, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and others. This motivated him to start The Battle Continues and launch a website (www.TheBattleContinues.org). Earlier this year, he incorporated the nonprofit so he can take donations and disperse them directly to veterans.

"What prompted me was the opportunity to make a bigger difference," he admits. "I'm trying to help veterans as they come back. A lot of the struggles they're battling with are the invisible wounds."

The ER physician educates through presentations to corporations, doctors' groups and the public. Personal photos, video footage and stories from his deployment in Iraq help him share lessons learned in combat and their application in civilian life, as well as how to better understand soldiers' mental and emotional state upon discharge. Dr. Bose has given hundreds of speeches in the international arena, including a keynote with U.S. President Barack Obama.

Many veterans return and have to fight to get health care, and some end up homeless and jobless, Bose explains. "A lot of people don't seek medical care because they think, 'My doctor is not going to understand.' I'm in a unique position to help, having been a battlefield doctor."

He readily admits, "I would not have known what they've been through if I had not served in Iraq. You come back and even your family and friends don't really understand. People can't conceive what soldiers are going through. These struggling veterans might be your next-door neighbor, or the guy in the next cubicle. These are often 20-year-old kids and they have their whole lives ahead of them."



Sudip Bose received The Bronze Star for serving one of the longest combat tours by a physician since WW II.

As previous wars have improved the care of physical wounds, Bose hopes the Iraq War aftermath will help to advance the treatment of veterans' mental health. "These problems need to be addressed, and they need to be addressed early," he says. "Society is doing better in recognizing these issues, but there is room for improvement."

For more information and to find out how you can help, please visit www.TheBattleContinues.org.

<http://magazine.nm.org/fall-2014/alumni-news/the-battle-continues-bose/>