

THE FLYING UNICORN AWARD - 2015

Context:

The Flying Unicorn Award - a fortunate prize for unfortunate ideas - is a satirical award created by COMCEPT, the Portuguese Skeptic Community. During 2015, our readers and followers suggested personalities and organizations that contributed to the propagation of pseudoscience, superstition and other disinformation damaging to the society.

In the creation of this award, we were inspired by JREF's Pigasus Award.

Categories:

We "award" three prizes in three different categories.

Gramophone – For the media (press, radio, television, blogs).

Shooting star – For famous personalities.

The Emperor's New Clothes – For any other personality or organization that contribute to the propagation of false or unproven ideas.

Polling is now open on our website and anyone can cast their vote until the 30th of March on [this link](#). "Winners" will be announced on April's Fool Day (April 1st).

May the worst win!

2015 Nominees:

Gramophone

- 1) **TVI** (private national TV channel) for the program "Cards of the Soul". This was an attempt to compete with longtime-running competition from SIC's card reading *et al.* morning show. They wanted their share of exploring people's credulity and despair. In order to get it, they had not one, but twelve presenters, each with their very own pseudoscience (tarot, astrology, etc.). One of the tarot readers once predicted a new lover for the daughter of the caller who was...four years old! The program was cancelled later in the year.
- 2) **SIC** (private national TV channel) for a news report about dowsing where they concluded that the only problem with the method was not indicating the depth of the water source.
- 3) **i** (national newspaper) for a series of news reports about a) exorcisms and b) homeopathy, including an editorial praising homeopathy. The typical

pro-homeopathy arguments were used: "I know it works because of my own experience", "it works in animals", and "there are doctors who prescribe it".

Shooting Star

- 1) **Adelaide de Sousa** - an actress that promoted chiropractic using her own son as a guinea pig on a popular afternoon TV show. On the program, they promoted the use of chiropractic in children as a means to enhance health in adulthood, urging parents to take their children to the quack!
- 2) **Fernando Nogueira** (Fafe's Wizard) - a "famous wizard" that claimed that Benfica (a major football team) would not win the National championship because he was performing "satanic rituals" that would earn him 200 000 euros! Guess what? He blamed the referee for the failure of the rituals!
- 3) **Simone de Oliveira** - a very famous and respected actress that now is lending her image to the promotion of Calcitrin, a calcium supplement touted to do all sorts of miracles to your bones and health. The College of Pharmacists and the College of Physicians have both stepped forward in condemning the dangerous publicity - still running in major TV channels.

The Emperor's New Clothes

- 1) **Geographical Society of Lisbon** - in March 2015, this prestigious, elite cultural and (supposedly) scientific society hosted the First Luso-Brazilian Symposium of Astrology! We wonder if B.o.B will be able to also book their venue for a Flat Earth Symposium...
- 2) **Holmes Place** - an important chain of fitness centers that is promoting the zodiac diet.
- 3) **Higher Education Institutions launching degrees in alternative therapies** - Due to new legislation, now "unconventional therapists" (as they seem to like to call themselves here) need to have a higher degree in the field they promote. At least eight Higher Education institutions, both private and public, have jumped on the opportunity and will be offering courses in naturopathy, acupuncture and other quackeries. Among them, is the Red Cross!