**Art of Observation:**

**Enhancing Observational Skills Using Visual Thinking Strategies**

**Location:** Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

**Instructors:**

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**Course description:**

This is a fine arts museum-based course for all dermatology residents in the Harvard Combined Dermatology Residency Program using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). VTS is a method of fine arts observation that uses trained facilitators to build a group understanding of a work of art based on three sequential, open-ended questions: “What’s going on in this picture?” “What do you see that makes you say that?” and “What more can we find?” VTS has been used effectively in medical education, with studies showing an increase in the amount of time spent looking at patient images, the number and accuracy of observations made, tolerance for ambiguity, and positive views towards health care professional communication skills.

**Course goals and objectives:**

1. Hone observational skills.
2. Gain fluency in verbalizing what is seen with the eye.
3. Encourage confidence with communication, teamwork, and teaching skills.

**Curriculum (each session approximately 2 weeks apart):**

1. 3-hour introductory session for PGY-2 Harvard Dermatology residents.
   1. Welcome and Overview (10 minutes)
   2. VTS exercise (30 minutes)
   3. Background on VTS (15 minute didactic session)
   4. VTS exercise (30 minutes)
   5. Opportunities to facilitate VTS exercise (20 minutes)
   6. Reflective exercise (15 minutes)
2. Two additional 2-hour sessions for all Harvard Dermatology residents. Activities will include:
   1. VTS exercises focusing on various topics: color/texture, building narrative, considering assumptions, addressing ambiguity
   2. Small group or individual work on topics above
   3. Back to back drawings to practice delivering and receiving descriptive information
   4. VTS exercise on medical images
   5. Correlation between lessons learned in VTS curriculum and medical practice
3. In-between sessions, short reflective exercises will be assigned to continue the learning outside the museum setting.