

Best of Last Week – Constraining dark matter, mysterious giant stone jars, impact of salt intake on body

April 4 2022, by Bob Yirka

Jars at Herakilo site. Credit: Tilok Thakuria

It was a good week for space science as a team at India's Tata Institute of Fundamental Research's International Centre for Theoretical Studies [set constraints on compact dark matter from gravitational wave](#)

[microlensing](#), and in so doing, introduced a new way to probe the nature of the elusive substance. Also, an international team found that [the first audio recording from Mars revealed two speeds of sound](#)—one for high-pitched sounds and another for lower-pitched sounds. And a team with members from the University of California, Santa Cruz and the University of Washington found evidence that [methane could be the first detectable indication of life beyond Earth](#).

In technology news, a team at the University of California, Berkeley, developed [a new approach to tackling optimization problems using Boltzmann machines](#), one that involves the use of Ising machines. Also, a team at the University of Nebraska at Omaha found [a surprising new way to make walking easier](#) using a strategically timed pull from a waist belt connected to a pulley. And a team with members from Arizona State University, Colorado State University, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and First Solar Inc. [unveiled factors limiting the voltage of polycrystalline CdSeTe solar cells](#). Also, a team with members from the University of Basel and IBM Research-Zurich explored the possibility of [hosting spin qubits in silicon-based FinFETs](#) in a quantum computer.

In other news, a team at Imperial College London conducted [the first human challenge trial to learn more about what happens to the human body when COVID-19 strikes](#)—36 volunteers were intentionally infected and then monitored to learn more about the progression of the disease. And a team from the Australian National University [discovered 65 mysterious, giant stone jars in India](#).

And finally, an international team of researchers conducted the [largest randomized clinical trial to date looking at the link between sodium reduction and heart failure](#). They found that reducing the intake of salt did not lead to fewer visits to the ER, hospitalizations or death. However, it did find improvements in quality of life such as reduced fatigue and coughing.

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Citation: Best of Last Week – Constraining dark matter, mysterious giant stone jars, impact of salt intake on body (2022, April 4) retrieved 19 May 2024 from

<https://sciencex.com/news/2022-04-week-constraining-dark-mysterious-giant.html>

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