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MIKE EHRMANN GETTY IMAGES

SEEMS LIKE OLD TIMES

Tampa Bay's Rob Gronkowski (left) and Tom Brady celebrate after defeating the Kansas City Chiefs 31-9 in Super Bowl LV at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Fla. Brady threw two touchdown passes to Gronkowski, his old teammate when they won titles together with the New England Patriots. Brady, 43, earned his fifth Super Bowl MVP and seventh ring. Sports, D1.

STUDY: VARIANT SPREADS RAPIDLY THROUGH NATION

Scripps expert co-wrote report saying it could be predominant by March

BY CARL ZIMMER

A more contagious variant of the coronavirus first found in Britain is spreading rapidly in the United States, doubling roughly every 10 days, according to a new study.

Analyzing a half-million coronavirus tests and hundreds of genomes, a team of researchers predicted that in a month this variant could become predominant in the United States, potentially bringing a surge of new cases and increased risk of death.

The research offers the first nationwide look at the history of the variant, known as B.1.1.7, since it arrived in the U.S. in late 2020. Last month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned that B.1.1.7 could become predominant by March if it behaved the way it did in Britain. The new study confirms that projected path.

"Nothing in this paper is surprising, but people need to see it," said Kristian Andersen, a co-author of the study and a virus expert at Scripps Research in La Jolla.

"We should probably prepare for this being the predominant lineage." SEE VARIANT • A6

MORE COVERAGE INSIDE

- **A8** • U.S. experts optimistic about increase of vaccine supplies.
- **A9** • Senior Democrats to announce \$3,000-per-child benefit.
- **B1** • Nurse sews teddy bears for families of COVID-19 victims.
- **C1** • Will "hero pay" ordinances for workers close more stores?

DOCTORS CITE HARM TO CHILDREN SHUT OUT OF SCHOOL

BY KRISTEN TAKETA

Pediatricians across San Diego County say they are deeply troubled by what they see school closures doing to children.

Dr. Janet Crow, a pediatrician at UC San Diego, talks every day with middle and high school kids who are heading toward depression or are flat-out depressed, she said.

One of her high school patients can't bring himself to do Zoom school, she said. His mom isn't there to help him because she is an essential worker with two jobs. The 16-year-old also is working at a tire shop to support his family.

He used to have a school counselor and a teacher who were working hard to motivate him, Crow said, but now he doesn't see them because his school is closed.

"For all intents and purposes, he's dropped out," Crow said. "It's so heartbreaking for me because I've known this kid since he was born." SEE SCHOOL • A7

IN-PERSON WORSHIP SERVICES RESUME

Chula Vista church that sued meets indoors after top court's ruling

BY KATE MORRISSEY

On the first Sunday after the Supreme Court found that California had illegally restricted South Bay Pentecostal Church from worship indoors, church members flocked to the in-person service.

As they greeted each other on their way into the building, they celebrated by saying it was a beautiful Sunday and praising God. All wore masks, and some wore gloves. The church's scrolling marquee proclaimed, "Safest Place on Earth."

The court allowed some state public health restrictions to remain in place for indoor worship, including prohibiting singing and chanting and imposing a capacity limit of 25 percent. It was not clear whether the church followed those restrictions.

Reporters from The San Diego Union-Tribune were not allowed inside to observe the service.



KRISTIAN CARREON

Members of South Bay Pentecostal Church in Chula Vista got their temperature checked Sunday before entering.

Church members declined to talk to reporters as they entered, deferring to the church's pastor. The pastor did not respond to several requests for comment.

At least 60 cars were parked in front of the church. SEE CHURCH • A8

COLLEGE TURNS PAGE, CITES RACIAL EQUITY GAINS

BY KRISTEN TAKETA

More than four years ago, Southwestern College's accreditation was on warning status, the college was grappling with multiple employee discrimination or misconduct complaints, and the campus was wrestling with a history of racial tensions.

Today officials say the college has gotten back on its feet and is out of crisis mode, although it's still facing some challenges.

In the past few years the college got its accreditation reaffirmed, completed 70 out of 79 personnel misconduct investigations and survived a bout of racism accusations during the 2019 student government election that threatened to tear the campus apart.



Mark Sanchez

The college is not in the same place where it was then," said Christian Sanchez, who was the

Southwestern College student government president last year. "Of course, there's still work to be done, but I think there's been a drastic improvement."

Some of the racial challenges linger. For instance, five Black current and former employees sued Southwestern last year alleging discrimination, including being passed up for promotion, being denied overtime and hearing racially offensive comments.

