

Best of Last Week: Voyager 2 reaches interstellar space, Siri's laser weakness, and human disease killed the Neanderthal

November 11 2019, by Bob Yirka

Iowa physicists have confirmed the spacecraft Voyager 2 has entered interstellar space, in effect leaving the solar system. Data from Voyager 2 has helped further characterize the structure of the heliosphere, structure of the heliosphere -- the wind sock-shaped region created by the sun's wind as it extends to the boundary of the solar system. Credit: NASA JPL

It was a good week for space news, as a team at the University of Iowa announced that [Voyager 2 has reached interstellar space](#)—in addition to confirming that the craft has moved into the interstellar medium, they also detected a plasma density jump. Also, an international team of researchers [further refined how quickly the universe is expanding](#) using state-of-the-art technologies and techniques. And a trio of researchers with the University of Manchester, Università di Roma "La Sapienza" and Sorbonne University claimed that [data from the Planck space observatory suggests that the universe is a sphere](#)—Eleonora Di Valentino, Alessandro Melchiorri and Joseph Silk reported that they had found a discrepancy between the concentration of dark matter and dark energy and outward expansion; there was more gravitational lensing than theory has predicted.

In technology news, the team behind the development of The Bloodhound LSR jet car project announced that [the car's 461-mph speed was high, but the team is eyeing bigger records ahead](#) after breaking the land speed record on a dry lake bed in Africa. Also, a pair of researchers at the University of Notre Dame developed [a model to predict the size and shape of online comment threads](#)—the DARPA-funded project was carried out by Tim Weninger and Rachel Krohn. And a combined team of researchers from the University of Michigan and The University of Electro-Communications described [a scenario in which light is a thief that tells your garage door to open](#)—they also found that light from a laser could be used to send what are normally voice commands to devices like Alexa and Siri. Also, a small team of researchers from the University of Edinburgh, the University of Cambridge, Campus Universita'rio de Santiago and Leiden University found they could [solve the three-body problem faster using a deep neural network](#)—the team reports a new way to calculate where three bodies such as the sun, moon and Earth will all be at a certain point in time.

In other news, a team with members affiliated with institutions in the

U.S. and Israel found evidence [linking Neanderthal extinction to human diseases](#) using mathematical models of disease transmission and gene flow. Also, a study sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania, the Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy and biotech company, Tmunity Therapeutics announced that [they had used the CRISPR gene editing technique for cancer](#)—a first in the US.

And finally, if you, like millions of other people around the world, want to increase your chances of staying alive, a team of researchers from Australia, Thailand and Finland found that [any amount of running could be linked to a significantly lower risk of death](#).

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