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ASTROFÍSICA Y FÍSICA
DE ALTAS ENERGÍAS

Medical applications highlights

Gabriela Llosá¹

¹Instituto de Física Corpuscular (IFIC, CSIC-UV)

**Arcos de las Salinas,
27 May 2025**



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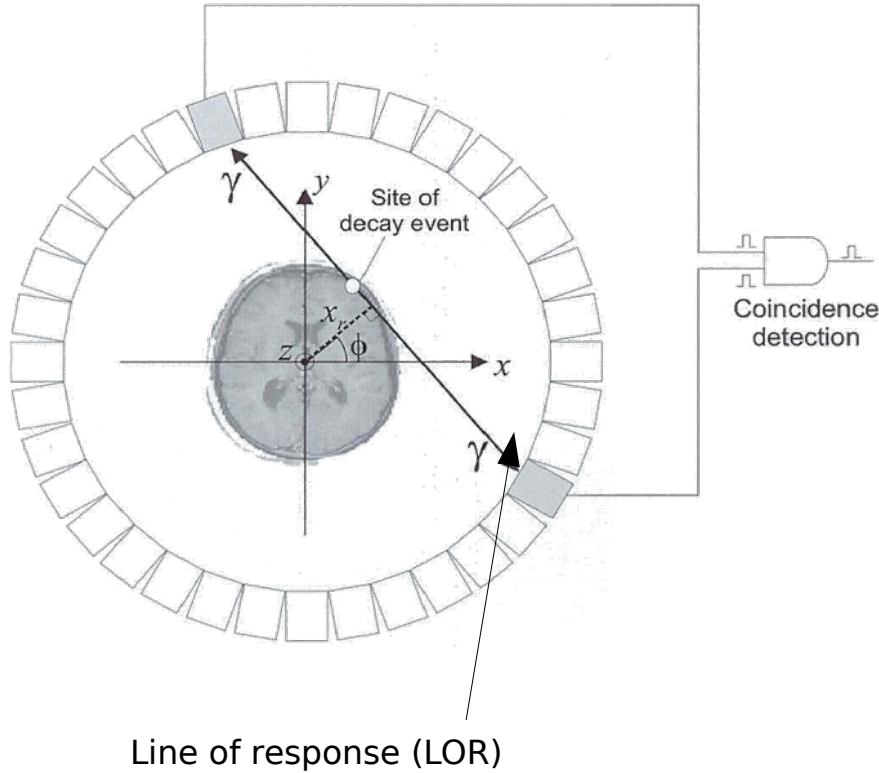
CSIC
CONSEJO SUPERIOR DE INVESTIGACIONES CIENTÍFICAS

- Challenges in PET instrumentation.
- Hadron therapy monitoring.

- Improve diagnostic accuracy
 - Reduce dose / time
- + Lower cost

Positron Emission Tomography (PET)

Ring of detector heads

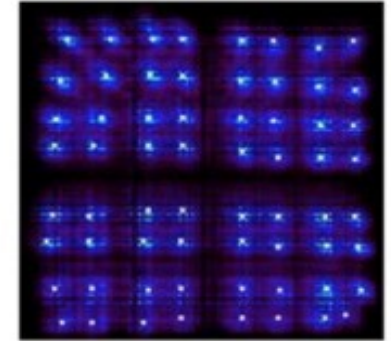
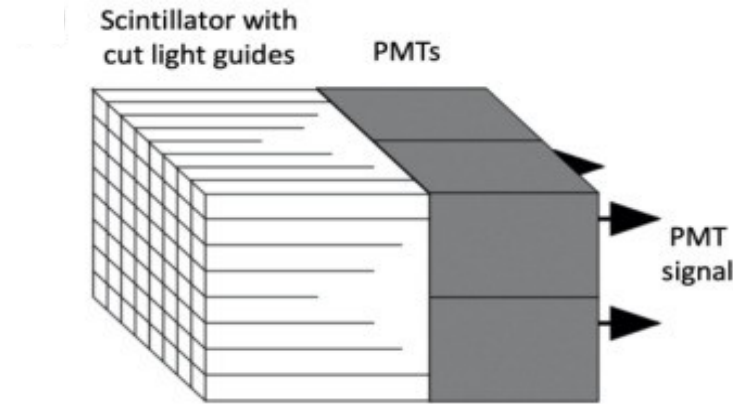


- Positron emitters
- 511 keV photons
- Most common radiotracer: ^{18}F -FDG



PET - detectors

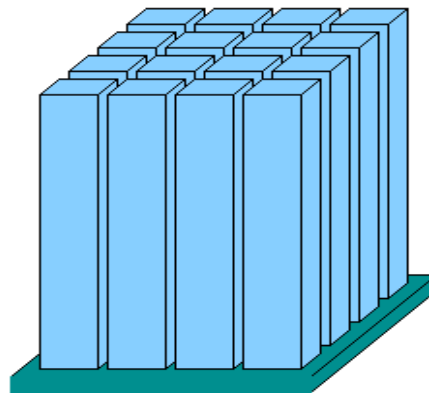
Block detector: BGO + PMTs.
4-6 mm crystal size



LSO / LYSO + SiPMs. 3-4 mm
crystal size

One-to-one coupling or
Multiplexing solutions to
reduce the number of
channels

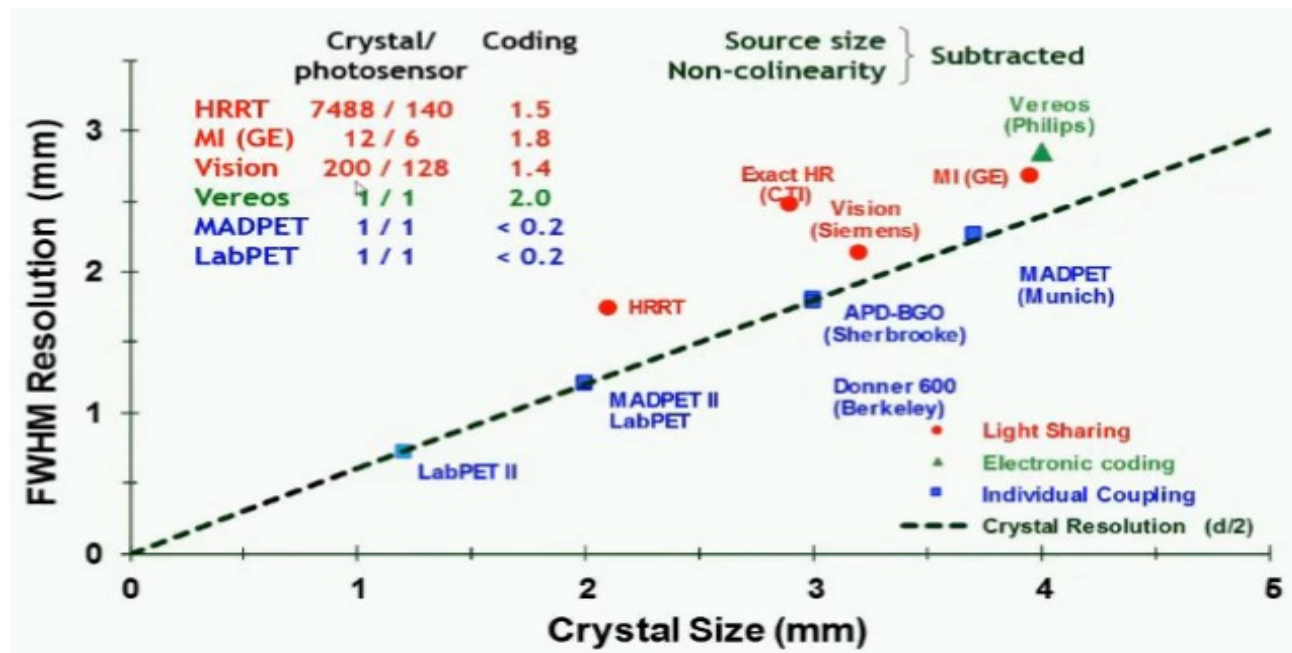
(→ PET/MR)



Spatial resolution in PET scanners

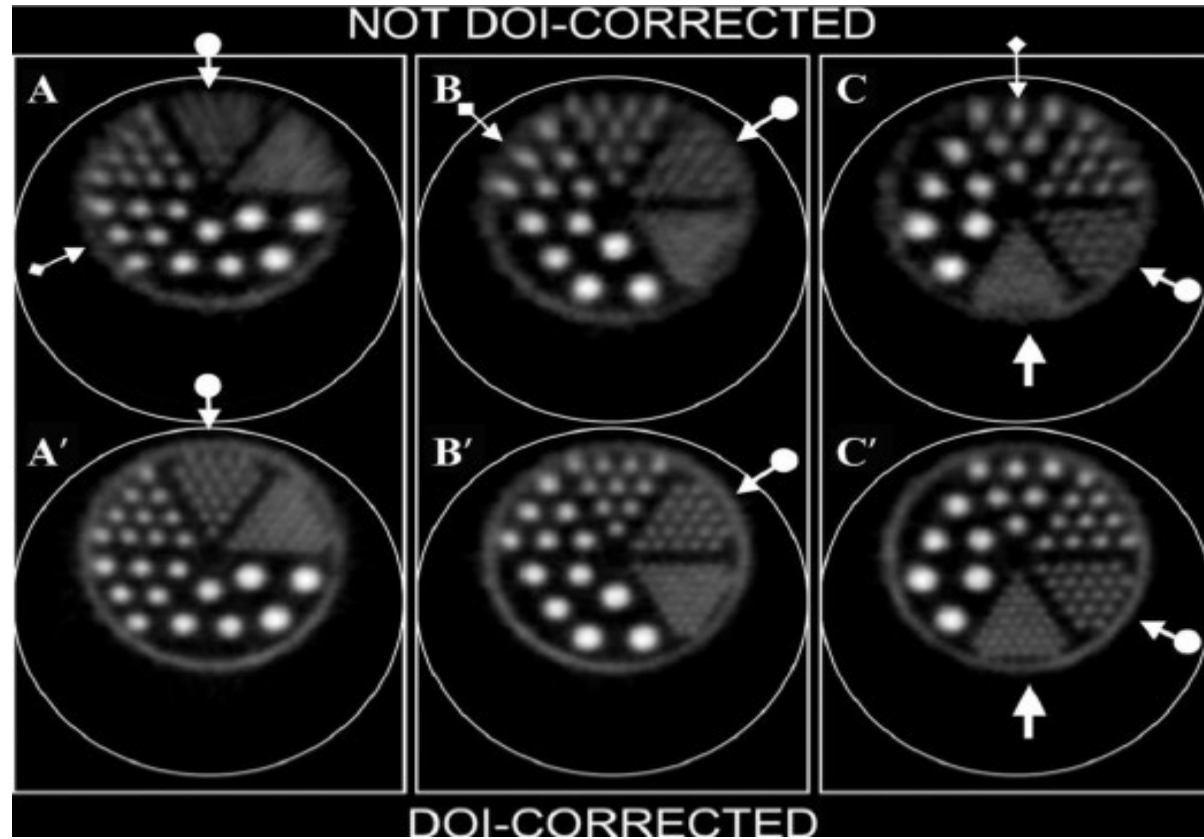
Small animal and dedicated scanners

- In clinical systems:
- 3-4 mm FWHM



Increase resolution maintaining efficiency, without increasing the number of readout channels

