

Message from Dr Rowan Hillson

- Thank you very much for inviting me to the launch of the NHS Diabetes South West Foot Care Network. I am sorry I couldn't come today but I hope to visit later this year and see all the progress I am sure you will make.
- This report from Rhys Blakely in The Times on 24th February tells us why we must improve foot care in people with diabetes:
- "A well-known American character actor was fighting for his life last night after shooting himself in the head in an apparent suicide attempt. Daniel von Bargen, 61, perhaps best known for playing Kruger in the hit television comedy *Sienfeld*, called emergency services from his apartment in Cincinnati, Ohio, and said: "I've shot myself in the head but it didn't work... I need help." "I was supposed to go to the hospital and I didn't want to. They were supposed to amputate at least a few toes... I've already had one leg amputated... I'm tired." Von Bargen's leg was amputated because he is a diabetic."
- We know that amputation rates vary around the country. And we know that about 80% of amputations could have been prevented by better care. Every amputation is a catastrophe for the patient and his or her family. And a high proportion of these patients die soon after. I have been asking members of each of the Footcare networks to start treating amputations as an untoward incident and investigate the causes - through primary, community and secondary care. And then, of course, it is essential to work constructively together to resolve any problems to reduce amputations in the future.
- I expect to see the amputation rate falling across England - and particularly in the South West.

Good wishes
Rowan