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**This dentist operates 24/7 to root out pain**  
**By Gene Warner**

The call came at about 3:15 a. m., waking Dr. Neil Scott from a sound sleep. At the other end of the line was a man in distress, suffering from a bad toothache. "I'm in a lot of pain," the caller said. "Is there any way you can see me now?"

About 45 minutes later, the man showed up at Scott's dental office, which is attached to his Countryside Lane home in Hamburg. Minutes later, the offending tooth had been pulled, and one patient had avoided what would have been an even longer sleepless, pain-filled night. "He was just happy that I was able to take him at that hour," Scott said.



Welcome to what's believed to be upstate New York's only private dental practice that operates 24/7. As Scott said of the slogan he would like to copy: "Dental pain doesn't sleep."

Scott can offer his middle-of-the-night services because, in many ways, he's a throwback to days gone by. His Country Dentistry office is the polar opposite of a large city or suburban dental office buzzing with dozens of dentists, hygienists and office workers.

He's a true sole practitioner. "No assistant, no front desk, no nothing," he said. That makes it easier when someone calls in distress in the middle of the night. "Working by myself, I don't have to call an assistant when I have an emergency at 4 o'clock [in the morning]," Scott said. "It doesn't bother me too much. I jump in the shower, get dressed, come downstairs, and I'm ready." Scott, a former physician graduating from New York Medical College in 1980 and subsequently did a one year residency in general surgery at New Britain General Hospital. Thereafter, he returned to further his education in dentistry and graduated from the University at Buffalo Dental School in 1986. He doesn't have a huge patient load that would prevent him from treating emergencies late at night or on weekends. But his wife, Marcia, says his real motivating force has been to live by the Golden Rule. He wouldn't want to be in pain himself, so he tries to help relieve the pain of anyone who is.

"It's a rewarding feeling to me more than anything else, to be able to help someone and get them out of pain," he said.

Neil Scott has pulled teeth, done root canals, tended to broken fillings and helped relieve post-surgical bleeding — at 4 a. m. on a weekday, 6 p. m. on a Friday and 10 a. m. on a Sunday. Emergency patients get two things they wouldn't find if they had their dental needs met during normal weekday business hours: what seems like a reasonable emergency fee and a cup of Marcia Scott's coffee. "People get the world's worst coffee, according to him, and the world's best coffee, according to me," she quipped. "I make it strong."

Scott's emergency fees for first-time patients run \$35 to \$115 on weekdays, \$50 to \$150 on weekends, depending on the time. That's plus the payment for the particular procedure; Scott says his patients have remarked how low those payments are. Patients have to pay for the service when they come in. They're reimbursed if and when their insurance covers the procedure.

Scott clearly offers a different kind of dental practice. "He runs his office out of his home, so somebody might be reluctant to use Neil at first," said Beth Stefani of Hamburg, a patient who first went to Scott for a root canal. "But he's a real professional, very interested in finding the root of the dental problem. What is so neat about Neil is that he listens to his patients. "It's not fancy, but it's Neil," she added. "It's very comfortable, and you're not going to pay an arm and a leg for dental services."

Scott's around-the-clock service doesn't seem to threaten other dentists, and emergency room workers seem to appreciate his late-night efforts. "The emergency rooms used to go through the phone book looking for a dentist," he said. "Now they have a dentist they can refer to."

Scott believes his practice remains the only around-the-clock dental service in upstate New York. "A lot of my colleagues said, 'No way,'" he said. "Maybe their wives don't want them to do it. Maybe they've got too big a patient load. Or maybe they don't want to get up at 2 o'clock in the morning. "I don't blame them."