DOI determination



Green et al. Molec. Im. 9(6) 2010

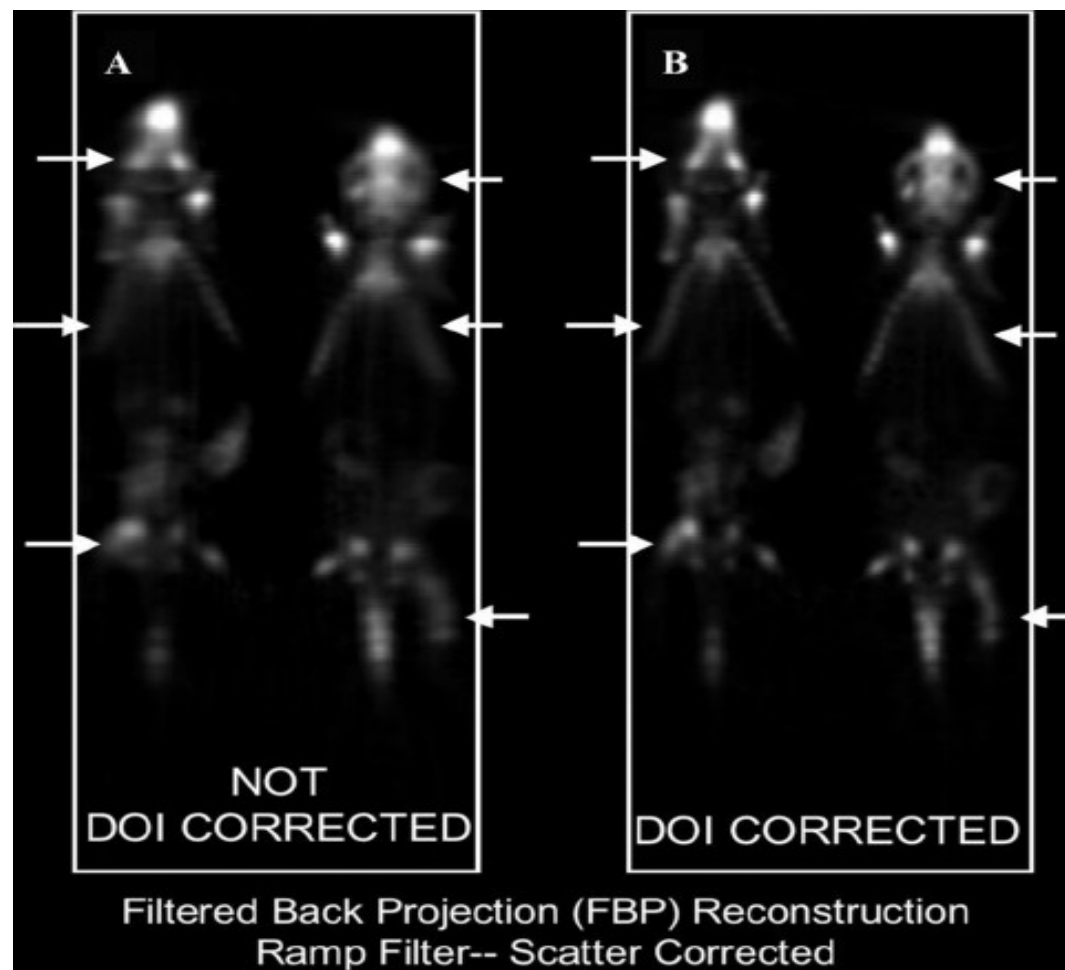
1st meeting Aragón-C. Valenciana
29 May 2025



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DOI determination



Green et al. Molec. Im. 9(6) 2010

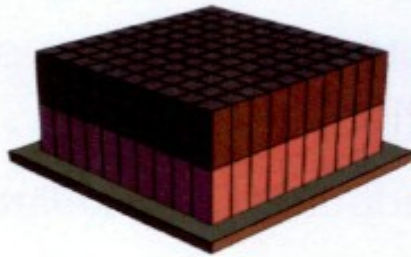


The ASFAE's research projects acknowledge the financial support from the MCIU with funding from the European Union NextGenerationEU and Generalitat Valenciana.

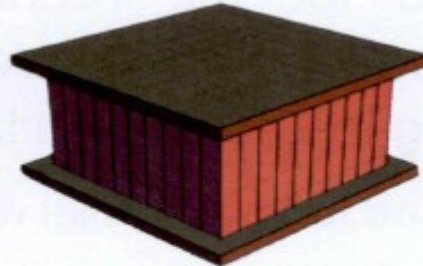
1st meeting Aragón-C. Valenciana
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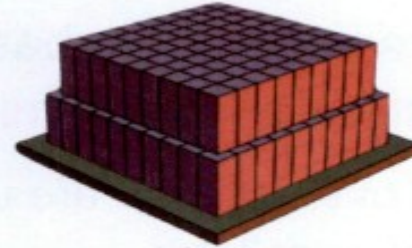
DOI determination



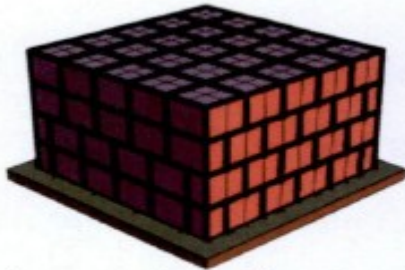
Phoswich design



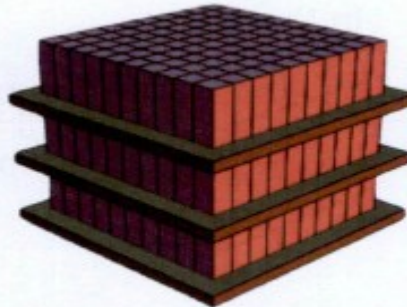
Double-sided readout



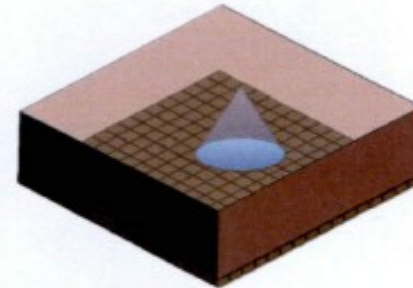
Stacked layers with a relative displacement with respect to each other



