

Best of Last Week: A new type of superconductor, a biometric hand and vitamin D reduces COVID-19 symptoms

September 28 2020, by Bob Yirka

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It was another good week for physics as a team at Lancaster University established [why objects moving through superfluid helium-3 lack a speed limit](#)—because of exotic particles that stick to surfaces in the

superfluid. Also, University of Queensland student Germain Tobar ["squared the numbers" on time travel](#), and in so doing, suggested that paradox-free time travel is theoretically possible. And a team at Cornell University identified [a new type of superconductor](#) called a g-wave.

In technology news, a team with members from institutions across Europe reported evidence indicating that [sodium-ion batteries are a valid alternative to lithium-ion batteries](#). And a combined team from MIT and Massachusetts General Hospital looked into the possibility of [using deep learning techniques to control the unconsciousness level of patients in an anesthetic state](#). Also, a team at Friedrich Schiller University Jena announced [a new storage battery that is more efficient and heat-resistant](#) than those now in use—it is based on new polymer electrolytes and the researchers claim they are efficient, flexible and environmentally friendly. And a team from Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia and Centro Protesi INAIL developed [a biomimetic hand prosthesis that is uniquely similar to a human hand](#)—they claim it is able to restore over 90% of functionality to people with upper-limb amputations.

In other news, a team with members from the University of Maine, Harvard University and the University of Nottingham found evidence that suggested [unusual climate conditions influenced WWI mortality rates and the subsequent Spanish flu pandemic](#)—an influx of cold air from the North Atlantic Ocean chilled the battle areas and kept virus-carrying mallard ducks from migrating north for the summer. Also, a team at the University of California found that [surgical and N95 masks cut down the amount of aerosolized particles emitted during breathing, talking and coughing](#)—but homemade cloth face coverings release large amounts of fibers into the air.

And finally, if you are like billions of other people on the planet and are looking for ways improve your odds if you are infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, you may want to check out the results of research done by

a combined team from Tehran University of Medical Sciences and Boston University Medical Center—they found that [adequate levels of vitamin D reduced complications and deaths among COVID-19 patients.](#)

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