

SMA

NEWS

VOLUME 40 NO.12 DECEMBER 2008
MICA (P) 200/01/2008



DOCTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD 2008 The Hobbit

For an exclusive interview with The Hobbit, please turn to page 24

1. Congratulations on winning the inaugural SMA Doctor of the Year Award, how do you feel about receiving this award?
I feel awful. An award like this means I am truly an old coot well past my prime... But seriously, this is a great honour of which I am truly undeserving. I could not have gotten this award without the guidance, support and friendship of the SMA News Editor, to which I am so grateful that I will tie him down and show him endless reruns of some brainless medical drama like Nip/Tuck until he goes into status epilepticus.
2. How are you going to celebrate?
Go to my favourite pub with other shorties and get drunk once I cash out on my Lemon Mini-bonds.
3. Can you share with us about your formative years being raised by a single mother?
What single mother? I was raised by an uncle who never grew old. Please read my CV properly.
4. What about your school education near Chinatown, in a rough neighbourhood that is equivalent to the south side of Chicago?
My shire has no Chinatown. I was raised in the slum outskirts outside Middle Earth General Hospital. Never thought I would ever enter medical school, I always thought medical school was meant for children of doctors.
5. How does it feel to be a round and pale minority in a world of the more physically endowed?
As my friend Yoda would say, "Mmmmm, size matters not! Judge me by size, do you? The Force is my ally... and a powerful ally it is..."
6. Did the fact that you often had to make ends meet in your younger days make you a better and more compassionate doctor or a bitter and cynical one?
Probably both. I am a realist. As Harry the Mad Potter told me and everyone in Middle Earth – no one owes me a living.
7. To some, you are a true underdog and anti-hero, a voice of reason and a beacon of unspoken truths and light. What do you have to say to those who applaud your courage, humour and fortitude?
To all these guys, I would say what the Taiwan singer Tan Lei would sing, "*Hua Hee Tio Ho*"¹. And please don't mistake me for Tan Kin Lian, who stands up for truth, justice and the Singapore way.
8. On the other hand, you are sometimes regarded as an anal fissure in the bowels of the neo-conservatives, a hernia in the loins of the Pharisees, a fly in the ointments of the Emperors with no Clothes and a verbal sniper hiding behind the large body mass of the SMA Editor. Your comments?
Eat More Fibre. Roughage is good for anal retention. Nothing I write is consequential or real, unless you live in this mythological universe called Middle Earth.
9. Have you ever come to head with the SMA Editor when he tried to moderate or even (gasp) censor some of your more extreme 'Rage against the Machine' articles?
Never, I don't come EVER head to head with the Editor. He is taller than me. Are you suggesting the Editor is short? The Editor may have gout and hobbles, but he is not a short hobbit.
10. Last year, the SMA Editor text-messaged you from High Table at Pembroke College, Oxford, JRR Tolkien's academic home and the spiritual birthplace of the Hobbit. Have you ever visited?
Been to Oxford many times in my dreams. Are you kidding me? I, a lowly shire 2-room subsidised-hut hobbit? The only Oxford I know is a) my little dictionary and b) my primary school compass set with the crappy blotting paper which I used with my Hero brand fountain pen. Only *atas* folks like the SMA News Editor go to places like Oxford and Cambridge.
11. What's your favorite travel destination?
Definitely not Mount Doom or the Twin Towers. Rivendell with the Elven Chicks maybe.
12. Where do you do your supermarketing?
Middle Earth Trade Union Cooperative.
13. And what is a usual grocery list for the Hobbit?
Beer and anything usually not found on the top two shelves. This would include cup noodles, bananas and low-fat melamine-free milk. I also take an occasional can of nitrofurantoin-laced luncheon meat for UTI prevention.
14. Do let us know some of the landmark issues that you are most proud of raising in those many years writing for the SMA while still juggling general practice and family commitments?
You are confusing me for someone important. I am The Hobbit. The only landmark issue I address is the lack of humour in SMA News after the sad passing of the Garfield... (sob)