Layers with reflective optical structure

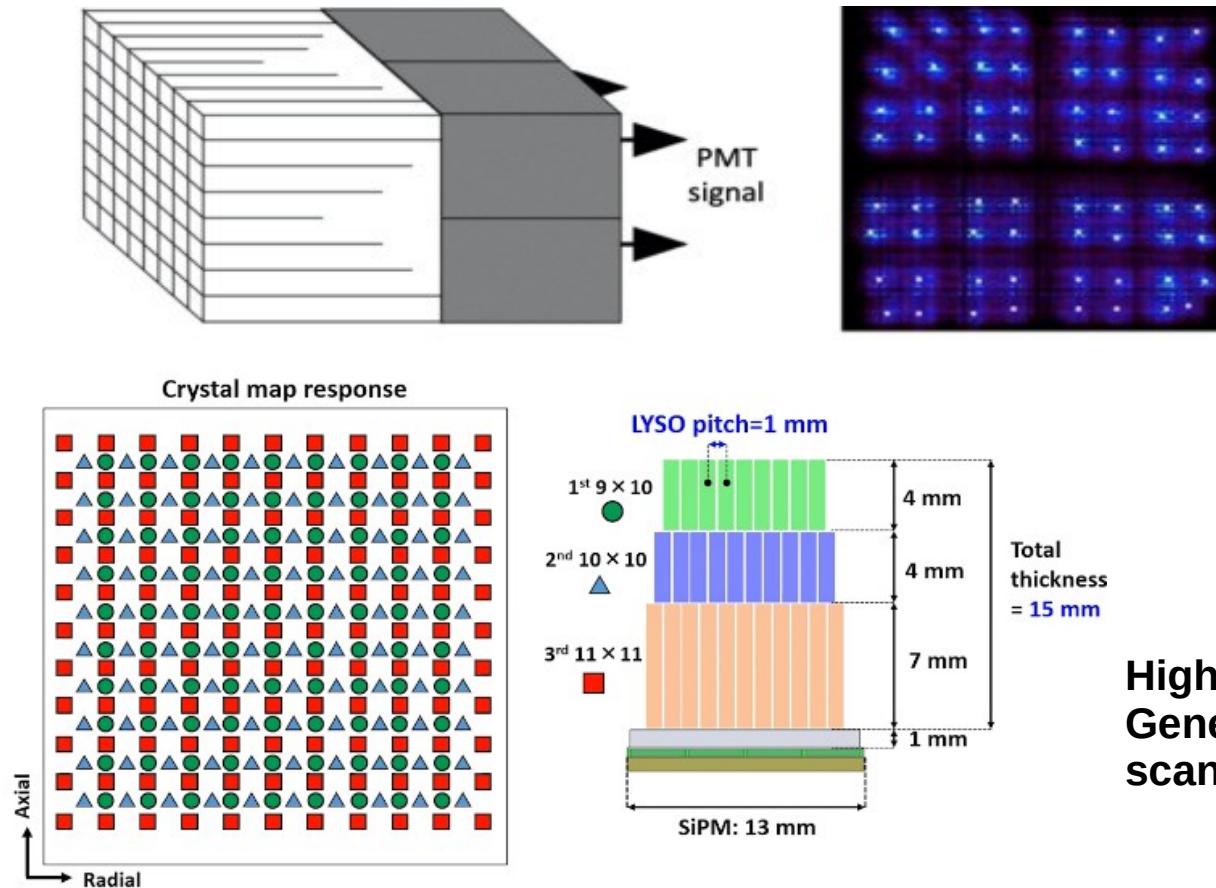


Multiple photosensors



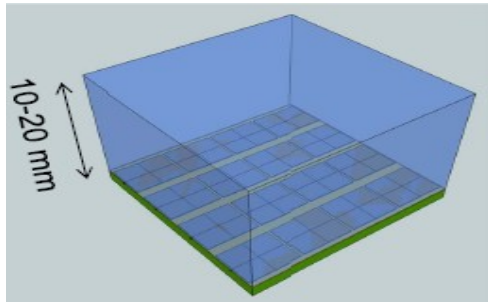
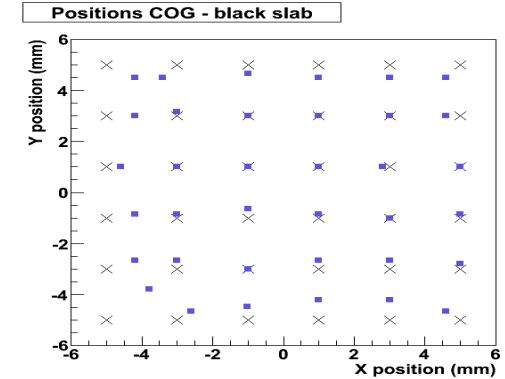
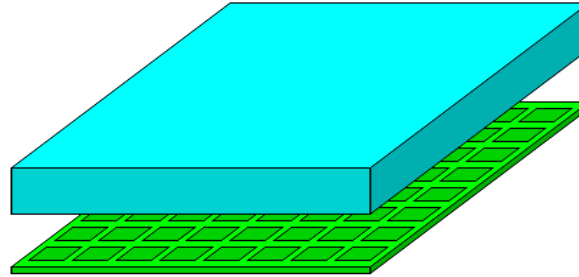
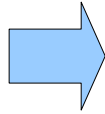
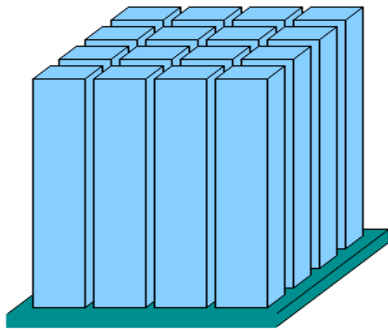
Width of the light spot in continuous scintillators

DOI determination



Higher cost
Generally not included in
scanners

Monolithic detectors?



Neural Networks trained with Monte -Carlo simulations are promising

| Performance parameter | Monolithic | State of the art |
|------------------------------|------------|------------------|
| Energy resolution (% FWHM) | 11 - 12 | ~12 |
| Spatial resolution (mm FWHM) | 1.0 - 1.6 | 4 - 6 |
| DOI resolution (mm FWHM) | 3 - 5 mm | None |
| CRT (ps FWHM) | 160 - 185 | 500 - 650 |

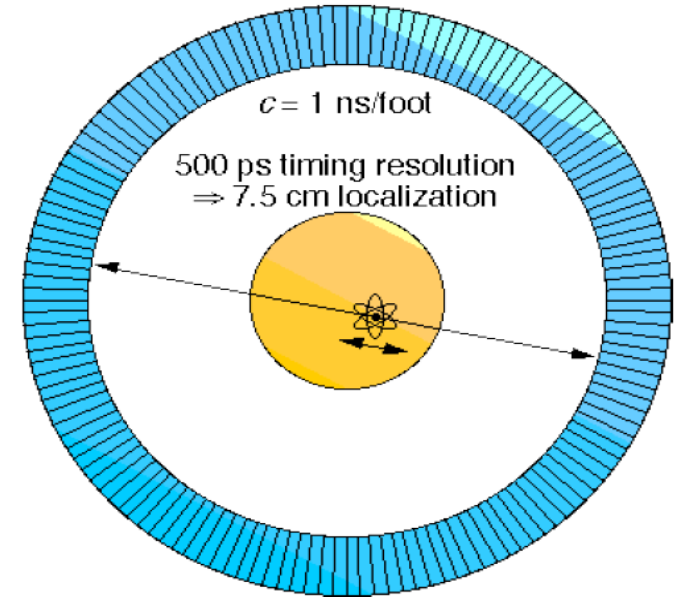
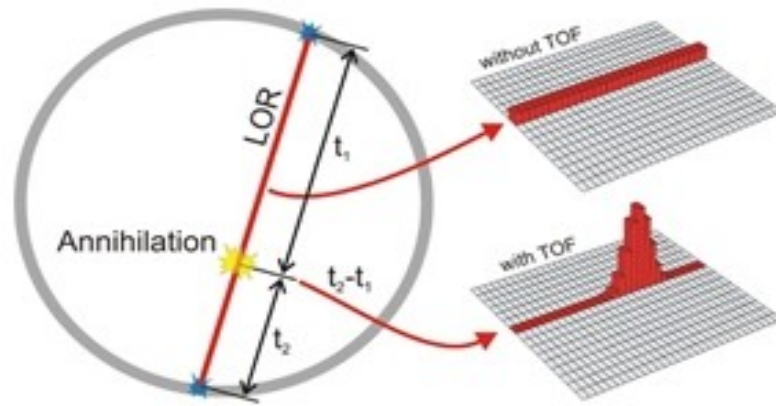
D. Schaart.
ICTR-PHE 2014

1st meeting Aragon-C. Valenciana
29 May 2025

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Time-Of-Flight (TOF) PET

$$\Delta d = \Delta t \times \frac{c}{2}$$

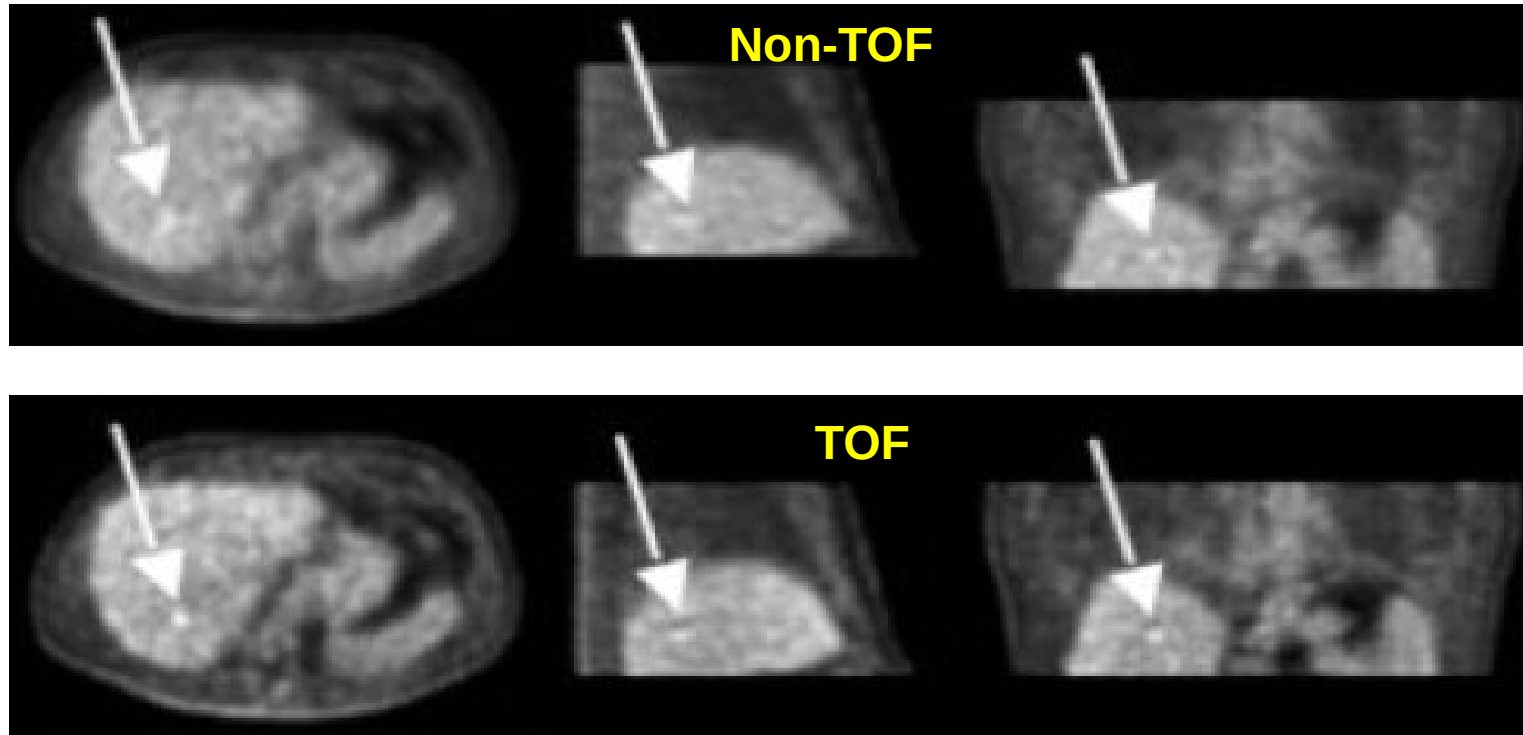


More accurate determination of the emission area of the photons
→ better signal-to-noise ratio (SNR).

