Purpose
The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether a custom designed (online) social network could serve as a method for independent evaluation and verification of clinical practice. Kamhi (2009) suggested that in contrast to scientific research, clinical practice “…will always fall short of being truly scientific because it has no intrinsic mechanism for independent evaluation and verification by a scientific community that insures self-correction”.

Method
For the initial phase of this investigation, a social network was designed specifically for students and faculty in Communication Sciences and Disorders. The Master Clinician Network: (a) allows students and faculty to access video recordings of best practice examples of clinical activity; (b) encourages participation in a forum designed for the exchange of ideas and critical review, and; (c) provides a means by which undergraduate students may, with permission from their select university programs, receive credit for clinical observation.

Six videos representing a variety of communication disorders were embedded into the Master Clinician Network. The videos ranged in length from 30-60 minutes and were obtained from certified speech-language pathologists, recorded in their current practice settings, who have at least five years of clinical experience. Permission to post the videos to an Internet server was obtained from both clinicians and patients. The videos were made available to members of the Master Clinician Network via a password-protected portal.

Student members were invited to watch one or more videos and answer a series of questions related to: (a) the quality of clinical practice observed, and (b) their preference for type of observational experience. The questions for the former were adapted from the three clinical attitudes identified by Cornett and Chabon (1988) as being central to the provision of high quality clinical services: (a) a scientific attitude; (b) a therapeutic attitude; (c) a professional attitude. Faculty members were sent a survey containing three 5-minute clips of select videos.

Results
62 responses were obtained from 117 student members representing 27 different university programs. Preliminary analysis of the results suggested that there was considerable agreement among respondents as to the relative quality of each example of clinical practice observed. Respondents were in agreement regarding the use of evidence-based treatment approaches, appropriate data collection techniques, the clinicians ability to adapt to unexpected changes, the fluidity and pacing of treatment, and whether the clinician appeared empathetic and professional. Similar results were obtained from the surveys sent to 57 faculty and professional members of the Master Clinician Network.

Discussion
The results of this investigation, although preliminary, suggested that an online social network may be a useful tool to encourage independent evaluation and verification of clinical practice. It may also provide a much-needed means for tech savvy twenty-first century CSD undergraduate students to obtain clinical observation hours by watching graduate student clinicians in university speech-language-hearing clinics.

Student respondents also indicated: (a) equal preference for online clinical observation as compared with live observation of practicing professional Speech-Language Pathologists; and (b) significantly greater preference for using an online observation network than obtaining observation hours by watching graduate student clinicians in university speech-language-hearing clinics.