

# When Adventure and Safety Collide

Surgeon-made film emphasizes action and culture of safety

● PETER POLLACK

## OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

If you tell somebody to quit smoking or to wear a seatbelt, nobody listens to you because it's boring," explained **Stuart E. Fromm, MD**. "I wanted to do something that was exciting."

Dr. Fromm, an orthopaedic surgeon in the Black Hills region of South Dakota, produced and directed "The Ultimate Adventure—Yin and Yang," a 40-minute action film that emphasizes both the thrills of extreme sports and its safety concerns.

"I've spent 20 years putting people back together, and I was wondering if I could do something more to save lives," he said. "I see the same injuries over and over. It's very predictable and sad. They have severe injuries—or they die—and I know that they could have just walked away from the accident had they been wearing a seatbelt or a helmet."

## Jumping in

Dr. Fromm said that he had little experience and no formal training when he decided to make his first film.

"I just jumped in with both feet," he laughed. "I have three boys who are into winter sports, and one of them has actually competed on a national level. In that world, your resume is video, so I started filming them."

"The next step came later. I practice in Rapid City, S.D. When I travel and tell people where I'm from, they either look at me like I'm from Siberia, or they say, 'That's a beautiful area.' At the AAOS Annual Meeting in San Francisco a few years ago, a bartender commented, 'Why would anyone want to live there?' That's when it hit me, and I decided to make a movie about the Black Hills. I entered it in some film festivals and, surprisingly, it did very well. It was a lot of fun making it—a lot of work, but a lot of fun."

A passionate outdoors enthusiast, Dr. Fromm determined that his next film project should incorporate lessons from his work as a physician.

"It's kind of a running joke that



Dr. Fromm leaps from a helicopter in a scene from the film.  
COURTESY OF STUART E. FROMM, MD

I'm an orthopaedic surgeon by day, but by night, I love the mountains, the West, the adventure. I grew up skiing, and I later got into back-country skiing, heli-skiing [a helicopter transports skiers up mountains], and more recently, back-country snowmobiling. I started to wonder if I could combine the best of my two worlds and make a film that could actually save lives," he said.

Dr. Fromm's film combines footage of sporting events, athlete interviews, surgical videos, and statistics to emphasize the importance of safety while having fun.

"I show footage of the athletes doing their thing, and then I interview them. They talk about what they do and make a pitch for the importance of protective gear," he explained.

Dr. Fromm interviews a range of athletes in the film, including freestyle skier David Wise, drag race driver Del Worsham, motorcycle stunt riders Scott Caraboolad and Kevin Marino, and backcountry snowmobiler Chris Burandt. A running theme is the number of hours athletes spend practicing behind the scenes to perfect their public performances. Mr. Caraboolad and Mr. Marino, known collectively as the StarBoyz, discuss their choice to heighten the drama by not using helmets while performing, even as they discuss the thousands of hours spent learning their stunts while wearing helmets.

## Challenges

Among other things, the film includes footage from a simulated accident presented as part of a regional program called Freshman Impact. In the program, high school freshman watch a mock trauma event featuring first responders, wrecked vehicles, actors who serve as accident victims, and a helicopter evacuation. The film also includes about 4 minutes of an actual trauma case.

"I wanted to show some real trauma surgery," said Dr. Fromm. "It was very tricky to get, but it's kind of my exclamation point. Without actually saying it, it tells the viewer, 'You don't want to be here; you don't want to end up in this situation. It's very powerful and it definitely grabs your attention. We worked very hard to address HIPAA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act] concerns and make sure there was nothing that could be linked to a patient. The operating room [OR] footage was shot by my wife, who is an OR nurse, so she knew what to do. And when we were finished, I ran everything past a legal team to make sure we hadn't missed anything."

Dr. Fromm says that from the beginning, his goal was to draw audiences into the film with its adventure aspect, and then subtly insert important safety information and statistics.

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# AAOS Board Takes Professional Compliance Actions

**A**t its meeting on June 11, 2016, the Board of Directors of the American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) considered the following licensure compliance matters not related to the AAOS Standards of Professionalism and took the actions indicated.

**Jack Akmakjian, MD**  
**Riverside, Calif.**

## **AAOS Fellowship Suspended**

In September 2015, the Medical Board of California entered a Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order that revoked Dr. Akmakjian's license to practice medicine. The revocation was stayed in favor of 2 years' probation. Dr. Akmakjian maintains an active license to practice medicine, but the terms of his probation include practice monitoring with reports submitted quarterly to the Medical Board, and completion of a prescribing and medical records keeping course.

The action stemmed from charges against Dr. Akmakjian, including negligence for failing to recognize discrepancies in drug screening tests and continuing to prescribe medications to patients, prescribing drugs without an appropriate examination or medical indication, and failing to maintain adequate medical records.

The AAOS Board of Directors voted to suspend Dr. Akmakjian's Fellowship in AAOS until he holds

a full and unrestricted license to practice medicine.