TOF-PET first generation

- PHILIPS Gemini TF: LYSO ~ 550 ps FWHM
- Siemens Biograph mCT: LSO ~ 529 ps FWHM



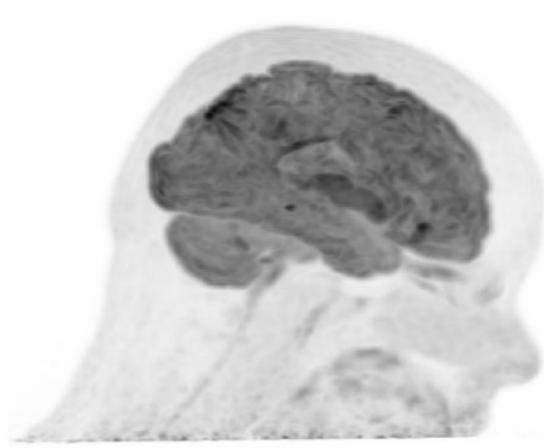
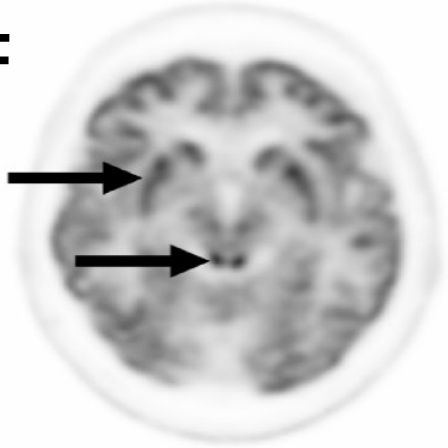


Liver lesion

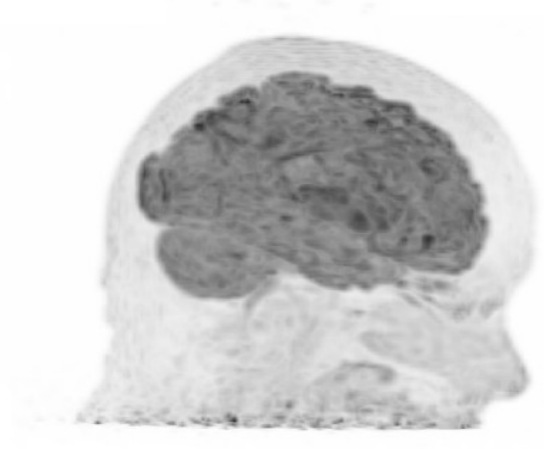
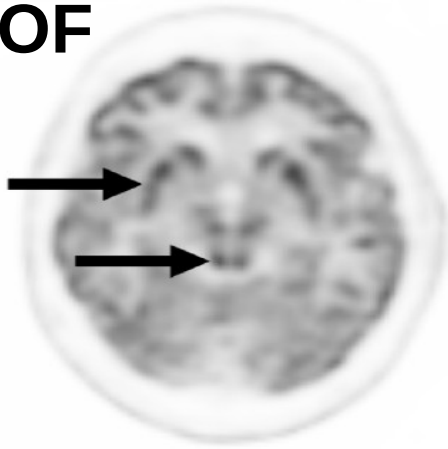
Surti et al.
J Nucl Med 52(5). 2011

TOF-PET

TOF



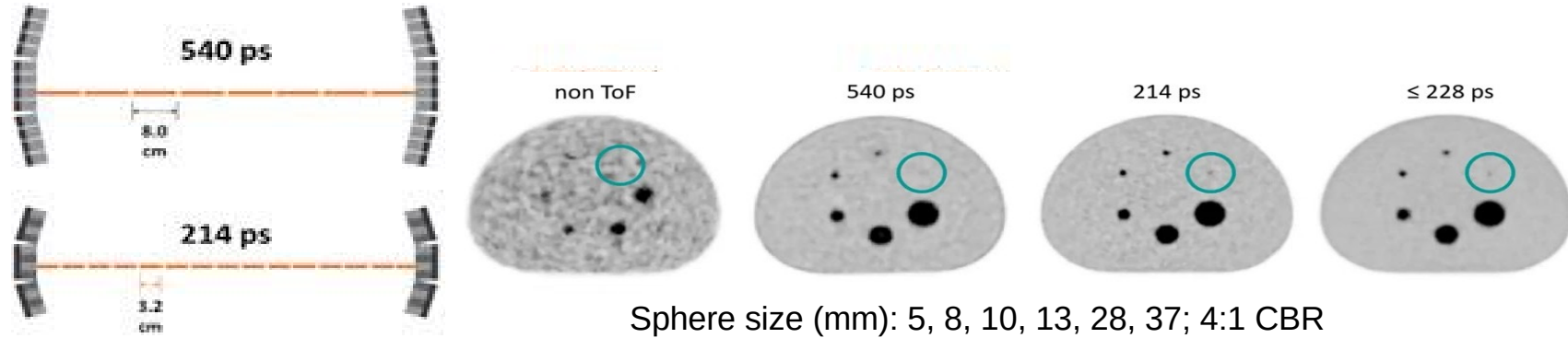
NON-TOF



Van Sluis et al.

J Nuc Med 2019

Last generation with SiPMs: 214-380 ps FWHM



















The 10 ps challenge → 1.5 mm LOR

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Physics in Medicine & Biology

ROADMAP

Roadmap toward the 10 ps time-of-flight PET challenge

Paul Lecoq¹ , Christian Morel² , John O Prior³ , Dimitris Visvikis⁴ , Stefan Gundacker^{1,5} ,
Etienne Auffray¹ , Peter Krizan⁶ , Rosana Martinez Turtos^{1,21} , Dominique Thers⁷ ,
Edoardo Charbon⁸ , Joao Varela⁹ , Christophe de La Taille¹⁰ , Angelo Rivetti¹¹ ,
Dominique Breton¹², Jean-François Pratte¹³ , Johan Nuyts¹⁴ , Suleman Surti¹⁵ ,
Stefaan Vandenberghe¹⁶ , Paul Marsden¹⁷ , Katia Parodi¹⁸ , Jose Maria Benlloch¹⁹  and
Mathieu Benoit²⁰  — [Hide full author list](#)



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[Physics in Medicine & Biology, Volume 65, Number 21](#)
Citation Paul Lecoq et al 2020 *Phys. Med. Biol.* **65** 21RM01
DOI 10.1088/1361-6560/ab9500

[+ Article and author information](#)

Abstract



Since the seventies, positron emission tomography (PET) has become an invaluable medical molecular imaging modality with an unprecedented sensitivity at the picomolar level, especially for cancer diagnosis and the monitoring of its response to therapy. More recently, its combination with x-ray computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance (MR) has added high precision anatomic information in fused PET/CT and PET/MR images, thus compensating for the modest intrinsic spatial

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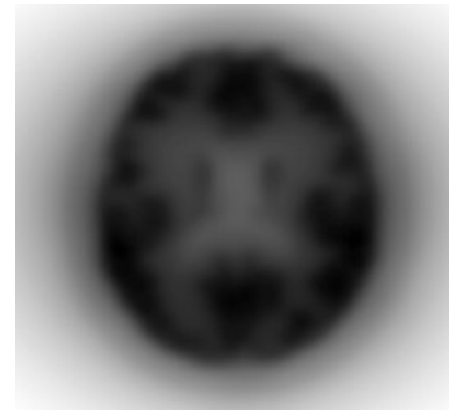
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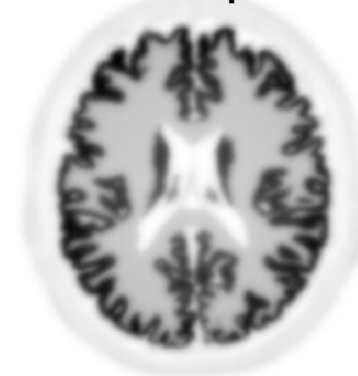
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Non-TOF



TOF 10 ps



unlikely that a CTR of 100 ps or better can be reached with standard scintillator technology

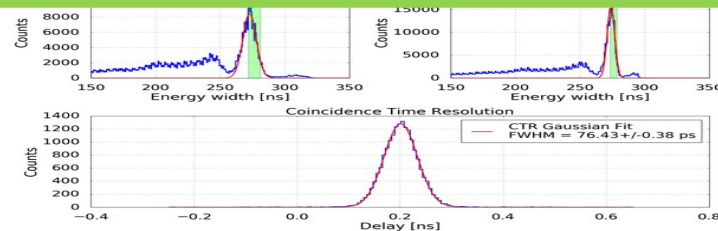


Next generation limited-angle time-of-flight PET imager

<http://petvision.org>

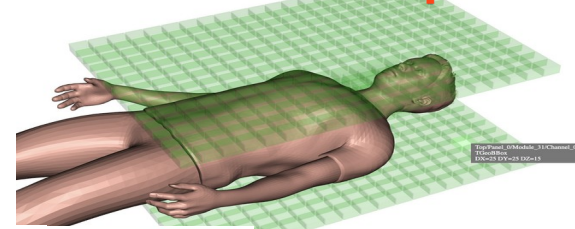
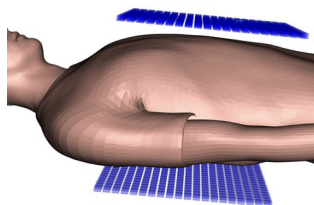
Explore the ultimate time resolution (<80 ps CTR) by integrating photo sensor and the FastIC readout

Preliminary results (non-integ. sensor)



**FastIC+ FBK NUV-HD +
2x2x3mm³ LSO
FWHM = 76 ps**

Enable limited angle and affordable total body devices



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para Imagen Molecular

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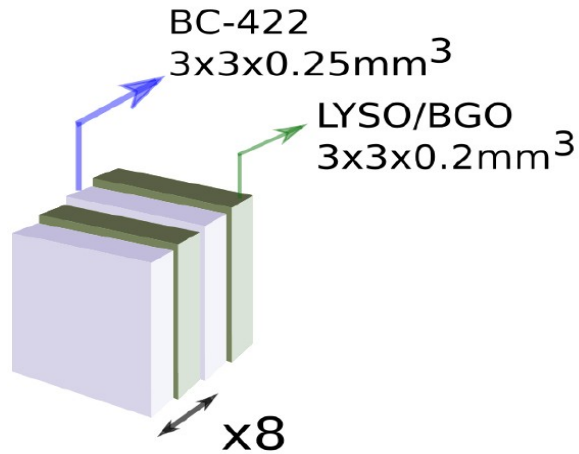
GVANEXT

