

Marin Independent Journal

Mobile dentists treat housebound patients



marinij.com
Get the latest Marin County news all day at marinij.com

MARIN NEWS A5

FINES POSSIBLE FOR AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

Audubon Canyon Ranch could be fined as much as \$2,700 by the county because it failed to get a permit before using excavation equipment on its Tomales Bay property

MARIN SPORTS B1

SAN RAFAEL FALLS AS PREPS BEGIN



Prep football season began with three Marin teams in action. San Rafael kept things close against Sonoma Valley 17-7.

MARIN BUSINESS C1

DENTAL CARE FOR THE HOMEBOUND

A Tiburon dentist has expanded his San Francisco practice to do house calls throughout the Bay Area.



IJ photo/Jeff Vendsel

Dr. Cheryl Elacio (left), joined by assistants Karla Mendieta (center) and Alyssa Minke, prepare to X-ray the lower back teeth of William Kaunitz during an in-home visit.

Service is first type provided in Bay Area

By Chris Stein
Marin Independent Journal

A TIBURON DENTIST has started the Bay Area's first at-home dental service, aiming to bring dental care to the homebound.

David Blende, a Tiburon resident and founder of the Blende Dental Group in San Francisco, has been doing house calls sporadically for the past two years, but he decided in July to launch a new division aimed

at those confined to their homes due to dementia, obesity, agoraphobia or other ailments, said Amanda White, business manager for the practice.

The three dentists in the group were already known locally for doing dental work on patients with severe phobias or physical problems that required anesthesia for dental examinations, Blende said. But he said the new division is a Bay Area first because it focuses exclusively on house calls.

Trying to replicate the set-up of a dentist's office in a patient's home often requires a special sort of dexterity on the part of all involved, Blende said. While the dentists arrive with portable lights, drills and

Someone has to be agile, be it the patient or the dentist. Sometimes (the dentists) are hanging upside down like a bat."

Tiburon dentist David Blende, EXPLAINING THAT TREATING SOMEONE AT HOME CAN BE AWKWARD

Business

Dow 9,441.27 96.66▲ Nasdaq 2,018.78 35.58▲ S&P 500 1,016.40 13.16▲ 10-yr bond 3.442% 0.1140▲ Crude Oil \$68.02 0.06▲ USD/Yen 93.02¥

C2 • SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2009

BUSINESS

TIBURON: Dental services for housebound patients

From page C1

computers, the arrangement can occasionally be awkward.

"Someone has to be agile, be it the patient or the dentist," said Blende. "Sometimes (the dentists) are hanging upside down like a bat."

Another consideration for the house calls is quality of care, which Blende said can be an issue in the unconventional setting.

"When a dentist goes to a home, he tries to figure out what (can be done)," Blende said. "We try and do simple procedures in the home."

More complicated procedures, such as root canals, typically require a trip to the hospital, Blende said.

Rates for the house calls begin at \$375 for an initial appointment and then vary depending on treat-

ment needed in follow-up appointments, White said. The practice does not accept dental insurance because rates are generally insufficient to cover costs for effective treatment, she said. But the office does help insured patients seek reimbursement from their provider.

House calls cost more than the practice's in-office exams, which start around \$175 for an initial appointment, but Blende said the extra \$200 covers the specialized equipment necessary for the house call and the cost of transporting it around the Bay Area.

McKell Perry, a dentist in Novato, said that though he does house calls for some of his patients who are immobile, a service that specializes in such patients fills an important dental niche.

"I think it's a great ser-



IJ photo/Jeff Vendsel

Dentist Cheryl Elacio wears high-powered magnifying glasses while examining William Kaunitz during an in-home visit at his Mill Valley residence on Thursday.

vice," Perry said. "You can do everything the equipment allows you to. Care can be every bit as good."

Dentists from the Blende Dental Group also do dental health exams at senior centers, often attending to patients who have not received dental care for many years, White said.

"They're a breath of fresh

air... especially with senior care," said Ernie Vigil, health services manager at Aegis of San Rafael, where the dentistry group did a mass exam last year. "It had been possibly years since these people had seen a dentist."

Contact Chris Stein via e-mail at cstein@marinij.com