

The Hobbit Star Wars Awards



It has been some time since the Hobbit Academy Awards came out. The theme then was "The Lord of the Rings". But with the ever-growing healthcare scene, Middle Earth must give way to something even older and larger – to a galaxy long, long ago and far, far away...

We have 20 prestigious categories for this year's Hobbit Awards. We will begin with –

The Death Star* Spectacular Demise Award

No one came close this year to our winner – Grace Polyclinic – for blowing up so spectacularly.

** Death Star - the massive battle stations that got blown up at the end of Episodes IV and VI.*

Trade Federation* Blockade Award

Ministry of Health – for coming up with a slew of controls to choke off consumption in our public healthcare clusters. These include revenue cap, price control, block funding, Casemix, medical service packages (MSPs), and so on. They have more levels of control than a police state.

** Trade Federation – a collection of militant galactic businessmen that tried to blockade the planet of Naboo in Episode I.*

The Chancellor Palpatine* Leadership Award

Running health is like running a whole galaxy. This award is named after the great Chancellor Palpatine of the Old Republic. Only the best is deserving – Minister Khaw Boon Wan, of course.

** The former Senator Palpatine of Naboo rose to prominence in Episode I, and later became Chancellor of the Republic in Episode II. He was given extraordinary powers to quell insurrections in some star systems at the beginning of the Clone Wars in Episode II.*

Anakin Skywalker* Upcoming Star Award

Tan Tock Seng Hospital's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr Lim Suet Wun, now Group CEO of National Healthcare Group (NHG) after SARS. As Senator Palpatine said in Episode I: "Young Anakin Skywalker, we shall be watching your career with great interest." The Force is strong with Dr Lim indeed.

** Anakin Skywalker – the little boy in Episode I who would finally bring balance to the Force in the galaxy. His alignment with the Force is without equal in recent times.*

Luke Skywalker* Farm-Boy Made Good Award

Dr Tan Sze Wee, SMA Council Member, is now Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP). He is of humble Tiong Bahru three-room HDB flat origins.

** The hero in Episodes IV to VI. He started as a farm boy in the backwater planet of Tatooine.*

The Ewok* Nature Award

This goes to another NMP, Dr Geh Min, ophthalmologist and champion of nature and environment causes.

** Ewoks - the furry, cute, teddy bear-like intelligent beings who inhabited the moon of Endor in Episode VI. They are peace-and nature-loving.*

Phantom Menace* Award

A tie for this hot category!

Singapore Medical Council's Continuing Medical Education (CME) requirements is the first winner. Some doctors will find themselves suddenly unable to practise in 2006 for not getting enough CME points from 2003 and 2004, even though they were actively practising and got a zillion CME points in 2005. Confused? That's why it is called a phantom menace – you cannot really see it coming until it is too late.

The other winner is MLM (multi-level marketing), which has crept insidiously into some of our clinics.

** Phantom Menace – title of Episode I and describes the hidden but deadly nature of the menace that the Sith represented to the Old Republic and the Jedi.*

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Attack of the Clones* Human Resource Award

NHG Polyclinics wins this for hiring many doctors from non-traditional sources to man its polyclinics.

** Attack of the Clones – title of Episode II and describes the attack of thousands of clones at the end of the same episode.*

Revenge of the Sith* Award

Business Consultants in public healthcare are the winners this year. Probably not smart enough to get into good medical schools, they are few in number, yet hang around forever in dark corners and have tremendous influence over weak hospital administrators. They regularly wreak havoc on doctors' lives.

** Revenge of the Sith – title of the upcoming Episode III (May 2005); the Sith are the evil opposites of the Jedi.*

Episode 4: A New Hope* Award

There were no suitable candidates for the award in such a bleak and dismal year.

** A New Hope – title of Episode IV, the "original" Star Wars movie.*

The Empire Strikes Back* Policy Award

"Block funding" is the bureaucrat's answer to folks in some institutions churning cases faster than butter and achieving ever-increasing workloads, and thereby getting even more subsidies. What block funding means is that no matter how much you do, you are getting only this much. Some folks on the ground have gotten the term wrongly as "blocked funding".

** The Empire Strikes Back – title of Episode V and the episode that describes the Empire hitting back at the Rebel Alliance on the ice planet Hoth and at Luke Skywalker and his friends. It is also the episode where Darth Vader reveals his true self – "I am your father, Luke." No question who is the boss here, folks.*

Return of the Jedi* Award

This goes to Associate Professor Goh Lee Gan, the former SMA President who was rumoured to have earned the ire of some powerful people when SMA came up with the "SMA Position Paper on Night Polyclinics and Faculty Practice Plan" on his watch. He must have been pleasantly surprised to be awarded the very prestigious Public Service Star at this year's National Day Awards.

** Return of the Jedi – knights title of Episode VI: Jedi – knights trained in the way of the Force and "the guardians of peace and the galaxy for more than a thousand generations."*

The R2D2* Downsize Award

This goes to all public hospitals for slashing Lasik package prices.

** R2D2 – the very useful pint-sized astromech droid that appeared in all Episodes.*

Han Solo* Award

Senior Minister of State for Health Balaji Sadasivan – for bursting into the very sensitive AIDS debate in true swashbuckling style.

** Han Solo – the straight-talking, risk-taking star-pilot who loves a good fight now and then, in Episodes IV to VI.*

The Escape from Coruscant* Emigration Award

Awarded collectively to the group of senior doctors from Singapore General Hospital and its national centres who have flown the coop and left for the private sector in the past year.

** Coruscant – the capital planet located at the centre of the galaxy. The planet has become one big, cold metropolis chock-a-block with people and machines; and the seat of power where lives are made and broken. Some just cannot be bothered and begin life anew in the outer systems, beyond the tentacles of The Empire.*

Jabba the Hutt* Extortion Award

Definitely to National University of Singapore's Faculty of Medicine for running a monopoly on medical education and consistently raising fees with impunity. One can only wait with bated breath as to how much they will charge for the Graduate Medical School – probably enough to fund the building of The Empire's Imperial Star Destroyer Fleet.

** Jabba the Hutt – the galactic gangster that deals in all things dubious and has even more questionable business practices.*

Jar Jar Binks* NATO Award

This goes to family medicine and shared care. There is a lot of talk about it but no one seems to be prepared to put any resources into it. No action, talk only.

** Jar Jar Binks – the floppy-eared amphibious creature from planet Naboo that is not too bright but talks incessantly and is of really little use. Appeared in Episode I excessively but thankfully reduced to a few lines in Episode II. A most irritating character.*

The Jawas* Scavenging Award

The Award naturally goes to the GPs who are now experiencing such bad times that they are akin to scavenging for crumbs and spare parts in the desert that is the GP market.

** Jawas – midget-sized natives of Tatooine desert who first appeared in Episode IV. They go around in filthy cloaks, scavenging and trading with the loot they have found. The "garang-guni" of Tatooine.*

Millennium Falcon* Nimble Flying Junk Award

SMA is the winner. SMA looks like an old piece of junk (please check out the beat-up office). But when push comes to shove, SMA sure can work fast.

** Millennium Falcon – the talisman ship of the Rebel Alliance. It appears to be an antiquated rust pot but can really fly fast when needed to.*

Yoda* Grand Award

Our low-profile SMA President Dr Lee Pheng Soon. He is the longest-serving Council Member and man of great wisdom. His insight into the workings of the galaxy and The Empire is unrivalled.

** Yoda – 800-year-old Jedi Master. The most powerful Jedi of all. ■*