**Darnell E. Blackmon, MD**  
**Tulsa, Okla.**

## **AAOS Fellowship Suspended**

In October 2015, the Attorney General of the State of Oklahoma ratified an agreement entered into between Dr. Blackmon and the Oklahoma Medical Board of Licensure and Supervision (Medical Board) in which Dr. Blackmon's license to practice medicine was suspended for 20 days, and he was fined. Dr. Blackmon maintains an active license to practice medicine, but it is restricted to only supervising healthcare providers related solely to orthopaedic practice for 5 years, and he cannot dispense controlled dangerous substances for 5 years.

The action stemmed from a Medical Board investigation of a spa in which Dr. Blackmon was the medical director. The Medical Board found evidence that an unlicensed employee of the spa was performing hormone injection procedures and that medical documents with Dr. Blackmon's signature were forged by the staff. In a joint investigation with the Medical Board, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) found that an employee ordered testosterone and weight loss medications from an out-of-state pharmacy under Dr. Blackmon's DEA number and then dispensed the medications to

patients. These acts were in violation of the law because the spa did not have a separate medical dispensing license.

The AAOS Board of Directors voted to suspend Dr. Blackmon's Fellowship in AAOS until he holds a full and unrestricted license to practice medicine.

**Ronald L. Fraser, MD**  
**Houston, Texas**

## **AAOS Fellowship Suspended**

In November 2015, the Texas Medical Board entered an Automatic Suspension Order that immediately suspended Dr. Fraser's license to practice medicine. The Texas Board found that Dr. Fraser violated the terms and conditions of his 2014 order by failing to abstain from prohibited substances when he tested positive for alcohol on four occasions.

The 2014 order stemmed from an investigation that found that Dr. Fraser prescribed controlled substances for two patients whom he knew were habitual users; he also prescribed controlled substances to himself for personal use. The 2014 order imposed restrictions on his medical license that included abstention from performing surgeries, prescribing controlled substances, and personal use of any prohibited substances, and required that chaperones be present during patient examinations.

The AAOS Board of Directors voted to suspend Dr. Fraser's Fel-

lowship in AAOS until he holds a full and unrestricted license to practice medicine.

**Timothy D. Jackson, MD**  
**Gulfport, Miss.**  
**Expelled**

On Dec. 19, 2014, Dr. Jackson was convicted of four felony counts of tax evasion and one count of corrupt interference with tax laws. Dr. Jackson was sentenced to 75 months' imprisonment. The investigation by the Internal Revenue Service found that Dr. Jackson engaged in a tax-avoidance scheme promoted by a church and its senior minister. As part of the scheme, Dr. Jackson took a vow of poverty and transferred his assets and assigned future income to the church, then claimed exemption from federal income taxation. However, the court found that he retained his assets and received 90 percent of his income back from the church. He appealed his income tax conviction claiming deprivation of the right to counsel. The appeals court confirmed the conviction. Dr. Jackson does not hold an active medical license in Mississippi.

The AAOS Board of Directors voted to expel Dr. Jackson.

For more information on the AAOS Professional Compliance Program, visit [www.aaos.org/profcomp](http://www.aaos.org/profcomp)

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"Or maybe it's not so subtle, but it's there," he laughed.

Now that the film is completed, Dr. Fromm is considering his next steps. "The Ultimate Adventure—Yin and Yang" is not yet available to the public. The film contains music licensed from several national acts, but the licenses extend only to film festival use.

"The music is important to me," he said. "One of the songs is by Imagine Dragons. I got lucky because I obtained the rights for it for film fest use just before they got big. So we're still working on the music rights."

"My biggest goal was just to finish the film," he continued. "I've been told by other filmmakers that just finishing it puts me ahead of

99 percent of the crowd. I worked on it for 4 years. Now I'd like to put it in some festivals and see where it goes. I've also started working on getting it into the education arena, because there's been some interest. The perfect age to watch this film is probably teens and 20s—the age where you think you're indestructible."

Regarding future movie projects, Dr. Fromm has a quick response:

"I'm going to catch my breath," he laughed. "I've got too many projects on my plate, so I'm just going to wait and see what this one does."

Peter Pollack is the electronic content specialist for AAOS Now. He can be reached at [ppollack@aaos.org](mailto:ppollack@aaos.org)

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ask, "So, are you saying it's not cancer?"

Each of us comes to these issues of patient communication from a different background, both culturally and in terms of training. Many medical schools are adding communication skills to their residency programs, and the AAOS offers workshops and other tools to assist orthopaedic surgeons in this area of practice. Although some physicians may be reluctant to seek out these courses, a communication techniques course may be of more benefit than other CME offerings.

Good communication is as critical a skill as a steady hand in the OR. We can share some portions of the surgery with residents and other team members, but critical

aspects of informed consent and any "bad news" has to come from us as attending surgeons. They may be conversations we hate to have, but we're the ones who are responsible for holding them.

For more information on the topics covered in this editorial, see "Mastering Communication Skills" on page 12 and "The Need for Surgeons to Have Flexibility" on page 44.

Links to the studies cited in this article and additional information can be found in the online version, available at [www.aaosnow.org](http://www.aaosnow.org)

**Eric Truumees, MD**, is the editor-in-chief of AAOS Now.