

New Dental Care Clinic Fills a Need



ADOLPHE PIERRE-LOUIS/JOURNAL

Emergency Dental Care USA opened Friday at 10820 Comanche NE.

Office Focuses On Emergencies

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If a toothache is killing you as you read this, there's hope even though it's Saturday. Even if you haven't seen a dentist in years.

Emergency Dental Care USA has opened at the southwest corner of Comanche and Juan Tabo NE for the express purpose of treating walk-in patients with dental emergencies. It will be open 365 days a year from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

"Think of us as 'Toothaches R Us,'" quipped company founder Mike Obeng, a practicing dentist from Omaha, Neb.

Fashioned after an urgent care clinic, the Albuquerque dental office is the eighth to open for the 13-year-old company, with a ninth soon to follow in Omaha. The staff includes dentists David Bundy, Joan Fox and Melissa Ivers. A fourth dentist is expected to be added.

About 60 percent of its patients pay out of pocket, while the remainder use insurance coverage, typically with a copay, Obeng said. If a patient doesn't have the necessary cash, he added, "We

are able to accommodate just about everyone who walks in here with a financing plan that's doable."

Emergency Dental does more than just toothaches, but it doesn't have a hygienist on staff or do regular check ups. Because many of its emergency patients have "deferred maintenance" issues with their teeth, the office will sometimes do follow-up work. But for long-term care, patients will be referred elsewhere.

"It's a unique concept," said Kevin Bobb, a commercial real estate broker at Grubb & Ellis New Mexico who helped Obeng find a location for the dental office. "He recognizes that there are a lot of tour-

ists coming through here to Santa Fe and the ski areas. If just 1 percent of them have an emergency, that's a business opportunity."

Obeng said he came up with the idea for Emergency Dental Care USA when he inserted the line "Emergencies Welcome" in a yellow page ad for his family practice in Omaha.

"I would get 2-3 calls every weekend," he said. "What I kept hearing was, 'You must've been the 20th or 30th dentist we called.' I thought why not set up practice just for emergencies."

The Albuquerque office is at 10820 Comanche NE, behind the Garcia's Kitchen restaurant.