Institut "Jožef Stefan"
Ljubljana, Slovenija

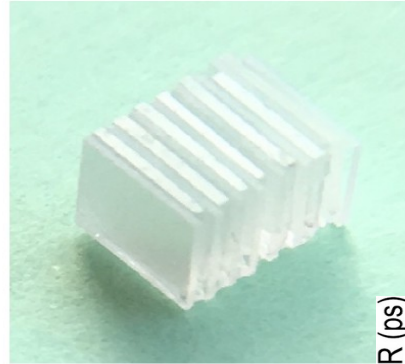
FBK
FONDAZIONE
BRUNO KESSLER
FUTURE BUILD
ON KNOWLEDGE

ICCUB

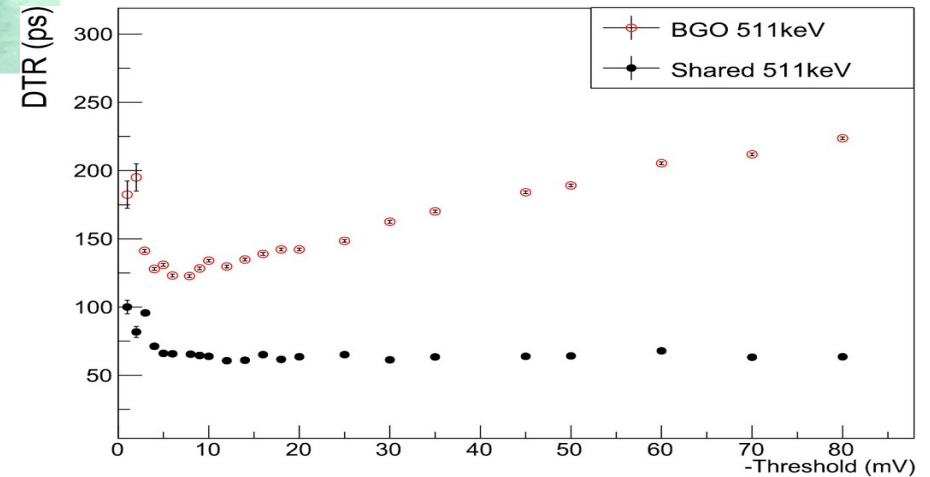
New materials / metamaterials.



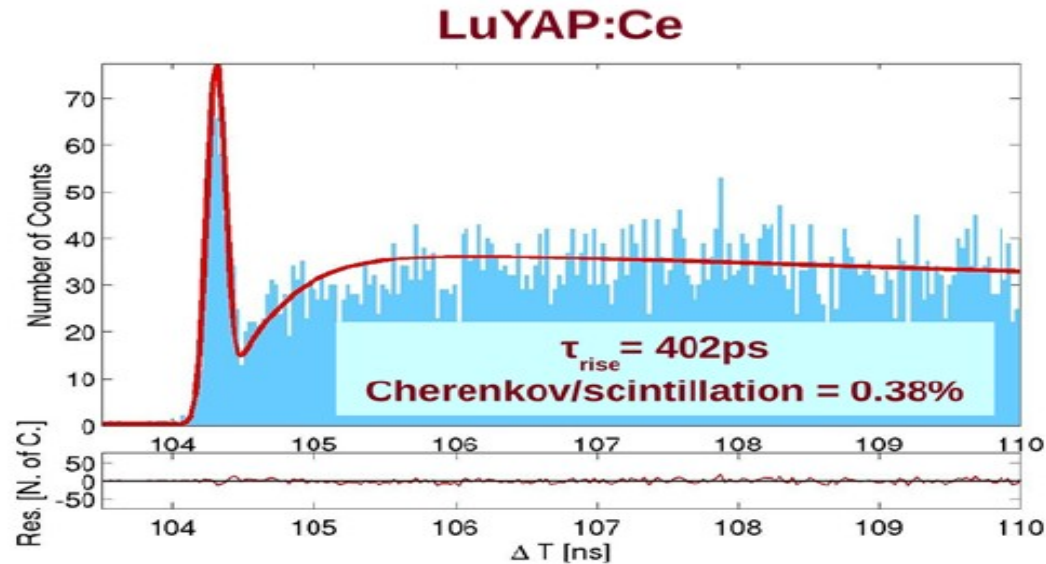
BGO + BC-422
sampling pixel



R M Turtos et al. Phys. Med. Biol. 2019



Prompt / Cherenkov photons in scintillator crystals.



S. Gundacker et al.
Phys. Med. Biol. 61 (2016)

**BGO could be a promising scintillator
for this application**

Cherenkov PET

- PbF_2 + MCP PMTs
- 511 keV photons produce
~ 10 Cherenkov photons.
- Measured timing resolution:
84.6 ps FWHM.
- Tests with cooled SiPMs.

S. Korpar et al. Physics Procedia 37 (2012)

S. Korpar et al. / Physics Procedia 37 (2012) 1531 – 1536

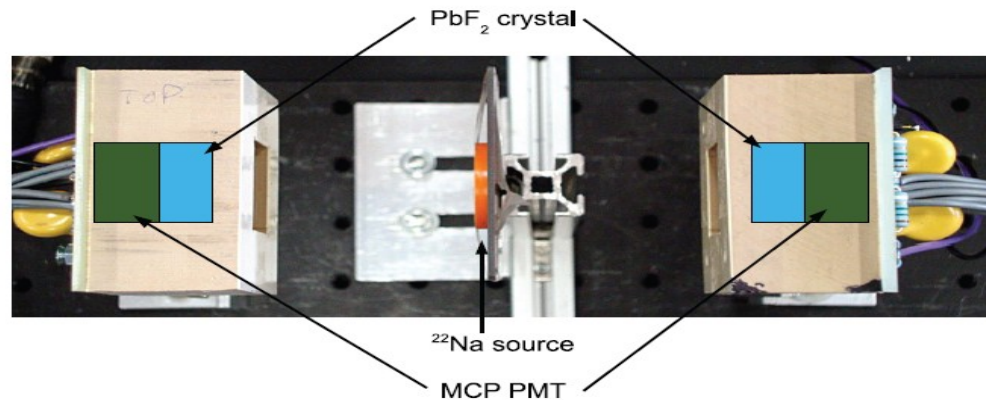


Fig. 1. The experimental setup with ^{22}Na source in between the two PbF_2 crystals coupled to MCP PMTs.

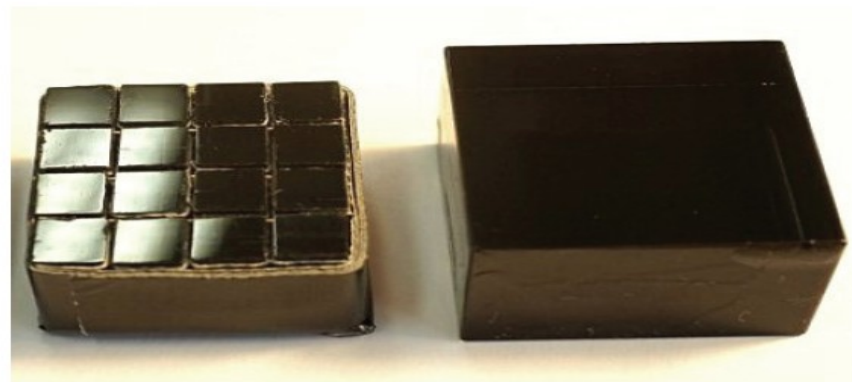
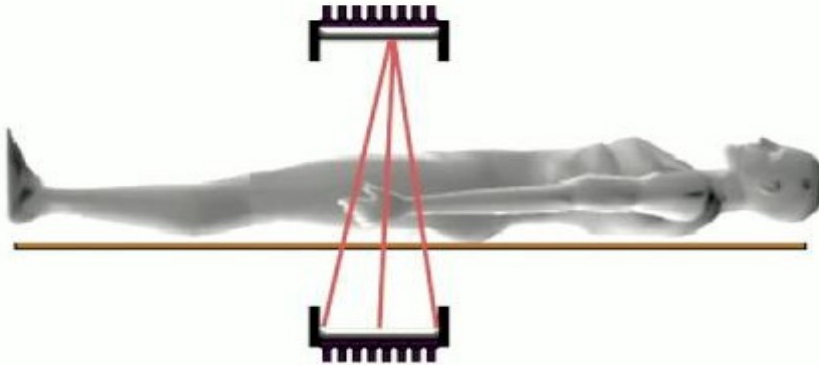
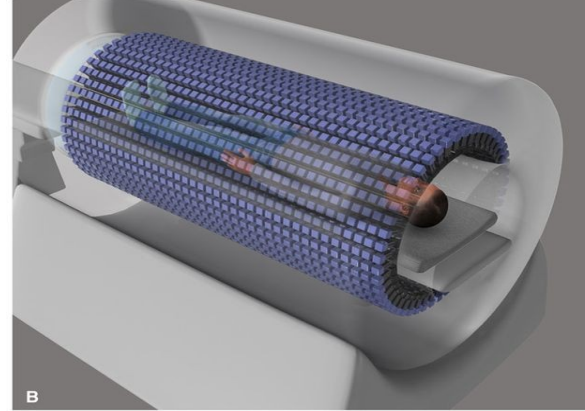
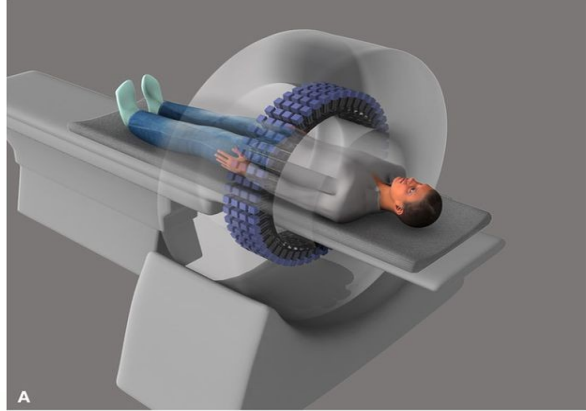
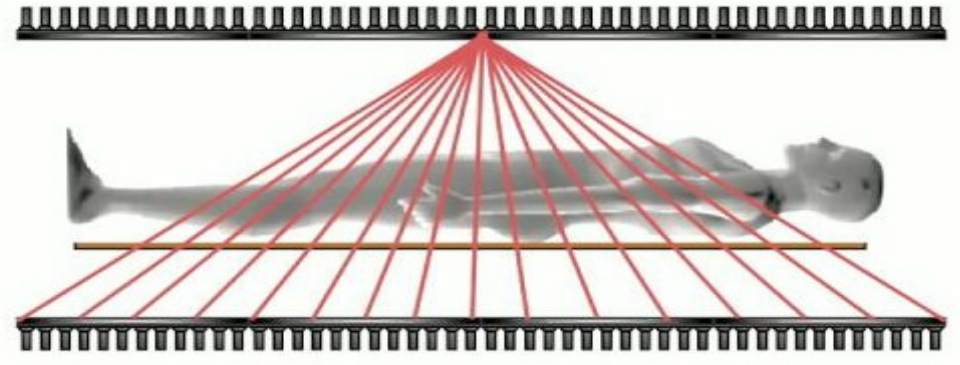


