

My name is Heather Simcakoski. I am the wife of Jason Simcakoski and mother of our 12 year old daughter Anaya Simcakoski.

Jason and I met while both serving in the Marine Corps together in Hawaii. After the Marine Corps I moved from Ohio to Wisconsin. Stevens Point is Jason's hometown and where he had dreams of one day taking over the family business, along with so many dreams for our future!

Jason was not only my best friend and husband, he was my family. When my mom passed away three years ago; the same day I was diagnosed with cancer (leaving me with no parents) he was the one that was there for me during my most difficult times. He drove 9 hours in the middle of the night to be by my side during surgery. During treatment I never had to question if he would leave, he loved Anaya and I unconditionally. Jason was a good person with such a good heart!

Because of the treatment Jason received at the VA, the only family I had - here aside from our daughter was him and he was taken unfairly....Anaya and I lost more than a husband and father, we lost a part of ourselves a part I don't know if you ever get back.

Even when life seemed impossible and we questioned ourselves - we always found the strength and love to work through it. Neither of us ever could give up on each other or our marriage.

With this, it is so heartbreaking to know that someone with such love and passion for helping others has been taken from Anaya and I - and I truly believe he would be here today if he had proper treatment.

I have so many questions, which I hope to find answers for.

I would like to understand why/how Jason's police reports "disappeared?" There's are reports that were made to DR Houlihan, the Tomah VA police department, the Tomah City Police Department and the FBI - regarding patients selling their prescriptions back in 2013 - making so much money from them that they had saved enough money to put a down payment on a house. Thankfully I have voicemails and text messages between Jason and the officers - otherwise I am not sure anyone would be listening to this point today. I hope to understand who is responsible for these reports, where they are and why no one did anything about the reports?

Additionally when you are managing someone with an addiction to prescriptions - or anyone for that matter.... Once they are admitted for inpatient care, why do they still continue to send medication to their home - while they are receiving it in the facility?

I also have concerns about the way Jason was treated as a patient - when he complained his medication was making him feel uncomfortable one evening, he knocked on the physicians door - she opened it and slammed it in his face. He was not a prisoner, he is a veteran who was willing to sacrifice his life every single day for each and every one of us - including those treating him, and to know that is how they treat their patients is devastating and completely unacceptable!

Also, living with Jason I was able to see the long term impact of all of the medication. I would see him falling asleep while eating, driving on the median, slurring his words, unable to work, sleeping 18 + hours a day. I would like to understand how any DR can call that rehabilitation or successful therapy? I would like to also understand how a DR can prescribe someone 14 medications and know which ones are working and which ones are not?

When you have that many medications in your system - your mind is altered. At that point, I question how a patient could even articulate to a DR what "normal" feels like anymore.... Especially after years of mixing and matching and in my opinion - experimenting on our veterans.

I would like to also understand why alternative treatments were not tried for Jason? After years and years of prescription treatment he was not rehabilitated? Does the VA only believe in treating addiction by replacing one addictive medication with several others? I personally do not consider that success!

They did not just take away a person - they took away a hero, a friend, husband, and father.

Everywhere we go and everything we do - there are constant reminders of Jason's life and it is so unfair to him and every single veteran out there to think that this is the type of treatment that is acceptable.

Veterans whom are willing to sacrifice their life for yours - they deserve so much more than second class healthcare. They should be proud to walk into a VA medical center to receive care; it should be world class treatment - not a last resort choice because they do not have other insurance. This should be the last place cuts are ever made on spending!

I believe our family and every single veteran deserves answers and there should be significant strides made to rebuild the trust of all veterans - that they can trust that they will receive the highest quality healthcare from the VA - regardless of the cost. I also feel we all deserve to know how to push for change effectively. I say this with no sarcasm intended; but currently it seems the only way to get anyone to do the right thing is to involve the media. I'd like to understand how processes can be put into place ensure there is accountability without such extreme measures.