The college said it is reviewing Christian Sanchez, who was the



GETTY IMAGES

George Shultz, shown at a Paris summit in 2010, kept busy after leaving government.

GEORGE SHULTZ

1920-2021

SECRETARY OF STATE SHAPED FOREIGN POLICY IN COLD WAR

BY NORMAN KEMPSTER & MICHAEL FINNEGAN

George Shultz, who as secretary of state in the 1980s shaped U.S. foreign policy in the closing phase of the Cold War when a dangerous nuclear-armed stalemate gave way to peaceful — if not quite cordial — relations between the superpowers, died Saturday. He was 100.

Shultz's tenure as President Ronald Reagan's chief diplomat, from 1982 to 1989, came after he served in three Cabinet-level posts in the Nixon administration: Treasury secretary, budget director and labor secretary.

Shultz died at his home on the Stanford University campus, said

SEE SHULTZ • A10



SPORTS

AZTECS BACK IN ACTION

After two games against New Mexico were wiped out, SDSU hosts San Jose State tonight. D1

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

SCHOOL

FROM A1

Another pediatrician, Dr. Leah Kern at UC San Diego, says some of her patients' development and academic progress are regressing. One patient with cerebral palsy is supposed to be getting physical therapy at school. Instead he's getting it via Zoom — and now his ability to walk is regressing, she said.

And a high school-age patient who had straight A's for years now is getting C's because he has to help his second-grade brother with on-line school. He is the only one at home who speaks English, she said.

Vista pediatrician Dr. Veronica Naudin's patients are no longer going to school. They're logging in to Zoom, but they're not going out to actually participate, she said.

One patient, a high schooler, did nothing, but stared at her computer screen for the first hour and a half of a two-hour final exam, until her mom pushed her to complete at least some of the test.

Another, a senior, used to be high-achieving but now is so depressed she no longer sees why she has to graduate. She stopped participating online, and her mom has been telling the school her daughter is sick for months.

"What we're seeing is frightening, because it's hard to see these faces. They're just empty," Naudin said of her patients. "When you talk about school, it's like an emptiness to them, like school is just something that they're enduring. I miss seeing those kids who would talk about school with joy."

"What are we doing here? Why are we making kids pay this price?"

Out of all the adults charged with taking care of children, pediatricians have been among the most vocal in calling for schools to reopen now.

After almost 11 months of the pandemic, 4 out of 5 San Diego County K-12 students are in distance learning. Some of the county's largest school districts, including San Diego Unified and all South County districts, remain closed with no indication they will reopen soon.

Closed San Diego County schools are barred from reopening until the county case rate falls below 25 per 100,000 residents for elementary schools and 7 per 100,000 for middle and high schools.

At least two dozen San Diego pediatricians from the local American Academy of Pediatrics chapter recently mobilized a committee with one goal: helping schools to open again, immediately.

"Somebody needs to think about these kids who don't have a vote," Crow said. "Children never get to advocate for themselves. We have to advocate for them."

Lost connections

Schools provide much more than academics to children; they are central to the development of their identity, independence and their sense of right and

wrong, said Dr. Maya Kumar, an adolescent medicine specialist at Rady Children's Hospital.

School is where children learn how to interact with other people and develop such life skills as empathy, negotiation and respect.

"When you isolate into a Zoom, you don't have that," Crow said.

Without in-person interactions with teachers, counselors, principals or other adults at school who encourage them or ask how they're doing, children are losing their will to learn. And without friends, without fun and constructive activities like sports and clubs, children are losing their happiness and sense of purpose, Kumar said.

"In the same way people who are unemployed might feel depressed and uneasy because they're not going out achieving something purposeful, school is the job of an adolescent, and we've basically put them all out of work," Kumar said.

The harm to children of being cooped up at home goes beyond depression and poor academics.

Children are getting heavier because they are no longer walking to school, playing at recess or participating in P.E. They're stuck at home, watching more and spending more time sitting and looking at screens.

"Gaining that weight and being that inactive so young... that can affect them for the rest of their lives," Kern said.

Kumar, who works in an eating disorder unit at Rady Children's, said the unit has become so overwhelmed with patients during the pandemic that it has moved patients to other parts of the hospital.

Kumar said more patients also are becoming victims of online sexual predators and are engaging in inappropriate behaviors like exchanging sexual photos or conversations online, because they are spending more time on screens, mainly social media and on-line gaming, she said.

Some patients have become so addicted to online gaming that they are neglecting eating, sleeping and showering, let alone homework.

