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**Transcript:** AMA President Dr Michael Gannon, ABC Radio Melbourne, *Drive*, Tuesday 4 July 2017

**Subjects:** Boxing

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**RAFAEL EPSTEIN:** Let's ask the doctors. The AMA's National President is Dr Michael Gannon. Thanks for joining us.

**MICHAEL GANNON:** Pleasure, Raf.

**RAFAEL EPSTEIN:** What's the AMA's position on boxing?

**MICHAEL GANNON:** Well, I suppose our position is not to turn up as a cheap wowser and listen to a really great Australian who's achieved something remarkable. But our position on boxing and all forms of combat sports won't change. I've seen the pictures of what the blows have done to Jeff Horn's face, and I shudder to think what that's done to his brain. That's the ultimate danger of this sport. Your brain is a fatty organ protected by a bit of thin bone and suspended in fluid. But that's not enough. If you face blows like that continuously, it gets damaged, and, sadly, so many heroes like Jeff, three years down the track, 10 years down the track, 15 years down the track, are brain damaged.

**RAFAEL EPSTEIN:** Do we know for sure if you get- does every hit to the head do you damage? Or do we just think that happens?

**MICHAEL GANNON:** All we can do is look at the epidemiological data we've got, and probably, a bit like every other element of disease, there are genetic factors and there are environmental factors. So I've got no question at all that there are some people whose bony skull affords them greater protection. I've got no doubt there's some people [indistinct] that the amount of fluid they've got there around their brain affords them bony protection. We all know the example of, probably, the greatest champion of boxing, Muhammad Ali, who suffered from dementia pugilistica, a form of Parkinson's disease. Now, not every boxer gets that, so that means that some brains are more vulnerable than others. The one thing we can say is that, overall, we're talking about a so-called sport. It's the only sport which involves the desire to force a concussion, to cause an acute brain injury so that your opponent can't continue the contest. That is completely different to any of the football codes, to cricket, to other sports that do have a risk of head injury but that's not their primary purpose.

**RAFAEL EPSTEIN:** I can see a few of you waiting on the phone to have a word about boxing. The number's 1300 222 774. I know many of you see it as a route out of trouble for a lot of people, and you could hear from Jeff Horn. We're having a word now with the AMA's National President, Michael Gannon. Michael, is it definitively more dangerous than any other sport?

**MICHAEL GANNON:** This is one of the most dangerous pastimes one could possibly undertake. It is- let's think about the primary purpose of this so-called sport; it is to render your opponents unable to continue to fight, or at least less able to do so that you score more points against them. I've heard all the arguments in favour of boxing. Look, I think Jeff's story is a fabulous story about fitness and purpose in life, but we just need to get smarter. We need to think about other pastimes in this world that get people off the street, that give people an avenue to fitness, and avenue to self-confidence, an avenue to purpose that doesn't require smacking someone's brain to the point where it doesn't work again, causing acute brain injury, and, in far too many cases, chronic brain injury.

**RAFAEL EPSTEIN:** Some texts reflecting some of what Michael's saying actually; I don't like boxing at all, but what a super sounding bloke, Jeff. And someone else is, I guess, alluding to some of what the AMA National President is saying to us; when was the last time a rich man's son won a boxing championship?

Michael, is the mixed martial arts, you know, the UFC and all of those different brands of combat inner ring- UFC, I guess, is the most prominent. Are they as dangerous?

**MICHAEL GANNON:** Well, I suppose they're more dangerous in other ways because they can cause all sorts of other injuries, and some of the footage I've seen – I've got to tell you, Raf, this is not my bag of fun these kind of combat sports. I do believe that they are legitimised forms of violence. The violence that goes on around these events concerns me. I think that society has grown up past these pastimes that really belong in a less civilised age. There must be other ways to give people this kind of purpose. In terms of MMA, etcetera, we've seen all sorts of horrible injuries involving the intra-abdominal organs, involving the male reproductive organs- they are just plain dangerous, and they are just brutality that is dressed up as a sport. It does appeal to the less better cells of some people- I would have thought there was a lot more fun to have on a Saturday afternoon than trying to incapacitate your opponent by kicking and punching them into submission.

**RAFAEL EPSTEIN:** Good to hear you thoughts, thank you.

**MICHAEL GANNON:** Okay. Pleasure.

**RAFAEL EPSTEIN:** Dr Michael Gannon, he is the AMA's National President.

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