I enjoy attending and speaking at dental conferences as often as my schedule allows. The big, international events are especially enjoyable, because of the broadened perspectives gained by being able to interact directly with fellow professionals from across the globe and seeing firsthand some of the latest techniques and technologies in action, perhaps long before they’re common practice here.

If you haven’t made it yet to the International Dental Show held in Cologne, Germany, every other year, I’d strongly encourage you to plan on getting to it at least once. I’ve been able to attend a number of times over the years, and have always felt the effort delivered a strong return on investment. The IDS is the largest dental meeting in the world. More than 120,000 people representing all sectors of the dental field attend. Besides the most innovative, newest products, the standard and the durable are all on display in a touchable, congenial environment. It is always held in Cologne, and this year it’s the week of March 12 through 16. Probably a bit too late now to make a last-minute decision to attend this year — but I’d encourage you to pencil in the next one two years from now. The booths in the exhibit area are the largest, tallest and most imaginative you’ll see anywhere, with several floors of highly creative displays in the individual booths. The broad range of products on display from around the world allows visitors to absorb an overview of global dentistry and its products and services. One has to be there and see it. All in the oral health field are welcome.

Another meeting I’ve had the good fortune of attending many times is the Chicago Dental Society Midwinter Meeting, just held in late February. The Chicago Midwinter is preceded by the Oral Health America Gala, a major fund-raising event that supports Oral Health America’s efforts to improve access to oral health care and education in the United States, especially among our most vulnerable populations.

Many of you may not realize that this year’s Chicago Midwinter and the Oral Health America Gala carried some extra meaning because they mark the retirement of an esteemed colleague, Dr. Tony Volpe, from his position with Colgate-Palmolive Co., a Diamond-level sponsor of the gala. Tony most recently has been serving as vice president of clinical dental research and scientific affairs at the Colgate-Palmolive Technology Center in Piscataway, N.J. He has been a powerful, positive force for our profession for more than 50 years, earning many international honors — as well as the American Dental Association Distinguished Service Award in 2004. I’m hoping Tony remains active in the profession, continuing with his many other interests, roles and responsibilities, and I look forward to spending time with him at many meetings and conferences to come.