Fig. 2. Cherenkov radiator crystals used for detection of 511 keV photons in the present experiment.

Total Body PET



**WHOLE BODY PET
CONVENTIONAL PET**



**TOTAL BODY PET
EXPLORER**

Total Body PET

Clinical PET/CT



EXPLORER total-body PET/CT

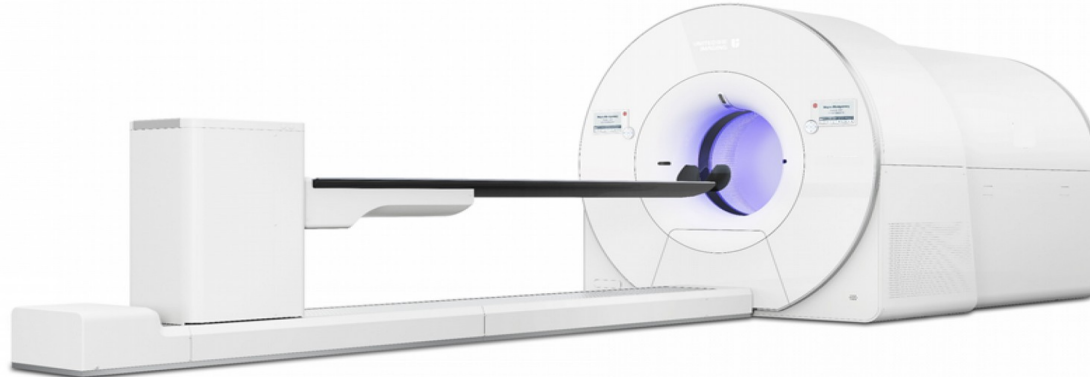


- Sensitivity 40x: faster images or lower dose
→ repetition of scans, pediatric scans...
- Image of the whole body in 20-30 s.
- Large FOV: activity in all organs and tissues simultaneously.
- Possibility of acquiring images during longer time (several radiotracer half lives)
→ Kinetic studies and dynamic images.
- Unprecedented quality.



Very high cost

Total Body PET



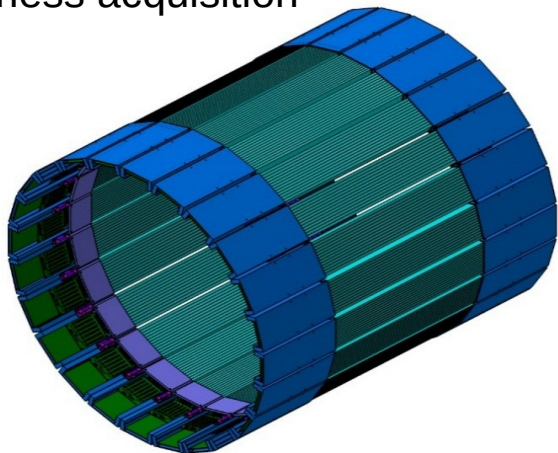
EXPLORER
Whole body length

Biograph Vision Quadra
1 m length

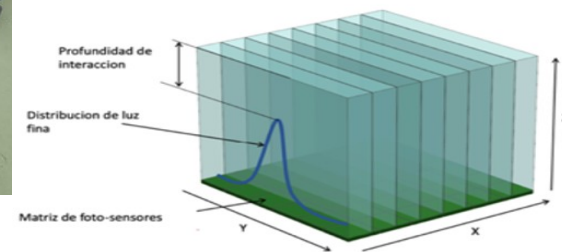
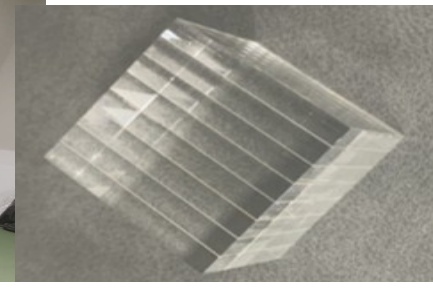
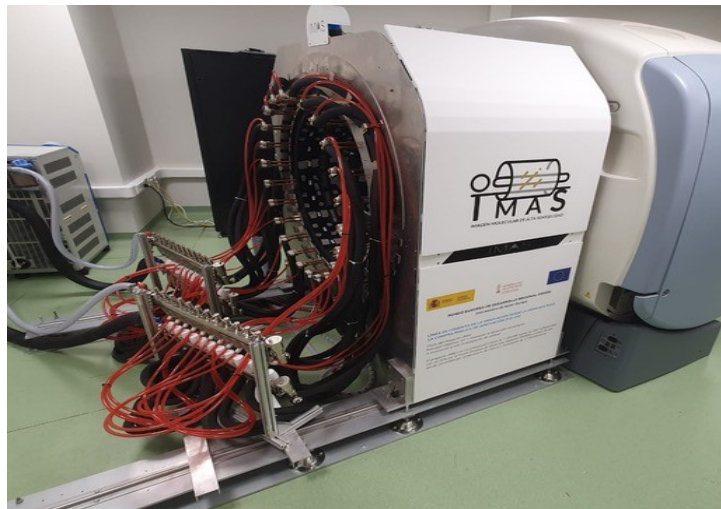


Total Body PET – affordable approaches

JPET: plastic scintillators
+ triggerless acquisition

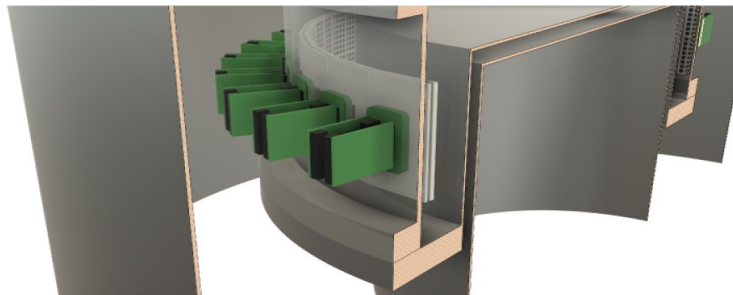
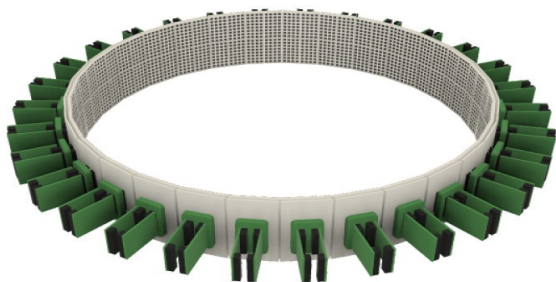


