

## NewsLine

From Valley Press wire services

### Market watch

August 6, 2007

|                                  |                |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Dow Jones industrials</b>     | <b>+286.87</b> |
|                                  | 13,468.78      |
| <b>Nasdaq composite</b>          | <b>+36.08</b>  |
|                                  | 2,547.33       |
| <b>Standard &amp; Poor's 500</b> | <b>+34.61</b>  |
|                                  | 1,467.67       |
| <b>Russell 2000</b>              | <b>+10.97</b>  |
|                                  | 766.39         |

### NYSE diary

|                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Advanced:</b> 1,790     | <b>New highs:</b> 31 |
| <b>Declined:</b> 1,569     | <b>New lows:</b> 650 |
| <b>Unchanged:</b> 64       |                      |
| <b>Volume:</b> 795,618,757 |                      |

### Nasdaq diary

|                              |                      |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Advanced:</b> 1,450       | <b>New highs:</b> 38 |
| <b>Declined:</b> 1,624       | <b>New lows:</b> 533 |
| <b>Unchanged:</b> 109        |                      |
| <b>Volume:</b> 2,706,330,229 |                      |

AP

# Valley dentist treats sleep disorder

By **BRENNA HUMANN**  
Valley Press Staff Writer

**PALMDALE** — Does your spouse say you snore, toss and turn, even gasp in your sleep?

You might find a cure at the dentist.

There is a fine line connecting the field of dental care with other forms of orofacial care, including such conditions as jaw pain and even sleep disorders, said dentist Michael Simmons of **The Dental Sleep Center-Palmdale**.

Since 1981, patients at the center have found treatments for cosmetic and general dentistry at the family business owned by brothers Michael and Gerald Simmons, dentists who practice with their father, Louis Simmons.

Through this family dental practice, Michael Simmons said patients increasingly began to complain of what he diagnosed as sleep apnea.

In order to expand the treatment of sleep apnea cases beyond referrals, Simmons said, he pursued training in sleep medicine and earned a fellowship in Pain Management at the University of California, Los Angeles, Medical School. A diplomate of the American Board of Orofacial Pain, Simmons also teaches undergraduate dental students at the UCLA dental school.

"A little less than half of the people who snore regularly have sleep apnea," he said, explaining the disorder in which, for a variety of reasons, breathing stops briefly during sleep for 10 seconds or more.

While muscles in the body relax during sleep, the soft tissue in the airway is particularly vulnerable to collapse, especially during REM (dreaming) sleep, in which the body is almost completely paralyzed.

For people with sleep apnea, breathing can stop dozens of times an hour. The condition is often characterized by labored breath-

ing and snoring during the rest of sleep, which compromises the amount of air a sleeper takes in.

Telltale symptoms of sleep apnea can include daytime sleepiness due to sleep deprivation, since neurological mechanisms suddenly interrupt sleep when blood oxygen levels fall or the diaphragm's exertions do not result in breaths.

These half-awake interruptions have been shown to have a significant negative effect on the restorative quality of sleep, affecting sufferers' cardiovascular health, growth patterns, healing and immune response.

And just like with snoring, people with sleep apnea are rarely aware they have a problem, even when they are awake.

However, "Sleep apnea kills people because they fall asleep at the wheel," Michael Simmons said, noting that, in consideration of the amount of car accidents blamed on driver fatigue, the number possibly attributable to sleep apnea becomes staggering.

"Right now, only about 10% of apnea cases are diagnosed," he said.

Add that to the fact that "what happens is your whole circulatory system starts to change" with apnea over time, possibly lowering life expectancy due to drug-resistant high blood pressure, cardiac arrhythmia, risk of stroke or even diabetes, he said.

Sleep apnea can be caused by airway blockages or congestion, as well as a neurological defect in rare cases. Simmons said that sufferers

are often men with necks measuring 17" around or larger (16" for women), or overweight individuals, who make up close to 30% of the American population. Diagnosis is often done in a lab, such as at Lancaster's **Advanced Sleep Medicine Services Inc.**, or home with a special recording device.

The condition has been attributed to sudden death in "big, strong guys" with large necks, such as young football players, Simmons said. Apnea in children is linked to attention deficit disorder. The likelihood of developing sleep apnea increases with age.

Surgeries that remove blockages, such as sinus surgery or tonsillectomies, can help, but a painful laser reshaping of the throat that has sometimes been employed is rarely effective, Simmons said.

He said a 2005 study conducted by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine found that, for mild to moderate sleep apnea, oral appliances (mouthpieces) were just as effective as a more common remedy, the uncomfortable continuous positive air pressure machines, which work by forcing air into a sleeper's airways through a bulky face mask.

Dentists can create the custom oral appliances that bring the jaw forward during sleep to help open airways, Simmons said.

Results can be seen in as quickly as a few days, though most people must wait about a month for the effects of sleep apnea to wane.



### SLEEP HELPER

Through his family dental practice, Dr. Michael Simmons discovered that he could help patients with sleep apnea. About 1% of the cases of the sleep disorder are diagnosed, he said.

**RON SIDDLE**  
Valley Press

“Sufferers are often men with necks measuring 17 inches around or larger (16 inches for women), or overweight individuals.”

— Dr. Michael Simmons,  
Dental Sleep Center

So-called "boil and bite" stop-snoring kits often are not well made enough to address the blockages that cause sleep apnea, Simmons said.

"They (patients) think they're OK, but their issue is not being addressed and they go out an get in a car accident.

"Ask your wife: Do you snore or do you gasp or stop breathing for awhile (at night)? Do you have daytime fatigue? Are you drinking coffee all day to stay awake?"

Simmons gave a typical diagnosis scenario.

"What happens is, a wife brings her husband in and he's an overweight guy with a big neck and he's maybe starting to have health issues. I ask him, 'Do you snore?' and he says, 'Well, sometimes, but it's no big deal.'

"Then we go into the other room

and ask the wife and she says, 'Are you kidding? He's like a chain-saw!'"

Women catch up on sleep apnea rates post-menopausally but until then, "They seem to have better tissue tone," Simmons said.

"A lot of people are in denial. They just don't know how serious it is," he said, noting that, when it comes to denial, "A lot of it is with men. Unfortunately, it's true."

Simmons will present a lecture on sleep apnea and snoring at 6 p.m. Aug. 28 in the Palmdale Library, 700 East Palmdale Blvd.

The Dental Sleep Center, a member of the **Sleep Medicine Network**, is at 1029 Elizabeth Lake Road.

For details, call (661) 947-0077.

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