Twitter Thread by Dr. David Pate

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Bad news. The day before yesterday, we had confirmation of 3 new variants of concern in the US. As of yesterday, we now have 4. Three of the 4 variants have just been confirmed in the last month. The new one yesterday is the South African variant.

What does this mean for

Americans?
1. If you have been lucky and been able to get away with being in gatherings and not wearing a mask up until now, your luck is about to run out. It's time to take the public health guidance seriously and don't get in large gatherings, especially indoors, and you need

to wear a mask.
2. We need to slow down the transmission of this virus or we are going to get yet more variants. I have fought against the suggestions by some that we should lock up the elderly & high risk individuals at home & then let everyone get back to normal and spread the

virus to get herd immunity for a year. It is a dangerous proposal and the proliferation of new variants is a consequence.
3. We need to get as many people vaccinated as soon as possible.
4. There are discussions that since schools have operated safely in the past (by and large,

they have), we should now bring students back for full in-person classes. This is a mistake for several reasons. First, our data that these decisions and the recent CDC report were based on was with the majority of schools in hybrid. The first rule of interpreting scientific

studies is that you can't take the findings of one study under certain conditions and then say based on that we can expect the same results under completely different conditions. Full in-person classes will reduce distancing below the recommendation of any public health

organization in the world. Further, that data was based on the transmission characteristics of the D614 and D614G variants. The CDC predicts that in March, the B.1.1.7 variant will be dominant. Does that matter? Yes, we only have to look at the

U.K. Though it is early and we

haven’t had the opportunity to study this new variant to the degree we would like, the U.K. Is telling us that distancing is even more important than with the prior strains. This is not the time for American schools to cut distancing in half. Further, the transmission

characteristics appear to be significantly different and there is some evidence that while previously schools did not contribute to community spread, with B.1.1.7, they may very well do so.