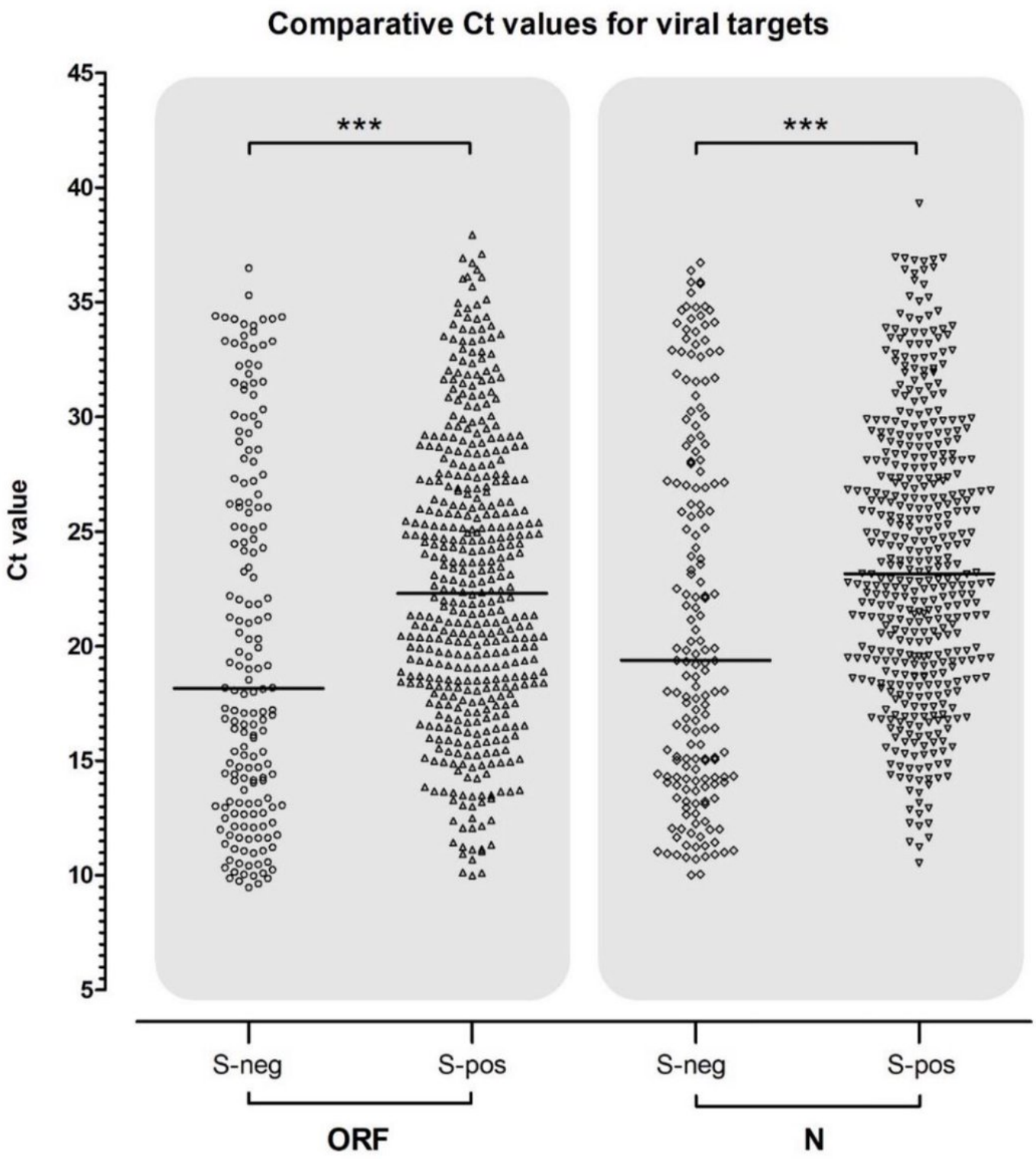
Twitter Thread by Dr Zoë Hyde



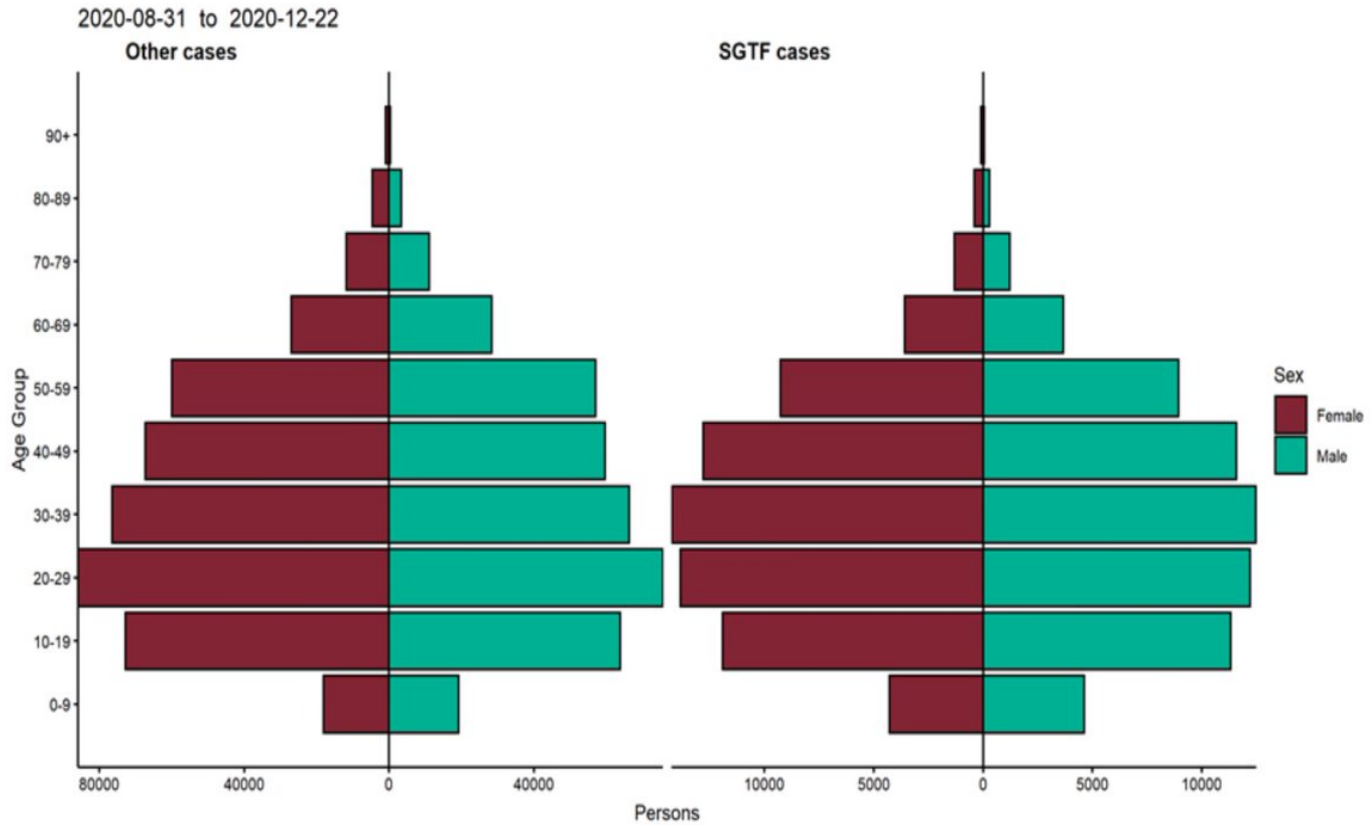
Dr Zoë Hyde
@DrZoeHyde

The evidence is in, and the UK variant does appear to be of great concern. The viral load of infected people is higher, and it seems to be about 50% more transmissible. It doesn’t appear to cause more severe illness, but more cases will unfortunately result in greater mortality.



The estimated viral load of people infected with the new variant is substantially higher, although it is not yet clear why. Further laboratory studies will hopefully explain this.
https://t.co/uQ3K6f4ltl

In contrast to early speculation, children do not appear to be markedly more susceptible to the new variant.



An investigation using NHS contact tracing data found 15.1% of contacts of people infected with the new variant became infected, compared to 9.8% of contacts of people infected with an older variant.
https://t.co/QnN9vC598s

Mortality does not seem to be substantially different.

In an analysis of 2,700 people followed for 28 days, 0.89% of people with the new variant died compared to 0.73% of those with older variants. This was not statistically significant.
https://t.co/QnN9vC598s

Unfortunately, owing to exponential growth, a 50% increase in transmissibility is worse than it sounds, and will lead to more deaths than a similar increase in lethality would.
https://t.co/TSYfrM6NyU

> Why a SARS-CoV-2 variant that's 50% more transmissible would in general be a much bigger problem than a variant that's 50% more deadly. A short thread... 1/
