

The Hobbit's Nonsensical Glossary of Healthcare Sector Terms

Let's face it: healthcare is a confusing business. A neophyte can be totally lost when confronted with the many different personalities, fiefdoms and inconsistencies in healthcare. Fear not, The Hobbit will now give you an overview with this completely irreverent, satirical and plain nonsensical glossary of terms one is likely to encounter in the healthcare realm. As usual, folks who can't take humor, please venture no further beyond this paragraph.

Aesthetic Medicine The attractive branch of general practice that general practitioners are not in competition with the polyclinics. For now, that is.

Alexandra Hospital A place where medical students were supposed to go to so that they can study patients with malnutrition. Now rebranded as our local Hanging Garden of Babylon.

Buangkok Green Medical Park An unnecessarily long and humorous euphemism for Woodbridge Hospital, the hospital that every Singaporean knows what it is for.

Changi General Hospital A hospital that claims to treat patients like the staff's own mothers. Some say it's more like mothers-in-law.

College of Family Physicians Singapore An organisation that The Hobbit is not allowed to comment on in *SMA News*, lest he suffers the wrath of Sauron, the vengeance of Saruman and the curse of Smeagol.

Clusters Organisational constructs similar in concept to the human appendix. They're there but no one is really sure why they're there. Likewise prone to bouts of inflammation but unlike the appendix, has been somehow able to avoid resection so far.

Dengue A disease that was suddenly discovered to be endemic in Singapore at about the same time that Tan Tock Seng Hospital was discovered to be

overcrowded, after setting recent record highs in incidence rate in 2003 and 2004.

Director of Medical Services A senior position in the Ministry of Health empowered with sticks to strike fear. Conveniently reserved for a very senior Medical Service Officer. (c.f. "Permanent Secretary")

Electronic Medical Records Exchange A programme that is in urgent need of examining and debating its implications on implied consent, as well as patient privacy and confidentiality.

Family Medicine Register A register to distinguish poorly paid general practitioners from better qualified – but equally poorly paid – general practitioners.

Graduate Medical School An issue that is likely to suffer a host versus graft rejection reaction, if it is not carefully dealt with now.

Health Promotion Board An organisation that makes you believe that if you lead a healthy lifestyle, you stand a good chance of finally dropping dead suddenly without pain, suffering and big hospital bills.

Institute of Mental Health See entry under "Buangkok Green Medical Park".

Johns Hopkins Singapore An institution located in National University Hospital that was originally conceived to provide quaternary care in oncology and other disciplines. Now being relocated to Tan Tock Seng Hospital. Enough said.

KK Hospital A friendly place for women, children and debt collectors.

MBBS An acronym for "Mouth Big, Brain Small".

Minister for Health The person who decides on the rules about sticks and carrots, and who gets what. In current context, also synonyms for “infallible” and “Teflon”.

Means Test Like elves and hobbits, a mythical construct that is often heard but never seen.

National Kidney

Foundation An organisation that used to have much in common with kidneys in the following ways:

- Has much “reserve” capacity.
- Is well-protected by hard structures and well-padded with fat.
- Has other functions besides its main charter, like oncology and children’s health (just as the kidneys maintain haemoglobin and blood pressure besides producing piss).
- Its operations run in a countercurrent direction (to what it’s supposed to do).
- Is able to reabsorb most of what was filtered out.
- Is susceptible to autoimmune diseases, thereby self-destructing in the process.
- Like the retroperitoneal kidneys, relatively inaccessible to normal surgical intervention without causing extensive damage to surrounding tissues.
- Is simply full of excreta.

Night Polyclinics Something that SMA was right about in 2001, and was finally proven right in 2005.

National Neuroscience Institute An organisation that went for an appendix transplant recently. (See entry under “Clusters”.)

Permanent Secretary A senior position in the Ministry of Health empowered with carrots to dish out. Exclusively reserved for a very senior Administrative Service Officer. (c.f. “Director of Medical Services”)

Polyclinics Healthcare institutions where the poor and/or clever go to for primary medical care, and to get referrals to subsidised specialist outpatient clinics.



Radiology A local branch of medical specialty soon to be rendered obsolete by Indian radiologists, and maybe even local cardiologists.

Salma Khalik Name of senior healthcare reporter who was influential enough to provoke a medical profession-wide clarification from the Director of Medical Services (DMS) when she could not communicate his vision accurately. “The article did not communicate my vision accurately and in the right context.”
(DMS, *The Straits Times Forum*, 7 January 2005.)

Singapore General Hospital

The hospital that handles the most difficult cases and copes with more than half of the nation’s immune-compromised patients. Once labelled maliciously as “a headless chicken” by an ungentlemanly competitor. Also a VRE-friendly place.

Singapore Medical Council (SMC) The organisation that enshrines the grand principles of democracy and self-determination in the medical profession by compelling all doctors to vote for a maximum of 8 out of 17 SMC positions.

Southern Half of Singapore The area where someone decided ALL of our acute general hospitals should be located, notwithstanding that new towns containing hundreds of thousands of people have been coming up in the Northern part of Singapore in the last ten to twenty years.

Specialist Training Committee The local mafia that determines the lives of helpless and young doctors-in-training.

Tan Tock Seng Hospital The most “happening” hospital in Singapore where everything exciting begins, from SARS, dengue and chicken pox, to patient-indemnity forms. Also, generally known as one of few places in Singapore where opposition Members of Parliament can go unrecognised.

Traditional Chinese Medicine A form of complementary medicine that professes to be traditional by getting its members to rely on radiological and laboratory investigations such as CT scans and tumour marker bioassays. ■