Twitter Thread by Deepti Gurdasani



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I'm honestly at a loss as to understanding what our government is thinking & what evidence they're considering in enacting gravely negligent policies that will almost certainly lead to tens of thousands of deaths in the coming weeks. Thread.

To recap - NHS capacity is critical in many places. Hospitals have reported oxygen shortages, and doctors are talking about having to choose who to put on ventilatory support. We have rapidly rising case numbers, >50,000 daily reported cases & 981 deaths reported yesterday.

Let's remember that the impact of socialising over christmas hasn't even begun to show in our numbers yet. And that hospitalisations are indicative of infections that happened ~2-3 wks ago (since then we have been seeing exponential rises in cases).

This means even if we act today, and bring R to below 1 right now, hospitalisations will continue to rise for another 2 wks or so - in line with exponential rises in cases over the past 2 weeks. And deaths will continue to rise for 2-4 wks after we act.

Given current doubling periods, this means very conservatively, 20-30,000 deaths over the next 4 weeks or so, which we sadly can't do anything about now, because most of those who will die during this period have already been infected.

It also means that we will almost certainly breach NHS capacity (if we haven't already), because the situation will worsen at least for the next couple of weeks. And that is if we take decisive action TODAY.

What is decisive action?

Data from the last lockdown, and what we know about the new variant strain makes clear that current restrictions are not sufficient. They were not sufficient to contain increases in cases in SE England then, and we haven't seen any plateauing of cases despite tier 4 restrictions.

While tier 4 restrictions have only been in place for a limited period of time, previous experience from lockdown suggests this won't be enough, and given the current situation, we don't have time to squander time to see if these have the desired effect or not.

Even flattening the curve isn't sufficient- given current rates of transmission. We need to go hard and fast. The speed at which we reduce transmission will determine the number of lives saved. The evidence that schools have contributed to transmission is incontrovertible.

Highest rates of infection in primary & secondary school children. Rises in infection in these age groups during lockdown. Yet, we've done nothing to address this. Shutting down schools now could save thousands of lives. I know shutting schools isn't what anyone wants to do.

I understand the hugely damaging impact on children, and families. But scientists, parents, teachers have all been asking for schools to be made safer for months, and the government did nothing. Now we're at a point, where if we don't do this, thousands more will die.

This isn't an exaggeration. This is sadly where we are. With this more transmissible strain, we need all measures possible to control spread. Half-way measures won't be enough. We've already squandered away valuable time.

Let's also remember that this variant is rapidly increasing in frequency in other parts of the UK now, including Wales. We know that increases in R directly correlate with variant frequency. We can expect the exponential rate of growth to increase even further, given this.

This means the doubling time isn't likely to remain constant- it's likely to increase over time if we don't act. Every day of inaction costs hundreds of lives in the future. If the government doesn't act now, its policy is equivalent to accepting mass infection & mass death.

Can't possibly overemphasise the urgency here.
When will government act on this? Both SAGE & @IndependentSage have urged urgent action.

Are we prepared to do nothing, and watch helplessly while thousands die of negligence?

Sorry, just want to mention that in the earlier tweet, I meant doubling time is likely to decrease *not* increase over time (in line with increase in R) - thanks to @RodneyP72773409 and @GeorgeChiesa for pointing this out.