

Best of Last Week: Mars findings, dirty smartphones, and your brain on a low-carb diet

March 9 2020, by Bob Yirka

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It was a good week for space news as a team with members from several institutions in the U.S. and one in the U.K. found evidence of [a cosmic impact that destroyed one of the world's earliest human settlements](#)

—meltglass at Abu Hureyra in what is now Syria, that was formed at temperatures higher than humans could achieve. Also, NASA's Curiosity rover snapped [its highest-resolution panorama to date](#)—a 1.8-billion-pixel assemblage of terrain surrounding the rover taken during the 2019 Thanksgiving holiday. And in related news, Jacob Heinz with Washington State University and Dirk Schulze-Makuch with Technische Universität Berlin found evidence suggesting that [the organic compound thiophenes found on Mars by the Curiosity rover could be consistent with the presence of early life on Mars](#).

In technology news, a team at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute showed that [a potassium metal battery could emerge as a rival to lithium-ion technology](#). The researchers demonstrated a way to overcome the problem of dendrite formation. And Goodyear unveiled [a biodegradable concept tire that could regenerate its tread as needed](#)—called reCharge, the new kind of tire would also eliminate flat tires.

A combined team from KU Leuven in Belgium and the United Kingdom's University of Birmingham found that [insecure encryption configurations could compromise the security of Hyundai, Toyota, and Kia vehicles](#). And a team at Penn State's Battery and Energy Storage Technology Center announced that they had developed [a lithium-ion battery that is safe, has high power and can last for 1 million miles](#).

In other news, a team at the University of Arizona found that [the average smartphone is seven times dirtier than the average toilet](#)—and they note that the CDC recommends that everyone check with their phone's maker to learn how to rid it of germs in light of the coronavirus epidemic. Also, a team at the University of York identified [a sub-atomic particle that could have formed the "dark matter" in the universe during the Big Bang](#)

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And finally, if you have been looking for ways to keep your brain

healthy as you age, you may want to check out the results of a study led by Stony Brook University professor Lilianne Mujica-Parodi—she and her team conducted [a study that showed that a low-carb diet may prevent or reverse age-related effects within the brain](#).

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