



Iraq War doctor attends convention as journalist

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By Paige Cornwell
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Iraq, 2004: A suicide bomber detonates in the middle of a street. Hundreds of people lay on the ground. Blood and body parts are everywhere.

Dr. Sudip Bose, then a battalion surgeon, knows he can't save them all. The man to his left, the one bleeding out, is going to die. The man to his right, the one with the head wound, might have a chance. It doesn't matter where either man comes from.

Like a journalist, Bose will be objective. He treats them both.



Sudip Bose listens to Joanne Stevens, the news coach leading the Unlock Your Potential workshop.
Yasmeen Smalley/The New York Times

“That really showed me the power of education,” said Bose, a former Army major who served in Iraq for 15 months starting in 2003. “You can’t do it all on your own. And with journalism, you can reach hundreds of thousands of people.”

Florida, 2012: Bose sits in on a session called “Unlock Your Potential” at the annual Excellence in Journalism conference. A presenter talks about different ways a story can be conveyed using different tunes. In a corner, there’s the sound of an explosion, but this time it’s a cellphone ringing.

Bose, 38, is a physician, military veteran and public speaker, but he has taken on another role: journalist. It’s a stark contrast to the battlefield. He’s a medical correspondent for CBS and the medical director of Odessa, Texas, and through those roles, says he’s found many similarities between the military and journalism.

He’s worked on stories for CNN, The Associated Press and Fox News, but he’s been the subject of stories, too.

Bose treated Saddam Hussein shortly after U.S. forces captured the former Iraqi leader in December 2003. Like a reporter jumping on breaking news, Bose had no preparation before treating the former dictator.

Army and medical privacy rules keep him from describing Hussein’s condition when he was being treated or revealing the location more specifically than Iraq.

Bose, who is from Chicago, says he learned about objectivity, a lesson that stays with him.

“I tried not to have an opinion,” the Bronze Star recipient said. “You do your job, you do your mission. Journalists have to be objective. We’re not the judge or the jury.”

In Iraq, Bose and his Army colleagues had to learn how to adapt with the limited supplies they had, just like journalists in a newsroom. He had to prioritize which patients to treat first. Journalists have to establish their own “journalism triage” with stories, Bose said.

Iraq, 2004: He pronounced a man dead on the street and treated the man’s shooter 10 minutes later. That taught him about ethics, he said.

He’s had to speak with the family members of troops who didn’t make it back. That taught him about sensitivity with sources.

Florida, 2012: His hero is the “invisible journalist,” the person writing behind the scenes. Many journalists don’t realize the impact they have, even if they are rarely seen, he said.

“Journalists put themselves on the line,” Bose said. “I was with journalists who were right behind us on raids, usually with a lot less armor.”

Bose wants to educate the public about health issues and the struggles veterans face. Instead of reaching one patient at a time, he hopes to reach thousands of people.

"It would be a disservice to forget about it," he said. "So many are coming back, and it's important to know what they've been through. We need to show what we saw there."

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