IMAS: semi-monolithic LYSO detectors



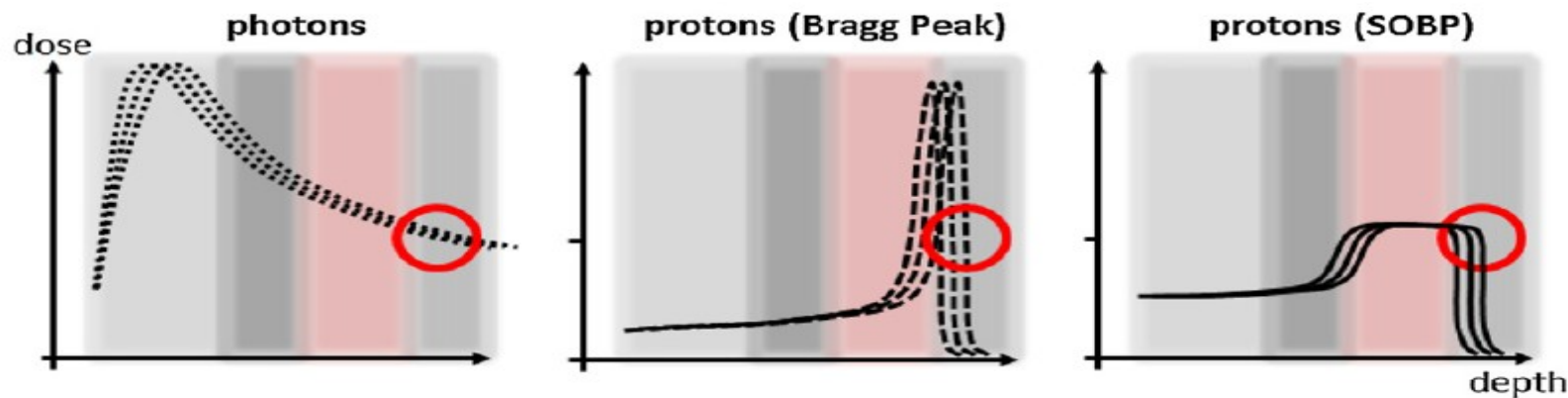
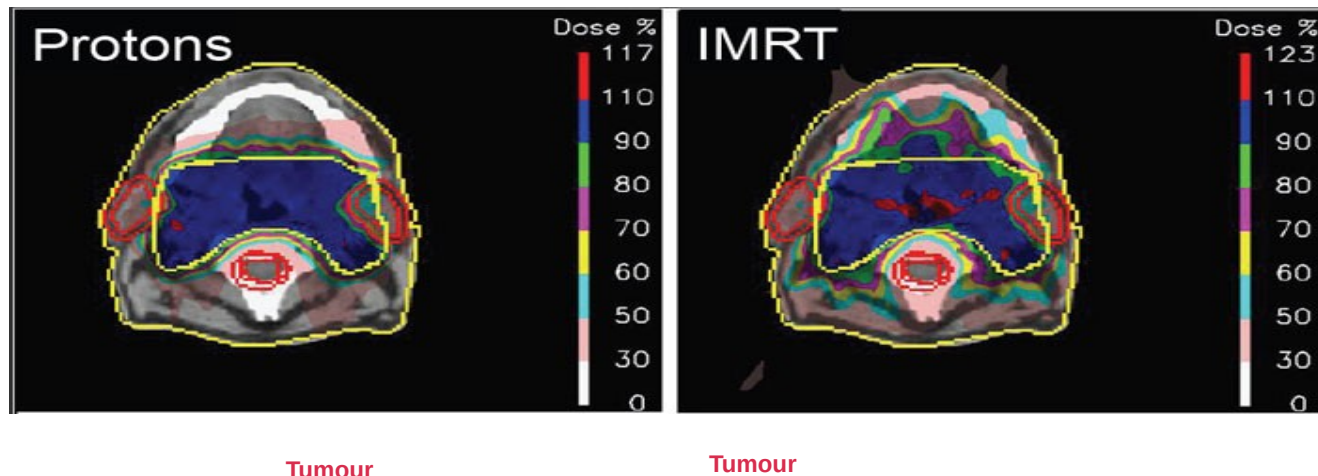
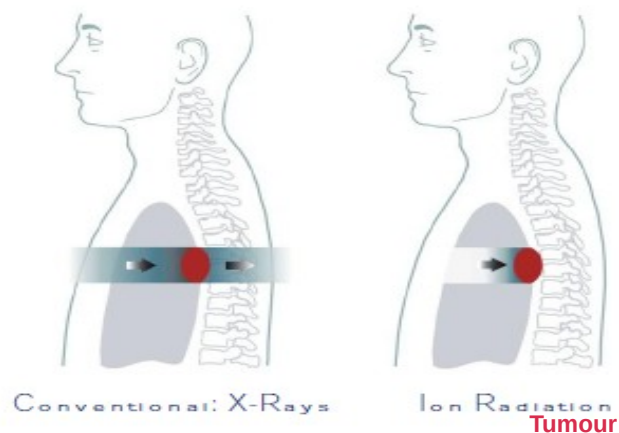
Courtesy of A. González

PETALO: liquid Xenon + SiPMs – continuous volume



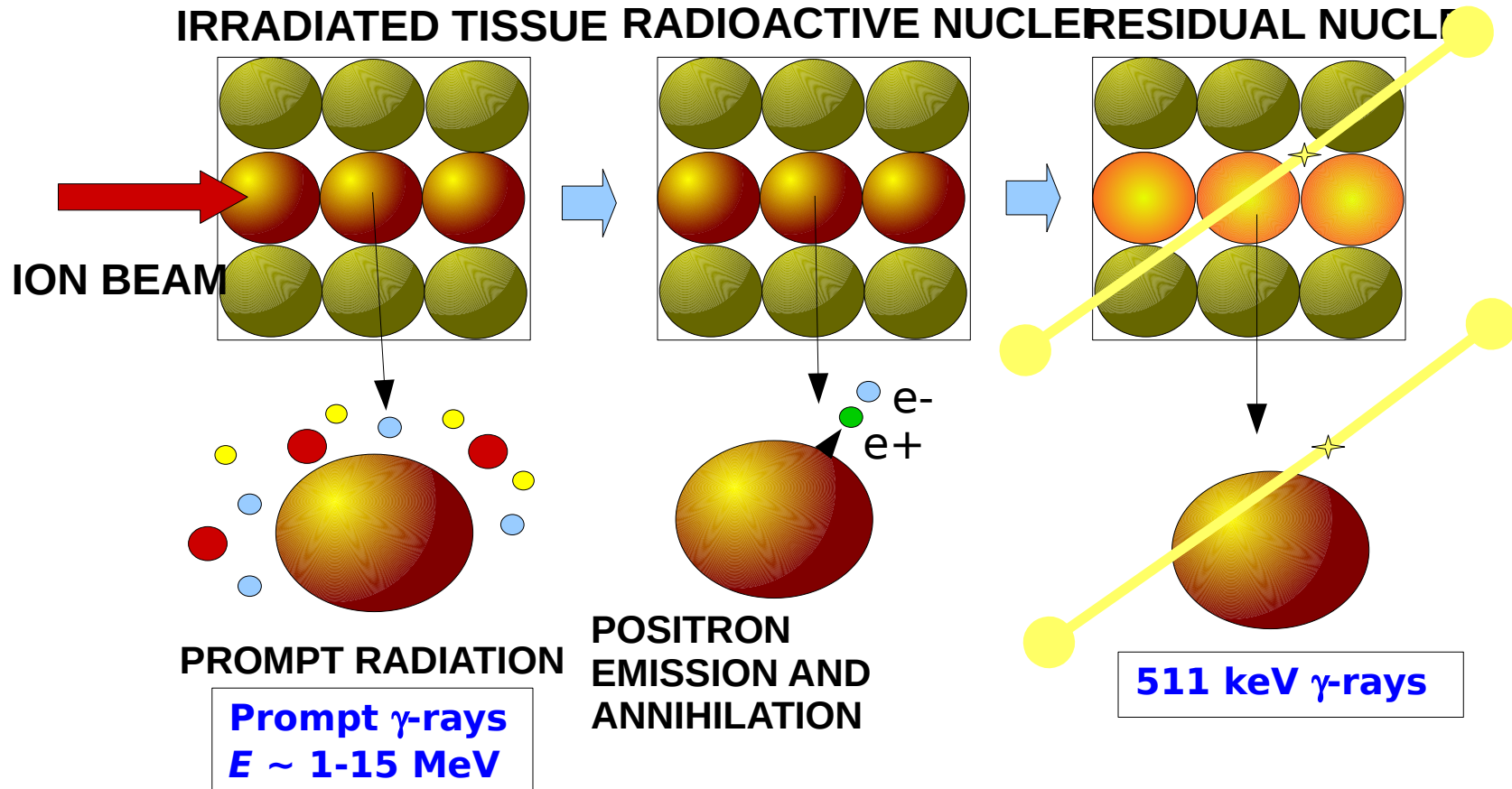
**Again BGO?
Other?**

Hadron therapy treatment monitoring



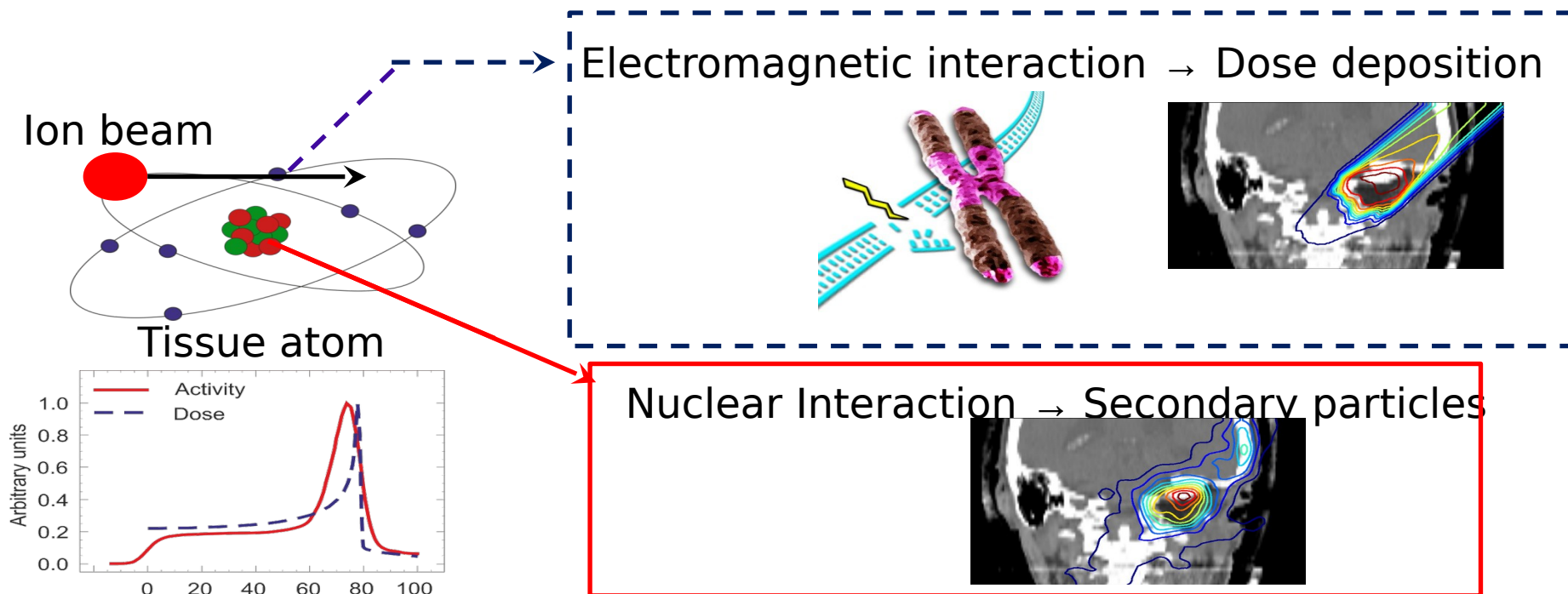
Large safety margins applied to treatment plans.

