

# **Best of Last Week: Speed of sound upper limit found, new solar panel design and machine washing COVID-19 masks**

October 12 2020, by Bob Yirka

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It was a good week for physics as a team with members from the Institute for High Pressure Physics in Troitsk, the University of Cambridge and Queen Mary University of London found [the upper limit](#)

[for the speed of sound](#). When moving through solid atomic hydrogen, sound traveled close to the theoretical fundamental limit. And amateur physicists Jussi Lindgren and Jukka Liukkonen devised [a new interpretation of quantum mechanics](#) that suggests reality does not depend on the person measuring it. Also, a team at the University of Maryland presented new mathematical tools to better understand simulations of hyperbolic spaces. They called them [mind- and space-bending physics on a convenient chip](#).

In technology news, a combined team from the University of York and NOVA University of Lisbon unveiled [a new solar panel design that could lead to wider use of renewable energy](#)—the design is based on checkerboard lines that increased their ability to absorb light. And a team with members from the University of Sussex Business School and the International School of Management found that [countries should prioritize support for renewables rather than nuclear power](#) if they want to lower emissions rapidly and do it as cost-effectively as possible. Also, an international team of engineers demonstrated [wearable sensors that could be printed directly on the skin without using heat](#). And a team with members from the Bretagne Atlantique Research Center and the French National Center for Scientific Research wondered [whether explanations for data-based predictions actually increase user trust in AI](#).

In other news, a team at the University of Birmingham found that [a deficiency of vitamin D increased the risk of COVID-19 in healthcare workers](#). And a team of mathematicians and computer scientists at Carnegie Mellon University [solved a 90-year-old geometry problem called Keller's conjecture](#).

And finally, if you are like billions of others around the world still trying to protect yourself and your loved ones from being infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, you may want to check out the results of a study done by a team at UNSW Sydney: they found that [cloth masks work, but](#)

[only if you machine wash them after use.](#)

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