15. But you provide such higher impact wit and humour that Tina Fey would just want to hug you, cuddle you and bring you home to keep as a pet!
My impact factor is *minus* 12. The Hobbit's message is that a) we need a good laugh b) its good to laugh at oneself and others.
16. This has been truly the Greatest Financial Depression ever – even in the living memory of our oldest working doctor, the Grand Dame of Obstetrics, nonagenarian Mama Oon. Your thoughts on how to live life moving forward?
Live life like Mama Oon. We should all live like her, with zest and purpose, regardless of race, language and religion, age, PCPS Chronic status and patient bed class.
17. There is a feeling that the global Far Right is no longer right with greed running rampant riot. Some local medical icons feel that the profession has become unacceptably transactional and have called for the Guideline on Fees to be revived. Your views?
This is a spot diagnosis. The SMA Council should send CCS a big bottle of Fybogel.
18. Would you ever donate your organ for tens of thousands of dollars worth of compensation or do they not accept miniscule Hobbit kidneys?
You answered the question yourself, dude.
19. You must be quite chuffed to have been published in the Straits Times?
Yeah. Seriously, I would have preferred the Economist, The Financial Times or IHT. But what the heck, for the Straits Times to have published a piece by a fictitious author, it must have been a slow news day.
20. There is now an African American President of the United States. Hobbit for President of the United States or Singapore?
Hobbits do not aspire to political importance. We aspire to have a good laugh every 10 minutes. Besides, I prefer beer taverns to tea parties.
21. You have been compared to Deep Throat (not the skin flick) from the Watergate scandal. Would you ever reveal yourself (I don't mean flash) one day?
My late friend Darth Vader taught me to learn from him – never take off the mask. Take it off and you end up like him – dead. This is Middle Earth, not Speakers' Corner.
22. What are the universal truths that you hold most dearly to?
Remember what you entered medical school for. Live and let live BUT never acquiesce to bullies and tyrants. Beer is good for you. And of course, *Hua Hee Tio Ho*.
23. What keeps you awake at night?
GERD and nightmares about MBBS Finals where I missed nystagmus in my short case.
24. What keeps you awake in the day?
IBS and pretty women. Occasionally patients as well, especially the gasping cyanotic type.
25. *Wah piang, Hobbit, lu sabei gao leh. Ai lim Tiger, Sapporo or Tsingtao Beer?*²
Pleeeeeeze, us Hobbits have more class than this when it comes to beer. Only "*sor-see*"³ will do – it is brewed to the 1516 Bavarian Beer Purity Laws which stipulates that only barley, hops and water are used.
26. *Lu ko oo simi tai chi ai kow peh kow bu?* Pright of GeePees? Euthanasia? Professionalism and ethic *jeejun bo ho liao?*⁴ ERP gantry outside Middle Earth? *Jin juay lokun joh boh ho eh mee kia...?*⁵
*Wah ka lu tar, jia sit gong, simi also can kow peh and kow bu*⁶. This is the Middle-earth way. But *kow* already must *chio*⁷. Don't just *kow* and don't *chio*. Then end up in depression like them gloomy grey elves.
27. What would constitute a fabulous last meal?
Teochew porridge with steamed mullet and saucer of *tau-cheo*⁸, plus a bottle of *sor-see*. ■

References:

- 1 Popular Hokkien ditty, "It is good to be happy".
- 2 Goodness gracious me Hobbit, you are truly clever. Would you like a Tiger, Sapporo or Tsingtao Beer?
- 3 Key, the logo of Becks Beer.
- 4 What else do you want to create a ruckus about? The plight of GPs, Euthanasia, Professionalism and Ethics being in a terrible state?
- 5 More doctors committing bad deeds now?
- 6 Let me tell you, the truth is that one can kick up a fuss about anything.
- 7 Laugh
- 8 Fermented bean paste

Hobbit – Doctor of the Year Quotes from readers

I do not know who Hobbit is. I enjoy his/her articles, for the funny witticisms and accurate insights into various aspects of healthcare. Some articles are too edgy and cause some people to be upset. It would be too easy to start writing only pleasant stuff praising everyone. And yet to have come so far, still maintaining his brave independent voice, the Hobbit has shown extraordinary resilience to the evil of polite journalism. It is a burden he should never have had to bear. We can ask no more of him. To be a doctor boldly critical of the medical system is to be alone. This task was appointed to you, Hobbit. If you do not find a way, no one will.

- Dr Chen Yixuan

Doctor of the year? You sure one or not? He/she can't even cure my pedal alopecia. Ok lah. Give chance this year. But don't make a hobbit out of it.

- Dr Teo Eng Swee Cuthbert

Hobbit dares to speak out what we feel on the ground. He's the MAN!

- Dr Lee Yik Voon

VOTE FOR CHANGE – Hobbit for SMA President!

- Dr Wong Tien Hua

Hobbit often hits below the belt because of his stature. Can't be helped. Hobbit views things differently – from underneath

- Prof Chee Yam Cheng

We all love the way Hobbit hides behind a pseudonym and is a quintessential Singaporean doctor at heart, daring to say it as it is, as long as it is not attributed to her.

- A/Prof Daniel Fung

Hobbit is not only loved, some feel deep indebtedness, to the point of idolisation. To quote a member's post from SMA forums:

"I have read SMA's newsletter article on 'Letters to Hobbit'. I shall follow wholeheartedly Dr See Beh Kiang (MBBS Honours) from Cerebral Volvulus Clinic at 888 Ziam Road practice on bill itemisation. I shall henceforth charge only consultations and waived charges for medicines in the name of bill itemisation fairness and transparency."

Thank God for Dr See's timely letters to Hobbit. I owe you one Hobbit. Hobbit you are my SMA idol of all time.

- Dr Tammy Chan

Hobbit is really a hero or heroine. In actual fact, he or she does not dwarf the current issues but is bold, sharp and occasionally humorous in delivering the problems and solutions in our current medical practice now. It is really great for SMA to confer the Hobbit as the Doctor of the Year 2008 – well deserved and long overdue!!!

- Dr Raymond Chua