

Best of Last Week – Bread made before agriculture started, a telomere breakthrough and shortcomings of omega-3

July 23 2018, by Bob Yirka



One of the stone structures of the Shubayqa 1 site. The fireplace, where the bread was found, is in the middle. Credit: Alexis Pantos

It was a good week for historical science as a team with members from

the University of Copenhagen, University College London and the University of Cambridge discovered the charred remains of [bread that predates agriculture by 4,000 years](#)—and possibly offers clues regarding initial cultivation of cereals. And a team with the University of Utah reported on [a newly discovered armored dinosaur from Utah that revealed an intriguing family history](#)—it looked similar to dinosaurs uncovered in Asia. And a team at the University of Alberta announced [the first fossilized snake embryo ever discovered](#) and suggested the find will rewrite the history of ancient snakes.

It was a good week for technology, as well, as a team at Cornell University announced that they had developed an [electron microscope detector that achieves record resolution](#)—and does away with special aberration correctors. Also, a team at Stanford University announced that they had [moved closer to a completely optical artificial neural network](#) by demonstrating that it is possible to train an [artificial neural network](#) directly on an optical chip. And a team at Tsinghua University announced that they had built [a hybrid device that harvests both mechanical and magnetic energy](#) from ambient wasted energy.

In other news, a team with members from Vanderbilt University and Argonne National Laboratory found that [safe solid-state lithium batteries heralded a "paradigm shift" in energy storage](#), due to recent advances in the use of a solid non-flammable ceramic electrolyte known as garnet. Also, a team in Australia announced that they had made [a breakthrough that could impact cancer, aging and heart disease](#) involving telomere biology—they suggest its structure, not its length, is what is important. And a team from the University of Wisconsin and Oak Ridge National Laboratory announced that they had developed [an eagle-eyed algorithm that outdoes human experts](#) in detecting and analyzing microscopic-scale radiation damage to materials under consideration for nuclear reactors

And finally, if you are one of the millions around the world talking

omega-3 as a dietary supplement hoping it will help you avoid heart problems, you might be fooling yourself, as a team in the U.K. found that [omega-3 supplements have little or no heart or vascular health benefit](#).

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