

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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America's Heroic Veterans May Face Their Greatest Challenge Upon Returning Home – Finding a Job!



Noted Surgeon Dr. Sunil Gupta Urges Colleagues in the Health Care Sector to Play an Active Role in Employing Our Nation's Returning Veterans

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Even before President Obama announced that 10,000 American troops would be brought home from Afghanistan later this year and another 23,000 soldiers by next summer, thousands of young men and women who have so courageously served our nation have found that their greatest challenge has been one they encountered following their discharge from service – finding a job, especially one that offers growth potential for the future.

According to a report by the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is significantly higher than the rate for the nation's general population. Earlier this year, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the unemployment rate for those who have recently served our nation in the military is 10.9 percent, compared to 7.7 percent unemployment for all veterans, and 8.5 percent for America's non-veteran population. Longtime veterans and organizations established to protect their rights say that efforts by the federal government to ease this unemployment crisis have been remarkably ineffective. Young male veterans, ages 18 to 24, have the toughest time of all – with a current unemployment rate of nearly 27 percent.

Compounding the problem, the committee says that military personnel who have recently returned home are best qualified to work in areas that have been hit particularly hard by our current recession. According to the committee's report, post-9/11 veterans "were less likely to be employed in education and health services, the only major sector that added jobs during the Great Recession."

According to Retinal Specialty Institute founder Dr. Sunil Gupta, one of the nation's most respected retina surgeons, it's time for the private sector to address this problem and find a solution. Dr. Gupta recently participated in the Clinton Global Initiative conference in Chicago that focused on America's unemployment

that more is not being done by those of us in the private sector to show our appreciation for the courageous and selfless service of these young men and women returning from war,” says Dr. Gupta. “Now it’s our turn to rise to the occasion and put our veterans to work in rewarding careers.”

At the CGI jobs-creation conference in Chicago, along with 700 of America’s top business leaders, corporate executives and elected officials, Dr. Gupta stressed that what’s needed are creative solutions that do not rely on the federal government. Dr. Gupta – a leader in the field of ophthalmic surgery and founder of 10 Retina Specialty Institute centers in the southeastern U.S. – told his colleagues at the conference about an innovative private sector initiative that is already demonstrating impressive results, and one that offers a number of unique benefits. The Retina Specialty Institute centers operated by Dr. Gupta and his colleagues have begun employing recently discharged veterans, giving them jobs that promise rewarding and fulfilling lifelong careers. Not only do the medical practices benefit from the dedication of these hardworking young men and women, but these veterans also benefit by finding jobs in the one employment sector that is actually growing during this recession.

The story of one young veteran who returned from Iraq last year illustrates the effectiveness of Dr. Gupta’s initiative. When Owen Ranck returned home to Alabama last year, after serving in the U.S. Army in Iraq for four years, this young soldier who had gallantly withstood almost constant attack in Iraq’s Camp Anaconda – nicknamed “Mortaritaville” for its danger – he thought himself fortunate to simply land a minimum wage job working for a local movie theater, picking up trash and selling tickets and popcorn. Fortunately, a friend who felt that this young man was clearly “underemployed” given his experience overseas, introduced him to Dr. Alan Franklin, a retinal surgeon who operated an eye care center there in Mobile. Owen was quickly put to work, and soon became an invaluable member of Dr. Franklin’s team. “Owen has developed from someone who came in with virtually no experience and no medical background, and he has become my number one assistant here in my practice,” says Dr. Franklin. Now, Owen can look forward to a productive career in the medical field for years to come.

At Dr. Gupta’s urging, all ten Retinal Specialty Institute offices have undertaken efforts to employ young veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, with impressive results for all involved. Dr. Gupta is currently urging the American Academy of Ophthalmology to pledge their support for this initiative on a nationwide basis, and encourage the organization’s members to make a special effort to put America’s returning veterans to work in the important and expanding field of ophthalmology.

About Dr. Sunil Gupta

Sunil Gupta, M.D., is a Board-Certified Ophthalmologist specializing in diagnosing and treating disorders of the retina including Diabetes, Macular Degeneration, Retinal Blood Vessel disorders and Tumors. Dr. Gupta is a highly skilled surgeon who is constantly performing research on new drugs, innovative procedures and better surgical equipment and is one of the most respected retina specialists in the country. Dr. Gupta’s background includes a B.S. degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Washington, a medical degree from the University of Cincinnati, and a residency in Ophthalmology at the Cullen Eye Institute at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, and a fellowship in Vitreo-Retinal Diseases and Surgery at the University of Iowa. Among other research accomplishments, Dr. Gupta was involved in the recent design of the widely acclaimed Alcon Vitrectomy Surgical System Constellation which has revolutionized vitrectomy surgery. Dr. Gupta maintains an active practice in the Gulf Coast region of the U.S. including Pensacola, Florida and Mobile, Alabama.

For a video illustrating this story, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hj0kEpBgGEM>

To learn more about Dr. Gupta and his work, visit <http://retinaspecialty.com/>

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