Twitter Thread by Victoria Stephen



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South African doctors are tough. We are used to extreme conditions. Making do with little. Going the extra mile for our patients. We have faced surge after surge of trauma patients hit our depts every weekend, managing the wounded, bleeding, critically injured. A thread 1/

I trained in the early 2000s. When SA didn't have ARVs for patients dying with HIV/Aids. In 2003 as a med student we marched so that South Africans could have access to ARVS. Millions of South Africans died due to the slow rollout of ARVS in the early 2000s 2/

As an intern, as ARVs were just being initiated, countless patients died - too sick to be started on ART, it was too late. As an intern at Bara, I remember certifying 8 patients dead in a night. Some patients were my own age - 24. 3/

ARVs made a huge difference. Life expectancy increased. Child-headed households decreased. More patients living a normal life. The #Covid19SA pandemic has reminded me so much of that pre-ARV era - the helplessness, being overwhelmed with patients and lacking resources 4/

Although we always get nervous when being exposed to HIV, we feel reassured that there ART prophylaxis. With #COVID19 HCWs are at high risk of getting sick, and also severe illness. We have continued to face this fear all year 5/

We have continued to work in an overburdened healthcare system, doing our best. Yet not even the PPE we are given has been of an acceptable standard. This article looked at N95s given to SA HCWs and found them SUBSTANDARD. 6/ https://t.co/Gg4KBK0pXK

Aerosolisation of #COVID19 has been proven to be a major concern. We don't have negative pressure rooms. We work in poorly ventilated departments overcrowded with patients. We are at high risk of getting sick with covid-19. Yet we don't have masks that fit properly 7/

Given our working environment, our poorly fitting masks, our second wave that is surging beyond the peak of the 1st wave, the need to reopen the economy to tourists, South Africa needs to make getting the #covid19vaccine its UTMOST PRIORITY. 8/

South African Healthcare Workers MUST hold @HealthZA accountable. We need the vaccine NOW, as we face our second wave. Getting the vaccine mid-year is TOO LATE for us and our patients. 9/

Let's not forget how long it took to get anti-retrovirals to patients with HIV/AIDS in South Africa. I will never forget what we went through back then. Delaying the covid19 vaccine is the same thing. 10/10 end