

Best of Last Week: Boosting solar desalination, DNA microscopy and anti-aging effects of pomegranate compound

June 24 2019, by Bob Yirka



Researchers from Rice University's Laboratory for Nanophotonics found they could boost the efficiency of their solar-powered desalination system by more than 50% by adding inexpensive plastic lenses to concentrate sunlight into "hot spots." . Credit: Pratiksha Dongare/Rice University

It was a good week for technology, as a team of engineers at Rice University announced that they [boosted the output of a solar desalination system by 50 percent](#) using sunlight and nanoparticles.

A team of researchers from Carnegie Mellon University, working with a group from the University of Minnesota, announced that they had built [the first-ever successful mind-controlled robotic arm without brain implants](#). This new prosthetic is based on novel sensing and machine learning techniques.

A team from Solar-Lezama working with Josh Tenenbaum, a professor at CSAIL and MIT's Center for Brains, Minds and Machines, outlined their work [toward artificial intelligence that learns to write code](#). The program, called SketchAdapt, was trained on thousands of program examples.

A group led by a team at Cornell University [used machine learning to unlock the mysteries of quantum physics](#) with data from an electron scanning-tunneling microscope.

In other news, a trio of researchers from Columbia University and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution mapped [a huge undersea freshwater aquifer off the U.S. Northeast](#), stretching offshore from Massachusetts to New Jersey.

Researchers from the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard described new [DNA microscopy with an entirely new way to image cells](#)—by their genome.

Researchers affiliated with several institutions across the U.S. found [a shipworm in a river in the Philippines that eats rock instead of wood](#).

A team with members from Denmark and Canada took [one step closer](#)

[to chronic pain relief](#) with a new understanding of the protein sortilin, which is expressed on the surface of nerve cells.

A team with members from the U.S. and Denmark reported the results of a study that found [more long-term sea level rise from Greenland ice](#)—leading to more sea level rise than has been predicted.

And finally, if you would like to slow your [aging process](#), you might have help soon. A team at Amazentis, in conjunction with EPFL and the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, announced that [a pomegranate compound with anti-aging effects passed human trials](#).

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