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Anomalous light flashes: from astronauts to protontherapy

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Heavy ion interactions in the eye can induce light flashes (phosphenes). Both Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin reported unexpected visual perceptions during their Moon landing mission, due to cosmic rays interactions. We have undertaken a clinical ground study of proton-induced phosphenes. Sixty percent of the patients treated for choroidal melanomas at the Institut Curie –Centre de Protontherapie in Orsay using 73 MeV protons, report anomalous phosphenes. The present study may be the first indication of phosphenes triggered by protons of few tens of MeV.

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