

Best of Last Week – Testing for extra dimensions, solving the riddle of life on Earth and fatty acids that slow cancer

March 23 2015, by Bob Yirka



It was another good week for physics as a trio of physicists suggested that if scientists are someday able to detect mini black holes at the LHC, at certain energy levels, [it could indicate the existence of parallel universes in extra dimensions](#)—and that, they claim, would support string theory. Meanwhile, in another collaborative effort, researchers studying data from NASA's Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope found that ["spacetime foam" was not slowing down photons from a faraway gamma-ray burst](#), which, they say, is another confirmation of Einstein's theory of general relativity. Also, another team invented [a new way to control light](#) that could prove critical for the next generation of super-fast computers. They built a very tiny honeycombed structure that can

bend light around tighter curves than has been possible before.

It was also a really big week for Earth science as well, as [a team of chemists claimed to have solved the riddle of how life began on Earth](#)—they found a way to generate over 50 precursor nucleic acids necessary for life to get started from just three ingredients: sunlight, hydrogen sulfide and hydrogen cyanide, all of which should have been present during the time when it is believed life was getting started on our planet.

In space news, scientists analyzing data from the Dawn spacecraft reported on [intriguing findings that might lead to signs of habitability](#)—a bright region on Ceres that varied in intensity during different time periods, and a plume emanating from the surface. Also, researchers studying data from the ESA's Rosetta spacecraft reported detecting [the "most wanted molecule,"](#) molecular nitrogen—on the comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko. And another team has calculated that [there are planets in the habitable zone around most stars](#) in the Milky Way galaxy.

In completely unrelated news, a team of researchers deemed [a popular weed killer, glyphosate, as a probable carcinogen](#) and other researchers conducting a psychology study at the University of Texas found that [men's preference for certain female body types has evolutionary roots](#)—apparently, certain curves suggested better breeding possibilities—which has persisted to this day.

And in good news for men, [a team of researchers showed how fatty acids can fight prostate cancer](#)—they found that [omega-3 fatty acids](#) actually slow the spread of cancer cells in the prostate, rather than cause an increase, as had been found in other studies. That should be a relief, since almost everything people eat has at least some of the acid in it.

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