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I grew up in a city that had been wrecked by addiction. At a young age I was taught that drugs were bad and if you stayed away from them you would be fine. Eventually I grew up and traded that city for another one and would continue to move around until college. It wasn’t till I revisited that city almost decades later to shadow a physician that I got to see the impact drugs can not only have on an individual but also the people around them. Later that year addiction would affect my life in a negative way.

My first year of medical school was a tumultuous one. I was learning how to consume the firehouse of information that was being thrown at us daily while trying to get enough sleep and nutrition. Multiple times during the year my cousin would reach out to me. At times he seemed off, other times he would want to talk about various things and sometimes he needed money( to find his way home). Despite being a broke graduate student I always tried to do what I could and make sure he was safe. One particular test weekend he called and I did not answer. A few days later I received a phone call that he had died. My cousin had be abusing cocaine, methamphetamines, and heroin. Neighbors say he had been acting erratic before his body was discovered not far from his apartment complex.

For awhile I felt guilty about his death, if I had just picked up the phone perhaps his death could have been prevented. With counseling and time I learned how to deal with his loss in a constructive way. However I still wish to learn more about addiction and how medical professionals treat these individuals. It is my hope that one day I can return to the city I grew up in and help combat individuals battling addiction while also supporting their families.