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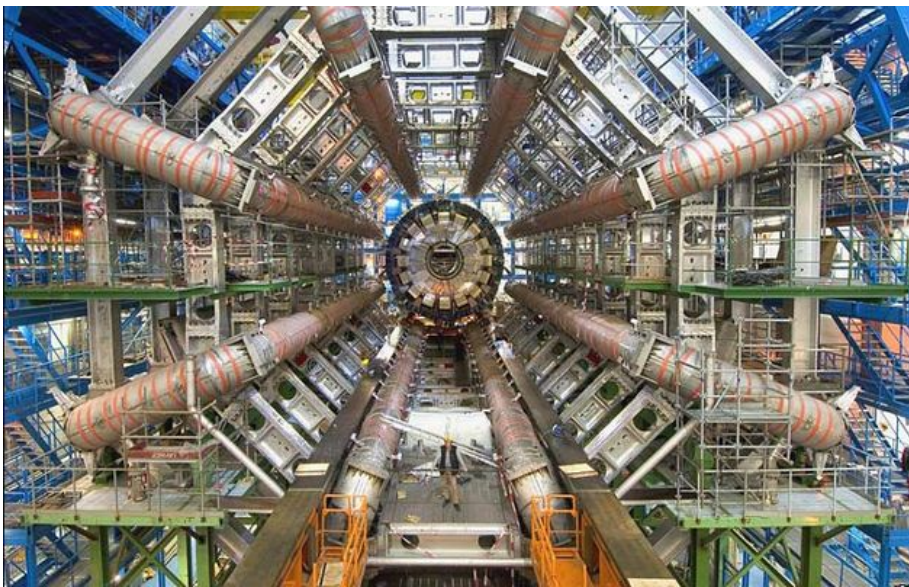
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Wits and the physics grail

TJ Strydom | 04 July, 2012 23:56



The Large Hadron Collider at CERN. Photo by Image Editor (Flickr)

Researchers from Wits University played an important role in observing the particle that could rewrite science textbooks.

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"Using the data that we have analysed thus far, as far as we can tell this new particle is very Higgs-like," said Dr Trevor Vickey, the Wits team leader on a key part of the project and senior lecturer at the Wits School of Physics.

Since 2005, Vickey has been exploring different search techniques at Atlas, one of the seven particle detector experiments set up as part of the Large Hadron Collider - a massive project to test different theories of physical science. Vickey has contributed to searches of the Higgs decay into two tau particles (tau particles are heavier and unstable cousins of the electron).


He is currently leading the Atlas team searching for the Higgs boson with this decay signature.

The Atlas collaboration comprises 3000 physicists from 176 institutions in 38 countries.

Dr Oana Boeriu, also a senior lecturer at the Wits School of Physics, joined the Atlas experiment in 2010 and has been involved in searching for exotic particles theoretically known as leptokarks.

According to Vickey, more data will be required to understand





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whether the newly discovered particle corresponds to the Higgs boson of the Standard Model of particle physics or whether it is connected to new physics.

"I'm confident," said Vickey, "that this discovery will change what is written in high school physics textbooks. When I was a high school student, I remember learning about the hypothetical Higgs boson."

Vickey and Boeriu confirmed that the discovery of the particle will be celebrated with "champagne, lots of champagne".

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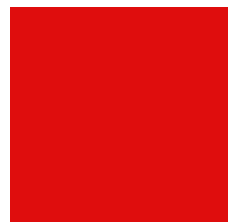
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