Twitter Thread by Richard Spoor



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Did a talk to a student organisation today on Covid mandates. I made a few points:

1.There is no scientific argument for vaccine mandates. The strongest case science makes is that vaccine mandates may prevent serous disease and death in older people and people with co-morbidities. The decision to impose mandates is a social and political one.

2.The benefits of vaccine mandates at universities are hard to quantify, it is not at all clear that the benefits will outweigh the cost.

3.Vaccine mandates are a system of reward and punishment. If you vaccinate you can keep your job or attend class, if you don't you lose your job or an education. Reward and punishment is how you deal with children, not adults with agency.

4.The 74% of South Africans who are not vaccinated are not children, either they have not been persuaded by the authorities or they have not had the opportunity. It's wrong to imagine that they are stupid, or worse rabid reactionaries.

https://t.co/eOaMp1xc2a is not at all clear how much vaccine mandates will help to end the pandemic. It is more likely that better communications, information, moral suasion and a more effective roll out will be more effective.

6.Many vaccine mandate advocates imagine that herd immunity is a realistic goal or that vaccination eliminates the risk of infection and transmission of the virus. It isn't and it's a question of degree.

7.They also forget that masks, social distancing and improved ventilation are effective and far less controversial means to contain the pandemic, also that natural/recovery immunity is real.

8.They also ignore the fact that poor and marginalised people are much less likely to be vaccinated than members of the elite. There are reasons for this that do not pertain to stupidity and selfishness.

9.The taboo against medical treatment without consent is well founded. There is a long and ugly history of the deliberate infection of colonised peoples with smallpox, of Nazi experiments in death camps and then the Tuskegee Syphilis Study.

10.The National Health Act forbids medical treatment without consent, it gives expression to a fundamental constitutional right. Denying people an education, a job or access to housing unless they agree to vaccinate is not consent.

11.Yes, vaccination is strongly recommended for older people and people with disabilities, but that is not an argument for vaccine mandates. The failure to persuade people to vaccinate is the failure of those charged to do so, not of the unvaccinated.