

Area doctor who treated Saddam Hussein speaks at event



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Dr. Sudip Bose speaks Thursday to the Newcomers Club about his time as a front line medic.

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Flipping from a photo of body parts detached and flung in the roadway to another of a bullet hole that pierced straight through the side of a

comrade, Dr. Sudip Bose said despite the terrors of war, its situations also can inspire hope.

"What we take is his hope," Bose said, pausing on a picture of a man who didn't survive before turning to another of a man with wounds to his eye. "Hope that this soldier may function in a visual world. Hope that a child who was in the wrong place at the wrong time has the opportunity to change history ... much can be learned from how a brave soldier faces the horrific."

Bose, who was among those to care for Saddam Hussein when he was in captivity and now is an emergency room physician at Medical Center in Odessa, spoke Thursday to the Midland Newcomers Club.

As still a quasi-newcomer himself, the former Chicago resident said he's been inspired by the friendly atmosphere of West Texas. He said he's hopeful that same kindness is shown to other servicemen and servicewomen, as many need positive influences during their transition back into civilian life.

"It's you who must keep the spirit strong in these soldiers as they return to Midland," Bose said.

Bose enlisted in the Army in 1995 during his first year of medical school. He thought it would be a great way to see some of the world, gain unique medical experience and serve his country.

In 2001, it became clear the U.S. could head to war and Bose was among those to deploy as the fighting in Iraq was intensifying. He would serve 15 months on the front lines there -- one of the longest combat tours completed by a physician since World War II.

The short time he spent caring for Hussein was only a sliver of what he experienced while serving, Bose said.

It's not a time he speaks about much -- citing the details as being off-limits because of security reasons and patient-physician confidentiality -- but said it certainly was something he won't forget.

"You just have to do your job," he said, adding he learned in that situation and others it wasn't his role as a caretaker to judge the person needing care.

What he hopes people understand most by listening to his story is not that he was part of that piece of history, he said, but rather that each death and each injury means something. He wants Americans to recognize its servicemen and servicewomen and support them when they return.

"Our soldiers, they're seeing horrible things, and we do have injuries and we do have people who've died, and they're more than just statistics," he said.

For those who serve, they're able to draw on hope because advances are being made, he said.

In previous wars, it was rare for someone who had a limb amputated to survive. Now, those people are coming home and living full lives.

Before World War I, blood banks didn't exist. Before the Korean War, the use of medivacs, or helicopters that fly trauma patients to hospitals, was nonexistent.

After being used in war, those things and many others now are common in civilian medical work, as well, he said.

"War is horrible. It's devastating. But, out of it (comes experiences) that provide a prism of hope, and that can help our society at large," he said.

In this war, Bose said the No. 1 preventable cause of death is hemorrhaging. Among the technology that's helping accomplish the task are bandages that contain parts of shrimp and lobster shells that harden a wound and prevent continued blood flow.

Beyond the medical field, Bose said war teaches servicemen and servicewomen to appreciate home, regardless of where that is, and to be thankful for the small things, even if that's a concrete bunker.

Bose said his deployment reminded him to appreciate the roles each person plays. Whether the man who helped carry a wounded soldier to a helicopter so he could be moved for treatment or the janitor who prevents infection by adequately cleaning, Bose said they're all saving lives and providing hope to another.

"We often get caught up in our roles and don't think about the people who make our life easier," he said.

Bose said he took a position in Odessa because it gave him the flexibility to speak about his experiences. Funds donated during his talks are provided to organizations that benefit wounded soldiers.

"Many times life gets difficult," he said. "We consider ourselves lucky because we were able to get back here."

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