How long do you have to wait to be sure that a hearing aid or other amplification device is actually helping the wearer, or that a change in fitting represents a significant change in performance? Recent interest in the acclimatization phenomenon has raised, anew, persistent questions about the length of time you must wait, after a new or revised fitting, before you can conclude that no further improvement will occur. If benefit from amplification increases over time, then it is vitally important to know the time course of such an event. Is it a matter of weeks, months, or years?

In this issue of JAAA, the research team from the Audiology & Speech Center of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center presents interesting data bearing on this problem. Rauna Surr, Mary Cord, and Brian Walden were able to administer both the Profile of Hearing Aid Benefit (PHAB) and the Connected Speech Test (CST) to 15 individuals approximately 1½ years after they had been fitted with wide dynamic range compression (WDRC) aids. These data were compared with results that had been obtained on the same measures only 6 weeks after fitting. If we consider 6 weeks as a “short-term” result and 1½ years as a “long-term” result, then results were quite clear. There were no significant differences between short-term and long-term findings on either the PHAB or the CST. The authors conclude that, for the purpose of clinical trial, a 6-week acclimatization period is sufficient. Whatever benefit is measured after 6 weeks is not likely to change thereafter. This finding is of obvious importance to the researcher engaged in the design of clinical trials of new amplification systems. It is also relevant to the clinician who seeks to determine whether a particular fitting has been successful in daily life.

This paper by Surr et al is an excellent example of the focus on outcome measures so important to our profession in this era of increasing accountability.