



Bringing Lessons From War Home



Former U.S. Army physician Sudip Bose speaks with GW students about his experiences in Iraq. A former U.S. Army physician who treated Saddam Hussein told students how his experiences at war apply to their lives on campus and beyond.

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[Sudip Bose](#) sees things differently after serving in Iraq as a physician for U.S. Army in a 15-month combat tour—a tour that earned him a Bronze Star Medal and included treating former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein after his capture.

For example, the M-16 rifle he was issued—despite previously never having held or fired a weapon, save for during rounds of Nintendo “Duck Hunt”—is a splint in a medical pinch. Those heavy combat boots? With a few modifications, they’re emergency neck braces.

Dr. Bose, a former major in the U.S. Army who served one of the longest combat deployments by a physician since World War II, relayed these and other war snippets Feb. 28, making connections between his experiences and those of the students sitting in [George Washington University School of Business Assistant Professor Korok Ray](#)’s class.

“So why am I here today? What does this have to do with Professor Ray’s class on managerial accounting? Isn’t this a class about finance and economics, number-crunching arithmetic?”

Yes, it is. But, he added: “I’m hoping that by sharing my perspective it will help you in the leadership and service decisions that you encounter.”

Turns out much of what Dr. Bose dealt with abroad—he cared for thousands of soldiers and Iraqi citizens—has direct application to the students’ lives.

One lesson is to think first and act next. In a combat zone, that takes the form of assessing “scene safety”—like not running immediately to a scene where a bomb detonated until it’s deemed safe. Students, too, shouldn’t act rashly. They may be inspecting a balance sheet but might need to investigate more information before making important hiring or investment decisions, he said.

Another important lesson is “recognizing the expectant.” In providing medical care in Iraq—or anywhere—doctors “triage,” prioritizing who is the most important patient to see at that exact moment. Triage applies outside of medicine, Dr. Bose said.

“What is your triage? If you’re a corporate executive, you’re getting a lot of pressure from investors, boards, customers, subordinates—and you have to recognize and figure out what is most critical to your business,” he said.

Understanding the big picture, and where one falls into it, is also crucial. Dr. Bose said care abroad is categorized into levels, from on-the-battlefield care, Level I, to hospitals back home, Level V. Each level has different priorities. Level I, where Dr. Bose mostly served, was very often about stopping preventable deaths, like a soldier bleeding out from a wound.

“You guys are going to be the future leaders of America,” he said. “What is your battlefield? What level do you fit in? Level I? Level III? Level V? Who are your wounded, and where do you fall in that big picture?”

Throughout his lecture, Dr. Bose also emphasized the importance of embracing one’s reality and adapting (whether it’s avoiding dinner plate-sized spiders or learning to sleep in a fox hole), “facing the horrific” (injuries, death), managing one’s internal battles and staying strong and continuing to persevere despite the challenges (like post-traumatic stress disorder).

“You can overcome your battles,” he said. “And you can glean the positives in your battles.”

In his introduction, Dr. Ray said Dr. Bose is a leading physician and decorated war hero who, since his tour in Iraq, has been raising awareness of veterans’ issues and lecturing on leadership and public service.

“He never ceases to amaze me with his achievements,” Dr. Ray said.

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