Testing General Relativity Using a Pulsar in a Triple System


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Some of the highest profile, and highest impact, results from pulsar timing involve probing the high-density physics at the cores of the neutron stars or testing general relativity in new and better ways. These efforts almost always involve the rarest and most exotic of recycled binary systems, including those which formed in unusual ways, or those whose orbits or companions were altered later, as often happens in globular clusters. We report recent results, using timing and search observations from the GBT and Arecibo, on several of these exotic systems. We have new and potentially exciting neutron star mass measurements and new tests of general relativity. And we suggest that it is well worth the efforts involved to uncover and examine these “1%” pulsar systems.

228.03 — Testing General Relativity Using a Pulsar in a Triple System

Anne Archibald\textsuperscript{1,6}; Nina Gusinskaia\textsuperscript{1}; Jason Hessels\textsuperscript{1,6}; Adam Deller\textsuperscript{7}; David Kaplan\textsuperscript{7}; Duncan Lorimer\textsuperscript{4}; Ryan S. Lynch\textsuperscript{3}; Scott M. Ransom\textsuperscript{3}; Ingrid Stairs\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} Anton Pannekoek Institute, Universiteit van Amsterdam (Amsterdam, Netherlands)
\textsuperscript{2} University of British Columbia (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada)
\textsuperscript{3} NRAO (Charlottesville, Virginia, United States)
\textsuperscript{4} University of West Virginia (Morgantown, West Virginia, United States)
\textsuperscript{5} University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, United States)
\textsuperscript{6} ASTRON (Dwingeloo, Netherlands)
\textsuperscript{7} Swinburne University of Technology, (Hawthorn, Victoria, Australia)

The millisecond pulsar PSR J0337+1715 is in a 1.6-day orbit with an inner white dwarf companion, and the pair is in a 327-day orbit with an outer white dwarf companion. This hierarchical triple provides an excellent laboratory to test a key idea of Einstein’s theory of gravity, the strong equivalence principle (SEP): do all objects, even those with strong gravity like neutron stars, fall the same way in the same gravitational field? Almost all alternative theories of gravity predict violations of the SEP at some level. We have carried out an intensive program of timing this pulsar, and we are able to perform a very sensitive test of the SEP. I will discuss our methods, our result, and its theoretical implications.

228.05 — Current results and future prospects from PSR J1757-1854, a highly-relativistic double neutron star binary.

Andrew David Cameron\textsuperscript{1,2}; David Champion\textsuperscript{2}; Michael Kramer\textsuperscript{2,3}; Matthew Bailes\textsuperscript{4,5}; Vishnu Balakrishnan\textsuperscript{2}; Ewan Barr\textsuperscript{2}; Cees Basse\textsuperscript{6}; Shivani Bhandari\textsuperscript{1}; Ramesh Bhat\textsuperscript{2}; Marta Burgay\textsuperscript{3}; Sarah Burke-Spolaor\textsuperscript{9,10}; Ralph Eatough\textsuperscript{2}; Chris Flynn\textsuperscript{4}; Paulo Freire\textsuperscript{2}; Andrew Jameson\textsuperscript{4}; Simon Johnston\textsuperscript{1}; Ramesh Karuppusamy\textsuperscript{2}; Michael Keith\textsuperscript{3}; Lina S. Levin\textsuperscript{1}; Duncan Lorimer\textsuperscript{3}; Andrew Lyne\textsuperscript{3}; Maura McLaughlin\textsuperscript{1}; Cherry Ng\textsuperscript{11}; Emily Petroff\textsuperscript{6}; Nihan Pol\textsuperscript{3}; Andrea Possenti\textsuperscript{8}; Alessandro Ridolfi\textsuperscript{2}; Ben Stappers\textsuperscript{3}; Willem van Straten\textsuperscript{12,4}; Thomas Tauris\textsuperscript{13,2}; Caterina Tiburzi\textsuperscript{14,2}; Norbert Wex\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} CSIRO Astronomy and Space Science (Marsfield, New South Wales, Australia)
\textsuperscript{2} University of Newcastle (Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia)
\textsuperscript{3} Department of Physics and Astronomy, West Virginia University (Morgantown, West Virginia, United States)
\textsuperscript{4} Institute for Radio Astronomy & Space Research, Auckland University of Technology (Auckland, New Zealand)
\textsuperscript{5} Institute for Radio Astronomy, University of Oregon (Eugene, Oregon, United States)
\textsuperscript{6} Dwingeloo Institute (Dwingeloo, Netherlands)
\textsuperscript{7} Institut fuer Radioastronomie, Institut fuer Theoretische Physik, Universitaet Bonn (Bonn, NRW, Germany)
\textsuperscript{8} Physical Institute, University of Bern (Bern, Switzerland)
\textsuperscript{9} Department of Physics and Astronomy, West Virginia University (Morgantown, West Virginia, United States)
\textsuperscript{10} Center for Gravitational Waves and Cosmology, West Virginia University (Morgantown, West Virginia, United States)
\textsuperscript{11} Dunlap Institute, University of Toronto (Toronto, Ontario, Canada)
\textsuperscript{12} Institute for Radio Astronomy & Space Research, Auckland University of Technology (Auckland, New Zealand)
\textsuperscript{13} Argelander-Institut fuer Astronomie, Universitaet Bonn (Bonn, NRW, Germany)
\textsuperscript{14} Fachhochschule fuer Physik, Universitaet Bielefeld (Bielefeld, NRW, Germany)