>
> — Adam Kucharski (@AdamJKucharski) December 28, 2020

There is no evidence to suggest measures to limit transmission of the virus such as masks and ventilation will no longer be effective.

However, measures to limit contacts will need to be more strict to keep transmission in check.
https://t.co/Vf1HvOUV7H

> Did the new SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7 lineage spread during the English national lockdown? Rising numbers and estimated higher R value suggest so. Together with our colleagues from COG-UK we took a closer look. >> https://t.co/YfCl4VUsrK pic.twitter.com/edhxttQRgS
>
> — Moritz Gerstung (@MoritzGerstung) December 30, 2020

More on the spread of the new variant by @TWenseleers, showing that it really is more transmissible, and can't simply be explained by a few superspreading events.
https://t.co/4y5T31LgkK

> More infectious SARS-CoV2 VOC 202012/01 strain is spreading at a similar rate across the whole UK. Clearly not a founder effect. >90% of all infections will be by this strain across the UK by February 1st. See code & data at https://t.co/hVi7Ld03KZ pic.twitter.com/lhOIKJ1xmy
>
> — Tom Wenseleers (@TWenseleers) December 28, 2020

It's also worth adding that while children don't seem to be more susceptible to this variant, they nonetheless are susceptible to infection, and transmit.

Given the increased transmissibility of the variant, we can unfortunately expect more transmission to occur in schools.