"It looks exactly like a substance use disorder," Kumar said.

Kern said some of her patients who have ADHD may have to increase their medication because, even though they used to do well at school on a low dose, they're struggling more to sit and focus on online school.

"The parent and I really agree that the real treatment would be to get their child back in person at school," Kern said.

Experts say the health consequences of school closures today can change children's lives for the worse long after the pandemic ends. One November study in the Journal of the American Medical Association suggested the decision to



Ariana Garcia, 7, does schoolwork at home in Oceanside. A group of pediatricians warns that distance learning's limitations are harmful to children.

close public primary schools will lead to a decrease in life expectancy for U.S. children. School district leaders and teachers have given many reasons to keep schools closed throughout the pandemic.

They said COVID-19 case rates have been disproportionately higher in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, so there is a higher risk of COVID spreading in schools there.

While most children do not get seriously sick from COVID, adults do, and school leaders said they don't want to risk COVID spreading from students to adults.

They also noted that San Diego County has yet to start vaccinating teachers. If they open schools and have to close them again due to positive COVID cases, that would be too disruptive to students, they said.

Kisha Borden, president of the San Diego Unified teachers union, said she and other educators are well aware of the trauma students are facing during the pandemic. But student mental health has long been an issue before the pandemic, she said, and school closures are not responsible alone for traumatizing students — the pandemic is.

Borden also said she thinks the pediatricians' recommendation to reopen schools now contradicts state guidance and guidance from the national American Academy of Pediatrics, both of which say the rate of community spread of coronavirus must be considered before determining

whether schools can reopen. She also pointed out that students and educators have lost family members to COVID, and many families do not want to return to school because COVID has devastated their communities.

"The arguments by the pediatricians erases these families' experiences, and that's not OK," Borden said.

Safe openings

The pediatrician group is trying to alleviate these fears by pointing to several recent studies showing that schools can and have reopened safely.

There is a growing consensus among experts that school is not significantly contribute to community spread of COVID-19 and that cases are rarely transmitted within schools as long as they follow basic safety measures such as masking and social distancing.

A study of 11 North Carolina school districts that had reopened with more than 90,000 students and staff found that, over nine weeks of in-person school, there were 32 COVID-19 infections that were transmitted within the schools, compared with 773 cases among staff and family members acquired from outside school. Not one of the 32 in-school infections was transmitted from child to adult, according to the study.

Other studies also have suggested that children are more likely to get COVID-19 out in the community than in school.

The pediatricians, like

other essential workers, have been working in-person and out close with children throughout the pandemic. They believe schools can and should do the same.

"We've figured out ways to make other small places safe. I think that's what can happen in schools," Crow said.

The pediatricians pointed out that several school districts and most private schools in the county have been open for months. Kern said she has some patients happily attending public and private schools in person in places like El Cajon, Santee and Lakeside.

"They feel safe and supported," she said, and parents are grateful that their child is in school.

"We want to share data that in other countries, even in the other states, even in San Diego County, this has been done and it's been done safely, and we really want them to know that they can go back and be safe."

There have been 27 outbreaks at K-12 schools in San Diego County, although outbreaks don't necessarily mean the cases were transmitted at school. The county says an outbreak is where three or more confirmed COVID-19 cases occur among people from different households within a two week period.

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CHICAGO MAYOR TOUTS DEAL TO OPEN SCHOOLS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot touted a preliminary agreement with the teachers union over COVID-19 safety protocols on Sunday, potentially averting a strike in the nation's third-largest school district.

Some students could return to classrooms as soon as Thursday, with the reopening of school phased in by grade. Also, the city agreed to vaccinate 1,500 teachers and staff weekly at vaccination sites dedicated to Chicago Public Schools. The possible deal — which still requires approval from the Chicago Teachers Union — also includes metrics that would trigger school closings when cases spike.

The union and district have been fighting for months over a plan to gradually reopen the roughly 340,000-student district, with talks breaking down in recent days on issues including vaccinations. Lightfoot and CPS officials had threatened to lock educators out of teaching sites multiple times, while the union said it would lead to a strike for the second time in less than two years.

"This agreement was about making sure everyone in our school communities just aren't safe, but also that they feel safe," Lightfoot said, calling the last 11 months a "whirlwind for the entire city."

While she called it a "tentative agreement," the union characterized it as an offer that required further review.

"We do not yet have an agreement with Chicago Public Schools," CTU tweeted on Sunday. "We will continue with our democratic process of rank-and-file review throughout the day before any agreement is reached."

It was unclear when the union would begin voting.

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