“The meeting presents a tremendous year-end buying opportunity,” Seldin said. “We have more than 550 exhibitors and 1,500 booths, as well as over 500 courses ranging from seminars to hands-on workshops.”

Courses are being offered in Spanish as well as English, a feature Seldin credited for the show’s ability to attract so many attendees from other countries.

“We make a strong effort to promote the meeting in other countries,” added general chairman John S. McIntyre. “Our emphasis is international as well as domestic.”

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg was the guest speaker at the president’s luncheon, held Monday, November 26. Meredith Viera, current “Today Show” co-anchor, host of the afternoon game show “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire,” and former panelist on the morning talk program “The View,” was the featured speaker at the event.

“Welcome to the Big Apple,” Bloomberg said before adding, jok- ingly, “I’ve spent a lot of money while you’re here. We need the sales tax revenue.”

Luncheon emcee McIntyre presented an “I Love New York” sweatshirt to NYU School of Dentistry Dean Charles Bentolila and thanked Susan Schein for the company’s ongoing support for both the GYMD and the president’s luncheon. He also presented a plaque to the Latin American Dental Association, FOLA (Federacion Odontologica Latinoamericana) in honor of the organization’s 90th anniversary.

Viera, who spoke with Dental Tribune America’s today newspaper after her Q&A-style presentation, said she rarely gives speeches like the one she gave at the president’s luncheon.

“I don’t do a lot at all, because my time is so limited,” she said. “But this seemed like an interesting organization, and the timing of the event was such that I felt I could do it. But I don’t do very many. Depending on the audience, you may tweak [your speech], but most people just want to know your story.”

Referring to her recent dental visit for her cracked tooth, she said, “Teeth are important. I try to be good and see my dentist regularly.” Then she added with a chuckle, “What do you think I’m going to tell you?”

Viera has interviewed scores of celebrities, many of whom sport blindingly white movie star smiles.

“You sometimes start looking at the smile,” she said. “People will look to see: ‘Has this one had plastic surgery?’ In the same way, you sometimes look at teeth and say, ‘Are those real, or are they fake?’ If they look fake, that’s no good. So the best dentists are the ones that make them look real. If you see the real white, white ones, it’s like, ‘hmm.’

She includes her own Manhattan dentist in the “best” category.

“My oldest was very scared of the dentist,” said the mother of three. “My middle guy, 80-80. After Lillie, my daughter, had her first time at the dentist, the dentist said he’d never met such a tough kid. No novocaine, nothing. She’s a tough cookie. Our dentist here in Manhattan is Dr. Jed Best. He’s phenomenon- nal. He’s made it a positive experience. Even Ben now, my oldest is fine. Of course now he’s on his way to college and he’s an adult.”

A rainstorm on the 28th put a damper on show floor attendance, some exhibitors said, but they correctly predicted that Tuesday traffic would rebound.

“Sunday was a madhouse. Monday was really slow, and today is also quiet,” one exhibitor said on the 27th. “Wednesday should be really hectic as people who stayed away because of the rain try to see all the exhibits before the show ends. We’re hoping for good customer interest of course, but it’s the old story that either the hall seems dead or you’re swamped. You’re either scrambling to answer questions or you worry that you’re not reaching people.”

Companies in all branches of dentistry and related services presented an array of products on the floor of the Javits Center. Melanie Holsher, territory manager for Solmetex, said interest in the Solmetex Hg5 amalgam separator, high because of tougher state regulations on mercury waste from dental offices. Both New York and New Jersey are implementing strict new regulations, making the Greater New York Dental Meeting ideal for showcasing the technology.

Kuraray used a six foot tall robot to attract customers and emphasize its reputation for high technology. Regional manager Dan Bazzano said a lot of people are looking at Clearfil Majesty Flow, the company’s new restorative composite resin.

Another product that attracted attention because of its physical ap- pearance was Discus Dental’s Zoon, its lamp and tooth whitening system. “This is our big new product,” a floor representative said. “It’s what we’re emphasizing and what is attracting the most attention.”

A maturing population that has more disposable income drove interest in sophisticated new over-the-counter products. “People are flock- ing to us,” said Lisa Novelline, vice president of international sales for La- clede Inc.’s Biotene. “Dry mouth is be- coming more and more of a problem as the American population matures.”

**DOC at GYMD**

During a trade seminar on Nov. 26, The Department of Commerce (DOC) encouraged American den- tal manufacturers to export to over- seas markets. Although the U.S. re- mains the world’s largest national market for dental products, its share of the global market is shrinking, a trend that can only grow as the middle class increases in other nations and regions.

N. Gerard Zapiain, medical de- vice specialist for DOCs Interna- tional Trade Administration, noted that the global market for medical devices is growing at a 4.5 percent annual rate. It has climbed from around $150 billion in 2004 to $170 billion in 2007 and should approach $180 billion by 2009.

America is the world’s largest producer of medical devices, ac- counting for 45 percent of the global market. American medical device manufacturers’ spending on re- search and development doubled during the 1990s and is three times higher than what American compa- nies in general spend on R&D.

However, new markets are growing as other nation’s middle classes become larger and their per capita expenditures on health care grow. At present, the U.S. leads the world on per capita health expenditures ($5,000), followed by Western Eu- rope ($2,000).

Zapiain cautioned that Russia is not yet a significant market for den- tal equipment, but Russia should grow because of its large population and vast resources.

Latin America presents U.S. companies with a “hodgepodge” of regu- latory systems. Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and Paraguay have no medical device regulations. In contrast, Chile, Argentina, Mexi- co and Brazil have what Zapiain considers “tight” regulations. They find it a fact or regulations governing medical devices.

Brazil’s economic crisis has de- pressed imports, but its medical devices market is the eighth largest in the world, more than $2.7 billion as of 2004. Seventy per- cent of the market is supplied domes- tically. The U.S. is the largest foreign supplier, followed by Ger- many and Japan.

**For more on the Greater New York Dental Meeting, see page 17.**

Dental Tribune Managing Editor Matt Connor contributed to this story.