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We Was Somebody

Kyle Rodgers, Abigail Kay*

As the number of people who inject drugs (PWID) in Philadelphia increases, more healthcare professionals find themselves treating patients suffering from IV drug addictions. Unfortunately, many of these busy healthcare professionals have little education on the biochemistry of addiction and obstacles between people who inject drugs (PWID) and their recovery. *We Was Somebody*, a fictional play inspired by the stories of PWID in Kensington, Philadelphia, aims to promote understanding and empathy for the complexity of addiction and ultimately improve the quality of healthcare provided to the human beings affected by it.

The content of the play comes from peer-reviewed scientific literature, personal interviews with counsellors and psychiatrists, and anecdotes from PWID. The fictional narrative format protects the anonymity of those still living in the Kensington area while preserving the integrity of their experiences; recurring themes from their stories became cornerstones of the play. Furthermore, a play proved the most effective way to distill two years of observations, experiences, and relationships into a digestible two-hour presentation for medical students and healthcare professionals.

We Was Somebody illustrates how communities can fail PWID, veterans, and the homeless. It debunks the myth that addiction is a moral failure. It addresses how we as a society hypocritically condemn addicts who use to cope with disease or trauma, yet we ignore

professionals and students who use to cope with the emotional and physical stress of their work. Most importantly, *We Was Somebody* forces the audience to see addicts as people first.

The results of this project successfully raise awareness of this marginalized population to the audience. For some viewing healthcare professionals and medical students, it may reshape their prejudice against PWID. Regardless, simply initiating empathetic conversations within the medical community about this prevalent issue will improve future quality of and access to healthcare for PWID.