

U.S. astrophysicist Bohdan Paczynski dies

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U.S. astrophysicist Bohdan Paczynski, renowned for his research into celestial phenomena, has died after a three-year battle with brain cancer.

Paczynski died Thursday at the age of 67, it was announced Tuesday.

The Princeton University scientist's pioneering efforts to develop the technique called gravitational lensing permitted the discovery of the first terrestrial planet found outside our solar system.

Despite widespread skepticism from other astrophysicists, he also championed the idea the still-mysterious events known as gamma ray bursts originated billions of light-years away rather than within the Milky Way galaxy. His theory was ultimately confirmed by observations.

"He was incredibly creative and original," said Michael Strauss, a Princeton professor of astrophysical sciences. "All his life he brought interesting approaches to interesting problems."

Paczynski received many honors during his career, including the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society and the 2006 Henry Norris Russell Lectureship, the highest award of the American Astronomical Society. He was a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the U.S. National Academy of Sciences.

He is survived by his wife, Hanka, and two children.

A memorial is to be held at Princeton at a later date.

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