



# Peer to Peer:

## THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ANXIETY AND EXPECTANCY IN SOCIALLY TRANSMITTED NOCEBO NAUSEA

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Expectancies induced via the observation of others (i.e. Social Modelling) are known to impact our experience of side effects resulting from treatment. However, research investigating the impact of social observation on the nocebo effect has focused on single model-observer interactions. Little is known, therefore, about transmission beyond these singular exchanges.

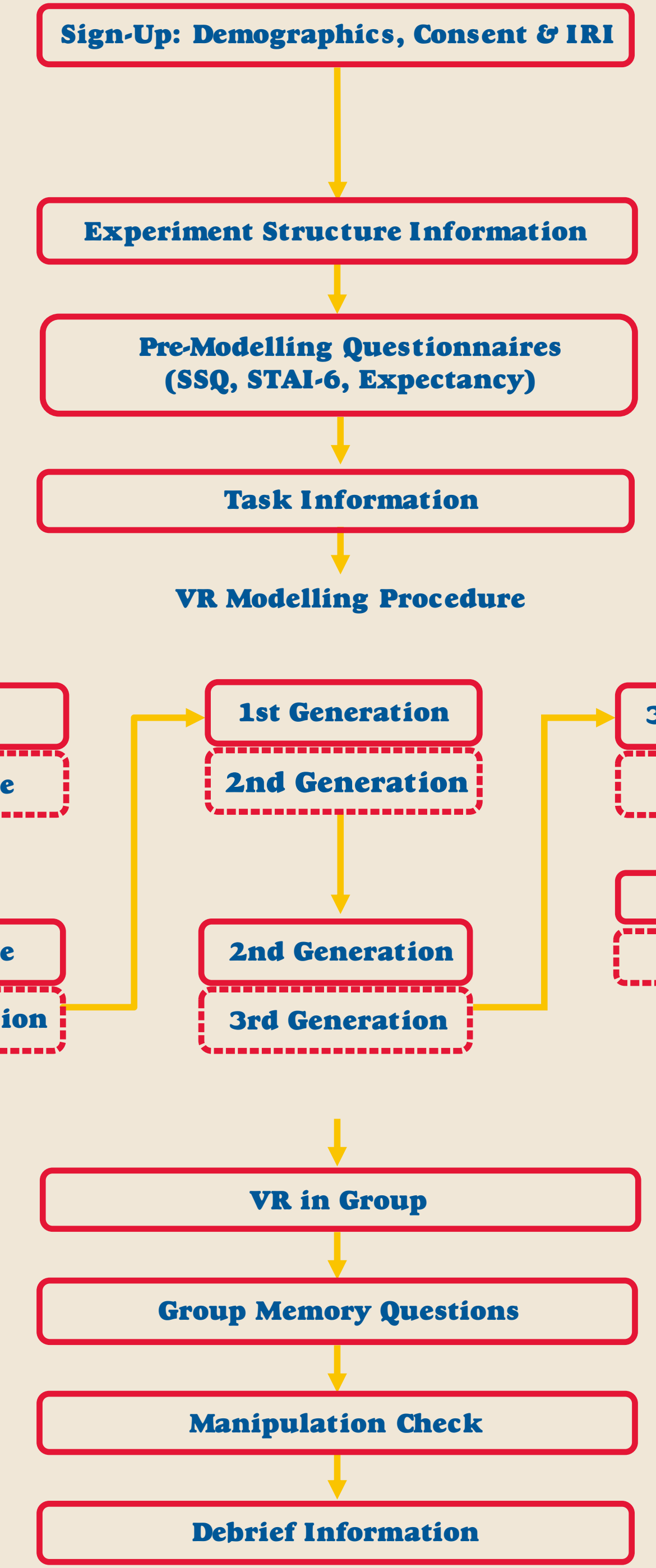
This study employed a novel Virtual Reality (VR) paradigm to investigate whether socially-induced nocebo effects can be passed along a social transmission chain.

Symptoms of nausea were found to be significantly increased among those who directly observed an actor (1st Gen participants), relative to all other groups (Control, 2nd Gen, 3rd Gen). Expectancy mediated the difference in nausea between 1st Gen and Control participants. Anxiety and expectancy mediated the difference between the 1st Gen and 2nd/3rd Gen participants.

Simply watching another individual report nausea exacerbated the same symptoms in the observer. While transmission along a social chain was not observed, this was explained by differences in anxiety and expectancy. This sheds light on the underlying mechanisms facilitating socially-induced nausea, with important implications for its future reduction.

