

Hobbit's New Year Resolution

An alert reader Ah Wong from Tan Tock Seng Hospital wrote to report two factual inaccuracies in the last article "The Hobbit meets Darth Vader":

- Gimli cannot possibly own a barber chain because he was recorded as having sailed for the Undying Lands together with Legolas and Co.
- Eowyn did not become Queen of Rohan because she actually married Faramir, one of the sons of the mad Steward of Gondor.

The Hobbit is so distraught with the feedback that she actually took one month off and that was why there was no Hobbit article in the November issue of the *SMA News*. (Actually, the truth is that the Editor decided NOT to publish an exceptionally mild article that was submitted for publishing and then sent me off to his friend Dr Seow at Buangkok Green Medical Park for therapy. He also told me he had no use for a mild Hobbit.)

Just kidding. The august *SMA News* Editor is not Darth Vader, so why would he speak to insignificant me?

The REAL reason I took a break was to prepare for my New Year Party gig at my shire. You see, with my clinical practice more anaemic than Saruman the White, I am trying to get a second career as a stand-up comic. I have been watching *Seinfeld* DVDs and Jay Leno on television, and now I think I am ready. Allow me to share my gig with you. With some luck, one day they may just let me perform in the College of Medicine Building or the Alumni Auditorium.

DRAFT SCRIPT

"Good evening, Professors, colleagues, housemen

and lastly, management consultants.

You know, I add management consultants to the list because these guys have hung around so long in our hospitals that they might as well be treated as permanent staff. Just last week, I heard they finally took away the parking lot from an Emeritus Consultant and relabelled it as "Management Consultant". 7-Eleven and Polar Curry Puffs are even giving these guys staff discounts. "Excuse me, can I have two curry puffs?" (fake American accent)

On another note, BBC reports that Zolpidem, otherwise known as Stilnox, has shown that in several cases of patients who had been severely brain-damaged for a long time (including three who had been in a persistent vegetative state for more than three years each), they had responded (that is, woken up) with the use of oral Zolpidem. The reports have led to a clinical study being planned for use of Zolpidem in lesser brain injuries. Apparently, the hypothesis is that the drug stimulates dormant brain cells, through GABA activation. I understand that some researchers in Singapore are considering conducting a trial here using doctors as subjects. These doctors have been severely brain-damaged by powerpoint presentations made by management consultants.

Seriously, I have been asked to speak on something less touchy than management consultants. Therefore, I will speak about something completely kosher and uncontroversial: the Graduate Medical School (GMS). I understand that it is no longer a controversy – the tuition fees for the GMS are confirmed at 35 grand a year for Singaporeans.

Last thing I heard, the Singapore Medical Association (SMA) is considering issuing their UOB-SMA Visa Platinum Cards to GMS students who are not on study loans. They kind of figured that if you could afford 35 grand, you had probably amassed enough money before entering GMS to automatically qualify for the Platinum Card anyway. Unverifiable reports say some banks are considering converting the matriculation into a private banking function.

Now I have to move on to something really serious. The newly elected Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr Margaret Chan, actually holds a degree from our local medical school; as do a former Prime Minister and several Director Generals of Health in neighbouring countries and so on. That is not bad for a school that needs to import a foreign medical school to teach us how to run a medical school.

Since we are on the subject of the international arena, let me talk a little bit about foreign talent. We really need good doctors in Singapore. So I really support the Singapore Medical Council (SMC) going out to recognise more and more basic medical degrees from all around the world. We now recognise good medical schools from as far as (let's hope I can pronounce this!):

- Medizinische Universität Innsbruck from Austria;
- Universitetet i Lund from Sweden; and
- Universitair Medisch Centrum Utrecht from Holland.

We should really go farther afield in our search for talent. We should really go to even more exotic places; maybe consider, just consider far-out places such as (pause) Kuala Lumpur? Last I heard, they actually have quite a good medical school in this institution which I vaguely remember as being called "Universiti Malaya" and what a wonderful coincidence – the graduates there just happen to speak languages we may just also happen to know: English, Malay, Tamil and Chinese.

I was reading this article in the papers that day about this wonderful 32-year-old Singaporean doctor now working in Johns Hopkins, who has just published a wonderful paper in *Science* no less, about using *Clostridium* bacterium to fight cancer. Dr Ian Cheong said: "The essence of the paper is – there are two ways to improve the pizza business – better pizza or better delivery." Ian, it is great you figured that out in Johns Hopkins. Maybe now you can help

Johns Hopkins figure out a way to better deliver top-class researchers to Singapore, and so maybe A*Star and Johns Hopkins can finally get some top-class research going in Singapore? Pepperoni, mushrooms, olives, extra cheese research – the whole works, Ian.

Time flies and well, it is time to end today's gig. But before I go, it is time again for my Top 10 List.

Today's Top 10 List is "10 things that tell you that you are having problems making claims for your patients under the new Outpatient Medisave Withdrawal for Treatment of Chronic Diseases".

10. You finally gave up when you realised you have more forms to fill than a guy wanting to get onto the dole before your clinic is accredited to make Medisave claims.
9. Your clinic manager/assistant just slit her wrists after they lost your DOI form for the third time.
8. The dongle is now used to generate 4D numbers more than passwords.
7. Your patient wants to claim \$300 to pay for Viagra which he claims is to treat diabetes complications such as impotence.
6. You actually look forward more to seeing managed healthcare patients and MC-seekers than patients who want you to make the Medisave claim.
5. You discover that should you make an erroneous claim, the penalty just about wipes out your entire morning's earnings.
4. You now pay your 14-year-old IT whiz-kid son to make the claims for you after three clinic assistants quit on you last month.
3. The money finally reaches you, after your patient has been cured of the chronic disease.
2. You call up the relevant authorities to complain about the teething problems. The reply you get is "What do you expect? Chronic diseases naturally have chronic problems."
- And at Number 1: Some wise guy uploads a video of you struggling to get your money from Medisave onto YouTube."

END OF SCRIPT

Sorry folks, this gig is just mere confabulation on the Hobbit's part. There is no New Year Party Gig. There is just a Hobbit's New Year Resolution: I now have to get back to reading Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* for the nth time so that *&^%\$#@! Ah Wong from TTSH does not get the chance to correct me again!

But really, here is a message for Ah Wong from TTSH: Get a life!

And yes, Happy New Year to all SMA News readers. ■