

Rep. Sloan Visits Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

Rep. Tom Sloan (R, Lawrence) visited the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center as a member of the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) Military & Veterans Affairs Task Force. This is the second visit by Rep. Sloan to the Medical Center to see the Traumatic Brain Injury and the Prosthetics programs.

Approximately 98 percent of those Americans wounded or injured in the South Asia combat area who reach a level 2 trauma center survive. This is a much higher percentage than in previous wars because of individual body armor, the improved design of light vehicles, the training of combat soldiers in field medical skills, and the speed with which wounded military personnel are seen by trauma specialists. On average, severely wounded personnel arrive at a level 2-trained surgical team in one hour of their being wounded; level 3 surgical specialists see the patient in less than 24 hours; the patient travels to the critical care hospital in Germany via the critical air "ICU at 40,000 feet" within a couple of days; and is in the U.S. hospital in 3-5 days. During the Vietnam War, that same severely wounded American would have arrived in the U.S. in 45 days of being wounded.

The above factors result in more American military personnel surviving, but the types of injuries from which they must recover are more complex. Loss of one or more limbs and severe head injuries are common from the IEDs (improvised explosive devices). Walter Reed Medical Center personnel have developed the most technologically advanced prosthetic devices in the world to permit amputees to function extremely well after their release from the hospital and rehabilitation. The traumatic brain injury specialists are among the leading experts in the world in terms of addressing cognitive deficits, post-traumatic stress disorders, and helping family members and the patient learn coping and supportive techniques.

Walter Reed Medical Center professionals treated more than 5,000 patients, 1,637 of whom were amputees and have initiated a global video conference communication program through which health care professionals at Walter Reed in Bethesda, MD, are able to consult with medical staff who treated each injured military person at each stop on his/her way from the site of the injury to Bethesda. This continuity of care information makes it easier for the Walter Reed staff to address the health and mental health needs of each veteran.

"My work to improve health care telemedicine video links between Kansas hospitals and VA hospitals benefits by seeing the value of early and frequent consultation between health care professionals and between the veteran and

distant health care specialists,” Sloan said. “Seeing the strength of severely wounded veterans, their families, and the team of professional health care providers that stretch half-way around the world focusing on each patient reinforces my commitment to help these wounded warriors when they come home to Kansas.”

Rep. Sloan is serving his 10th term in the Kansas House of Representatives and is a member of the NCSL Military & Veterans Affairs Task Force. He is Chairman of the House Vision 2020 Committee and a member of the Transportation and Agriculture & Natural Resources Committees. He also serves on two U.S. Department of Energy Advisory Committees and one with the Federal Communications Commission.

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