Twitter Thread by Apoorva Mandavilli



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This year has been momentous, with a new virus, a new job writing about that virus (114 articles!) and many new sources, readers and Twitter followers. To chronicle this insane year, I'm compiling some of the stories I'm proudest of. A thread.

Exactly a year ago, my family and I were headed back from Vietnam, with no idea how close we had been to the outbreak brewing in China. It took me a while to realize the gravity, but this first story I wrote about the virus still (mostly) holds up:
https://t.co/KQ5QMmY7MG

In March, it became increasingly obvious from research being published that the virus could spread in the absence of symptoms. Yet US officials were still mostly pooh-poohing it. In this article I talked to scientists who knew better:
https://t.co/485KxSXHeS

We know now that some of the worst effects of Covid-19 are because of the body's immune response, not just the virus itself. There were just early hints of that when I wrote this piece about cytokine storms.
https://t.co/WecEe8XkBf

In this story in May, I delved into what we knew about the relationship between the viral dose and the risk of infection -- a topic we still know woefully little about:
https://t.co/GqveDGgsul

I wasn't the first reporter to connect the dots on airborne transmission, but I'm still proud of this one for the impact it had. A few days after this article appeared, the WHO changed its position on airborne spread:
https://t.co/zGiS89Ej2E

In this story I tried to shine a light on other, older, pandemics that are being set back, in some cases by decades, because of the coronavirus. In another time, this would have been reported on the ground, but I tried to make the stories resonate anyway:
https://t.co/NG8zG5TpDq

This article is among my most controversial, and revealed a deep divide among PCR devotees on the one hand, and believers in rapid tests on the other. I also loved that a geeky story about a PCR metric (Ct value) was so widely read
https://t.co/rR4aBDK4Xl

I wrote a lot of stories about the CDC this year, and the Trump administration meddling in the agency's scientific work. But this article stands out, in part because of the importance of the document altered:
https://t.co/OlQyH5PtUY

I was in a continual state of shock while reporting this story about the White House Rose Garden event and the WH's stance that it did not need to trace any contacts because there was no evidence that anyone was infected there

https://t.co/mRdOZh8AiO

This story explored the possibility (now confirmed by many studies) that people with Covid develop autoimmunity reminiscent of lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, although it's still unclear how long those autoantibodies stick around
https://t.co/BcVlR6J5XS

An absolute joy to write, I could barely wait to get the good news out: that immunity from natural infection (and, presumably vaccines) might last years and maybe even decades. Of course, that was before the new variant emerged:
https://t.co/ntTmKxKjbm

I'll end with this story from a couple of weeks ago about the new variant identified in Britain and what it means for us. We know more about the variant since I wrote this, but most of it still applies:
https://t.co/zFul84KhhA

Finally, I'd like to highlight a few stories that had nothing to do with the coronavirus, beginning with this one about the London Patient, the second man ever cured of HIV, revealing his identity. It was also the last story I reported in person:
https://t.co/19rkF0uvUt

This story perhaps flew under the radar because of the pandemic. It examined disturbing allegations of harassment and bullying from a global leader in tuberculosis:
https://t.co/XTWuRRBqm9

Whew, that was a lot. Goodbye and good riddance, 2020. I was wowed by your science, appalled by the public health failures, and profoundly grateful to all of my readers and sources. And of course to the spelling bee and crosswords, which kept me sane.