

The Hobbit Academy Awards 2004

Editor's Note:

The Tolkien-Will-Turn-In-His-Grave Award goes to the Hobbit, who like his other peace-loving cousins, gets to be the hero without having any special powers. For the uninitiated, brief descriptions of the Lord of the Rings characters is available at <http://www.lordoftherings.net/legend/characters/>

It's time for the Academy Awards again. Here are some of the more memorable personalities and events in the local healthcare scene, which the Hobbit feels are also deserving of awards for posterity. And the awards go to:

THE SIEGE OF GONDOR* AWARD FOR BEST PERFORMANCE IN AN EPIC SCENE

Minister of State Dr Balaji Sadasivan's sterling performance in the College of Medicine Building, before 400 GPs, at the height of the outbreak, was indeed a memorable *tour de force*. Who needs CME points to pack the house?

**Gondor – The great kingdom of men, where the forces of good defeated Sauron's invading armies.*

THE SARUMAN* AWARD FOR MOST SUDDEN EXIT

This undoubtedly goes to former Director of the National Neuroscience Institute, Prof Simon Shorvon, akin to the Wizard Saruman's disappearance in *The Two Towers*.

**Saruman – Once the wisest of his order, the wizard turned renegade to join the Dark Lord Sauron.*

THE ARWEN* AWARD FOR BEST MAKE-UP

A public healthcare cluster spent zillions on a branding consultant. The results? A logo that looks like a cross between Liv Tyler's lipstick smudge and a blood stain; a name card design with a font so small that you need to read it under an electron microscope.

**Arwen – A beautiful elf princess played by Liv Tyler.*

THE GOLLUM* AWARD FOR BEST COSTUME

Another public healthcare cluster spent zillions on standardising uniforms of staff. Eh, did any patient notice and did it make any impact on health outcome, just as did any member of the cinema audience care what Smeagol was wearing?

**Gollum – A wretched creature driven mad by the curse of the One Ring. Also called Smeagol, he wears nothing but a loin cloth throughout the Trilogy.*

THE LEGOLAS* AWARD FOR FAST REFLEX

A certain public hospital immediately reduced prices when it was found to be expensive, after bill sizes of various hospitals

were released by the Ministry of Health. One wonders how much the "not-for-profit", "public" hospital was making before prices were slashed!

**Legolas – An elf prince whose keen sight and swift arrows brought down many an orc.*

THE TREEBEARD* AWARD FOR SLOW REFLEX

Another public hospital that initially declared it did not know why its Ward B1 bills were expensive. It subsequently said that it does not actually take the available B1 subsidies and returns them to the government in the form of "cream-offs"?!

**Treebeard – One of the Ents, ancient tree shepherds who are slow of speech and movement.*

THE ORC* AWARD FOR BEST ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

This goes to all the GPs out there during the SARS outbreak. Numerous are we, unnoticed, ill-equipped, doing jobs nobody wants, generally forgotten and considered largely expendable by the powers that are.

**Orc – Creatures who are united in serving Sauron.*

THE FRODO* AWARD FOR BEST SCREENPLAY

Prof Chee Yam Cheng for his elephant memory of what happened, as depicted in his massive work now serialised in the SMA News. It will soon be longer than the Lord of the Rings trilogy itself. For a man of few spoken words, he sure can write a lot!

**Frodo – The unlikely hero of the show, this little hobbit bears a heavy burden stoically.*

THE ORTHANC* AWARD FOR BEST PROP

The College of Medicine Building. Battered and pale, yet still standing; the extras therein barely alive. Truly, an ivory tower.

**Orthanc – The tower in Isengard where Saruman the Wizard resides.*

THE ANDURIL* AWARD FOR BEST ACTION SEQUENCE DIRECTING

Singapore General Hospital's Prof Woo Keng Thyé piped Yuen Wo Ping to win this year with his cryptic "sometimes you have to cut your thumb to save your hand" email when he stepped down as Head of Renal Medicine. I hope SGH's hand surgeons did a good job. Ouch.

**Anduril – Name of Aragorn's sword, forged from the broken shards of the legendary Narsil.*

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THE ROHAN* AWARD FOR MOST DRAMATIC HORSEMANSHIP

The senior civil servant who claimed he hurt his perineum after horse riding was a shoo-in for this category. Toby Maguire in "Seabiscuit" was soundly beaten. Unfortunately, his subsequent "seminal performance" in front of a lady GP was less enthusiastically received by the Courts.

*Rohan – Kingdom of the Horse Lords, known for their horsemanship.



THE DENETHOR* AWARD FOR BEST INSIGHT

A tie for this prestigious award:

The Ministry of Environment folks declaring: "It can't be from us!" when the first laboratory contamination case was discovered in SGH.

AND

The Beijing health officials who claimed there was barely any SARS in the Chinese capital.

*Denethor – The mad Steward of Gondor who had no clue what was going on and wanted to burn his son alive in *The Return of the King*.

THE GIMLI* AWARD FOR SHEER STUPIDITY

Defending the usefulness of the SARS Outbreak Patient Declaration Form, after withdrawing the use of it three days later. "Next time still can use the forms what" was what some chap incredulously said. You can drive a mountain troll through this argument.

*Gimli – An impulsive dwarf who provides much comic relief throughout the show.

THE WORMTONGUE* AWARD FOR BEST ORATION

The team of four distinguished lawyers that beat the doctors at a debate with absolutely no content, in the Parliament House. Special mention goes to the lady law professor debater who

turned up in a mini-skirt. I understand she is married to a doctor – that means we can at least take some vicarious credit.

*Wormtongue – The devious servant of Saruman was sent to corrupt King Theoden of Rohan.



THE GANDALF* AWARD FOR BEST COMEBACK

The CEO of Tan Tock Seng Hospital, for successfully transforming the image of TTSH from a hospital nuked by SARS to the great SARS Central.

*Gandalf – The good wizard, presumed dead in the Caves of Moria, returns with reinforcements to win the battle at Helm's Deep.

THE SAURON* AWARD FOR BEST VILLAIN

The evil folk(s) who decided that other restructured hospitals should accept Tan Tock Seng Hospital's patients during the SARS outbreak, thereby blowing up several other hospitals and turning TTSH into an "institutional super-spreader". Like Sauron, we never actually knew or got a glimpse or how this vile chap(s) looks in the flesh.

*Sauron – The Dark Lord only appears as a great eye, lidless and slitted, wreathed in flames.

THE ARAGORN* AWARD FOR BEST ACTOR

Old hand in hospital administration, Mr Khaw Boon Wan, coming back as Acting Minister for Health. Truly Return of the King.

*Aragorn – A descendant of the lost line of the ancient kings of men, it was foretold that he would one day reclaim the empty throne of Gondor.

THE RING OF POWER* AWARD

One ring to rule them all. This obviously goes to the Ministry of Health.

*The Ring of Power – Self-explanatory. ■

ERRATUM

In the "Public Transport and Public Health" article in the SMA News January 2004 issue, the speech by Acting Health Minister, Mr Khaw Boon Wan, was made when he was the Senior Minister of State for Transport and Information, Communications and the Arts, and not "Trade and Industry". We apologise for the error.