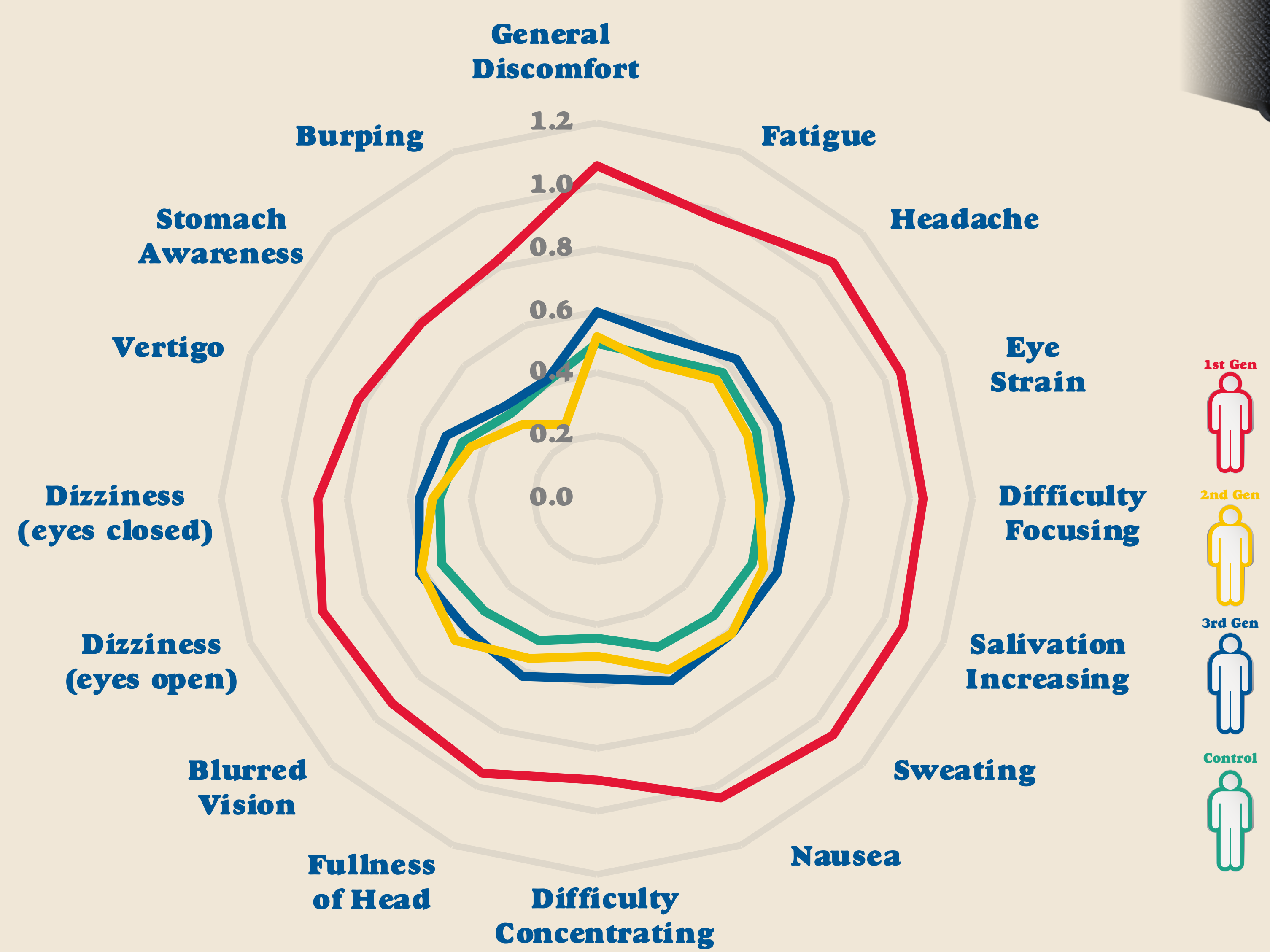
**Design:** Between-Ss single factor (Group) design. Participants randomly assigned to groups, after baseline measurements

- Control Group (N = 47)
- 1st Gen Group (N = 50)
- 2nd Gen Group (N = 40)
- 3rd Gen Group (N = 31)



## Primary Results:

### Baseline Corrected SSQ Items



**Orthogonal Contrasts:**  
 Control vs. Social Modelling (p = .245)  
 1st Gen vs. 2nd/3rd Gen (p = .011)  
 2nd vs. 3rd Gen (p = .874)

**Post-Hoc Contrast:**  
 Control vs. 1st Gen (p = .011)



VR Environment (screenshot)

## Mediation:

