A thread by Tom Inglesby

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The president spoke this afternoon about the US response to the coronavirus pandemic. There were a number of welcome public health-grounded messages. But there are places where he needed to go further, or to clarify or ask more from governors. 1/x

He asked people to use masks and social distance and said he had a mask in his pocket and said he would wear one whenever he was around others. This was all good. The next important step is for him to tell all governors to require masks in all states. 2/x

He conveyed how poorly things are going in FL, which was important to say. But the next needed step is for him to call on FL governor to take decisive steps to control spread. 3/x

He should call on Gov DeSantis to stop indoor large gatherings, public or private, direct people to stay at home unless they need to be in public. Require masks by all. 4/x

The president said the US outbreak is largely in sunbelt now. It's true things are worst in sunbelt. But ~80% of states have had worsening outbreaks over last 2 weeks. Major problems not confined to the south. Need to be very clear about how serious the national situation is. 5/x

Important to hear president offer direct statement that the pandemic is likely to get worse before it's going to get better. This is very different from inaccurate statements made by White House in last couple weeks that things were going very well in the US response. 6/x

What would have been useful for the president to say more clearly is what the Administration is going to do differently now to get this pandemic crisis under control. What is going to change now. 7/x

He did say “we are in the process of developing a strategy that is going to be very very powerful”. This is good to hear because a national strategy is very needed. Will be crucial for strategy to set plan for unifying national&state efforts, for accurate communications...8/x

... for ensuring we have enough PPE in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, factories etc, for building up contact tracing capability across country, for opening schools safely, for bringing down the time to get diagnostic test results from a week to a day...9/x

...for transparently reporting data from all states to inform public actions, for ultimately controlling the spread to the minimal level that many countries around the world have achieved. 10/x
A big concern from the event: why no scientists or public health officials at the podium? There continues to be very little opportunity for the press/public to interact with public health leaders in the middle of a pandemic. 11/x

In past national outbreaks, CDC was able to answer questions on nearly daily basis. Now neither they nor other federal scientists or health leaders are heard from very often. These WH events used to be the principal times they would be allowed to speak publicly. 12/x

Many other countries that have controlled their outbreaks successfully have had close working partnership between political leaders and health leaders, and no barriers btwn public and health leaders/scientists. 13/x

We should emulate that and let health leaders speak candidly about what they see coming, how they think Americans should act, what their judgments are about what is now most important. 14/end