

Activity | Walter Reed: The Battle for Recovery

Background: In 2007, mismanagement and mistreatment of wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center made national headlines. A series of articles in The Washington Post detailed neglect and squalor experienced by patients at Walter Reed. President Bush promised reforms, Congress investigated and the Army pledged to improve the care of wounded, ill and injured troops. After major reforms, what has changed for America's injured soldiers?

Objective: Examine the experiences of wounded and injured veterans and evaluate whether improvements have been made in their system of care.

Warm-up: Predict what the video “Walter Reed: The Battle for Recovery” will be about.

Before watching: Read the following excerpts from the video's [transcript](#) and indicate what you think.

Excerpt	Your thoughts on the excerpt:
NOEL KOCH (DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, WWCTP, 2009-2010): I had an old Life magazine from 1970 that was full of heartbreaking stories. Our soldiers were coming home, being treated like dirt. NARRATION: So Koch had the magazine cover made into a poster to publicize his new office. NOEL KOCH: And across the bottom it said, “Not this time, not on my watch!”	
STAFF SGT. JOHN (DAN) SHANNON: Every person who volunteers to join the military has written for the United States government a blank check, up to and including their lives, in order to protect the freedoms that we have in this country. If the American people can't find value in that – well, I can't believe that. I believe that the American people do find value in that.	

Chat with a partner: Do you know anyone who has served or is serving in the military? To what extent should the government provide care for soldiers injured in the line of duty?

Watch the Retro Report video “[Walter Reed: The Battle for Recovery](#)” ([Transcript](#)) and fill out the chart.

What happened to Staff Sergeant Shannon in Iraq?	
What happened to Staff Sergeant Shannon at Walter Reed Army Medical Center?	
How did the public become aware of the conditions faced by soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center?	
Describe the Warrior Transition Unit's approach for soldier care.	
What person, comment or video footage from the film stands out to you? Explain.	
If you could talk with Staff Sergeant Shannon, what would you want to tell him after watching this video? What questions would you have for him?	

Consider the question: Has the promise of the Warrior Transition Unit system been fulfilled? Read some of Eric Schoomaker’s and Noel Koch’s thoughts on the matter below. Then answer the questions that follow.

Eric Schoomaker “Former Army Surgeon General Eric Schoomaker, who oversaw the W.T.U.s, admits there were ‘growing pains,’ but says the system is working well.” (Source: Retro Report) “This really stellar achievement in improving survival had, in a sense, a downside for us in the recovery and rehabilitation, and that is that we are now beginning to see soldiers, the likes of which we had not seen in years.” (Source: Retro Report)	Noel Koch “Noel Koch disagrees. In 2009, as the Defense Department’s deputy undersecretary of defense for the Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy, he investigated W.T.U.s and said he concluded that all too often, the new units replicated some of the problems found at Walter Reed in 2007, the very problems they were supposed to solve.” (Source: Retro Report) “Some places were better than others, but there were problems of one sort or another at every single W.T.U. that we went to, and these problems were
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“We’re building the bridge as we’re walking on it, we’re flying the airplane as we put it together. So, there were undoubtedly growing pains But Schoomaker says that W.T.U.s are a vast improvement over the old system, and points to Army surveys that report over 80 percent of patients are satisfied.” (Source: Retro Report)	corrected somewhat at Walter Reed, but they replicated across the whole system. And all too often,... doctors responded to patients’ complex emotional and medical needs with a simple solution: Dope ‘em up. Drug ‘em.” (Source: Retro Report) “We’ve got a wave of problems out there in front of us that are going to be coming at us in the years ahead, in numbers that we can’t now really anticipate, and it’s going to manifest itself in broken soldiers, broken homes, children that are messed up. All this stuff is what we’ve got waiting for us.” (Source: Retro Report)
If you had to answer the question “Has the promise of the Warrior Transition Unit system been fulfilled?” at this time, how would you respond? What experience and sources would you draw from?	
What information might enable you to better answer the question?	
Which sources might you consult for more information?	
Which questions are hard to find an answer for?	

Wrap-up/Exit ticket- Reflect on what you have learned and identify what you find surprising, interesting and troubling about the material.	
One surprising fact or idea:	
One interesting fact or idea:	
One troubling fact or idea:	