Hadron therapy treatment monitoring

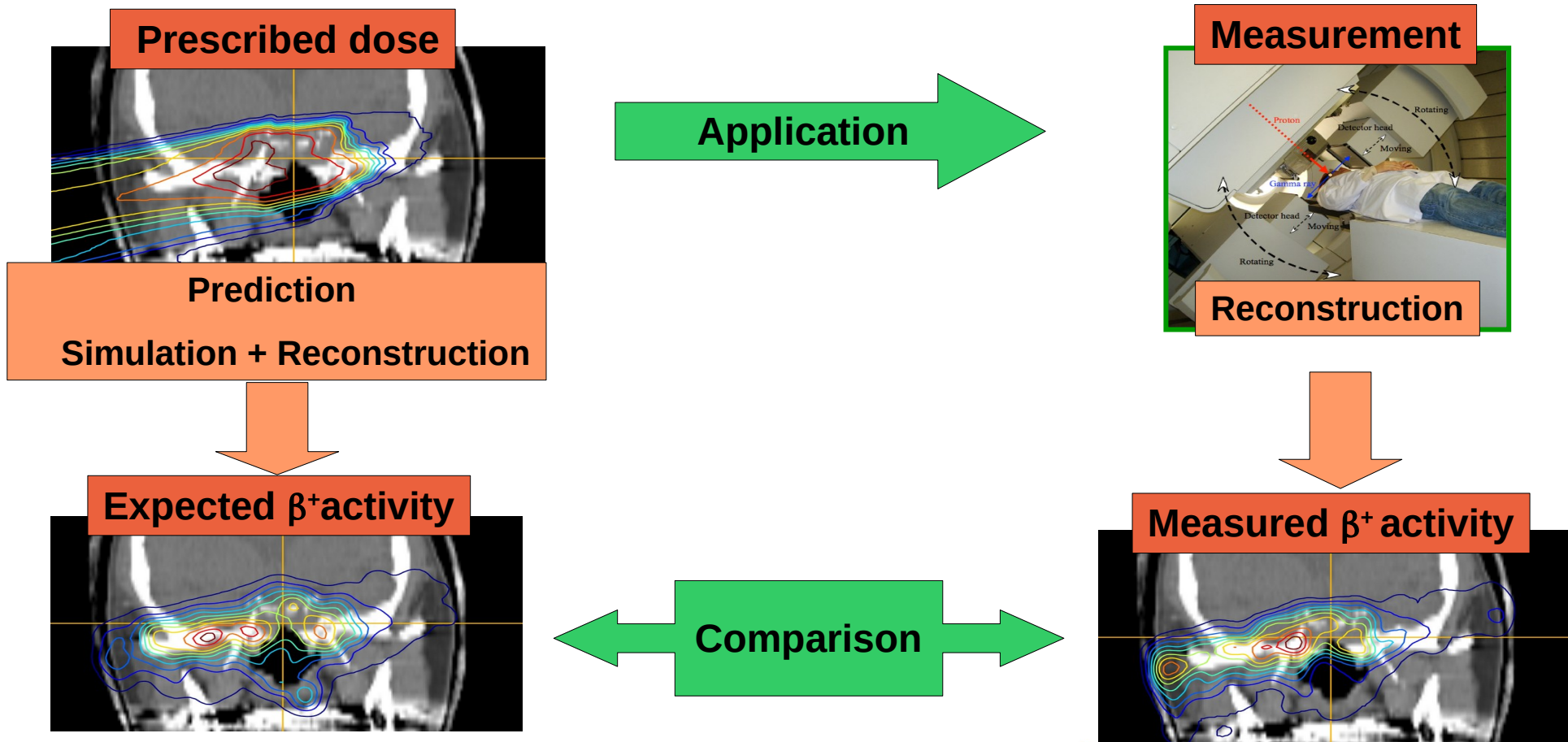


Treatment monitoring

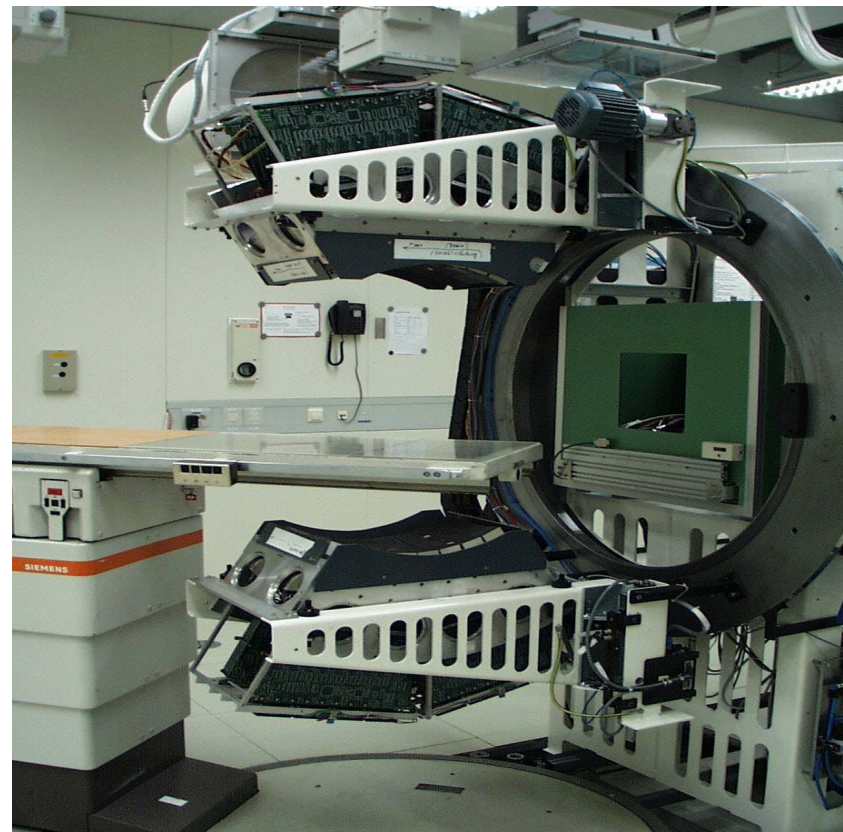
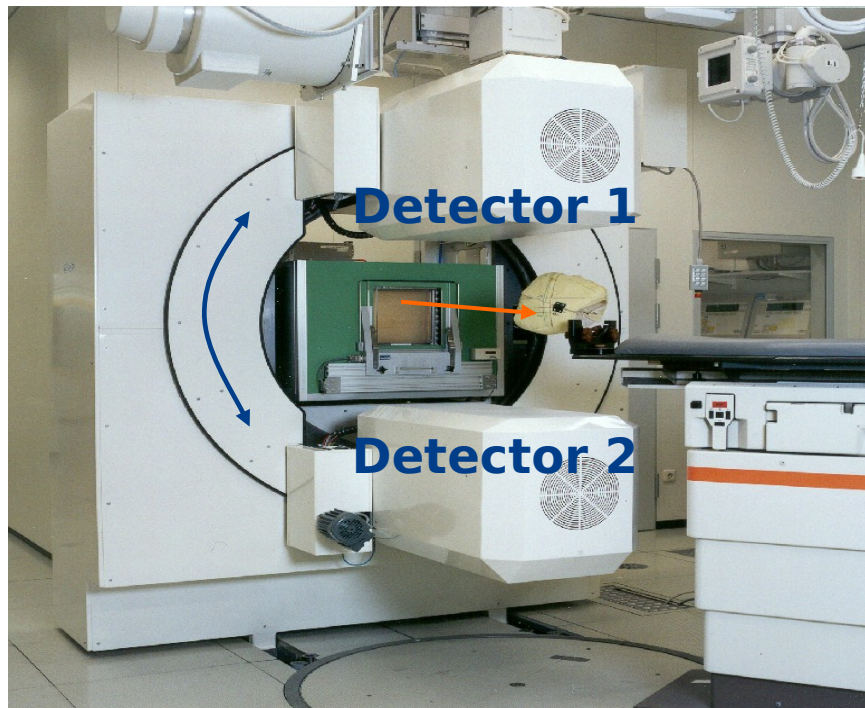
- Dose deposition through electromagnetic interaction.
- Monitoring through secondary particles emission (nuclear interactions).
- Different, but correlated quantities. Indirect measurement.



Monitoring with PET



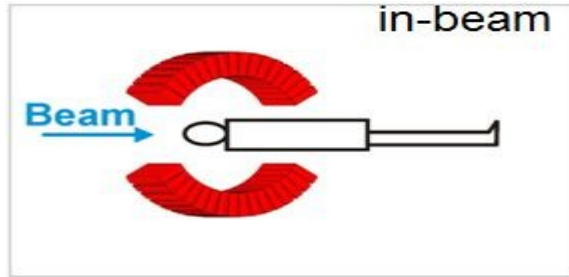
Monitoring with PET



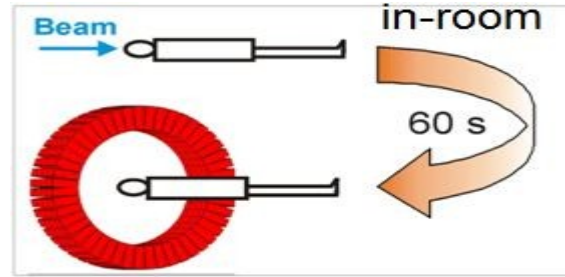
PT PET Scanner @ GSI

Modalities

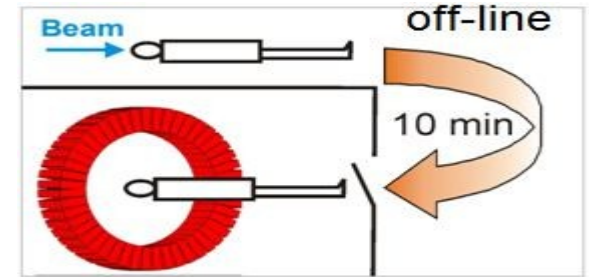
→ Higher influence of the metabolism, lower beta activity →



Measurement during irradiation

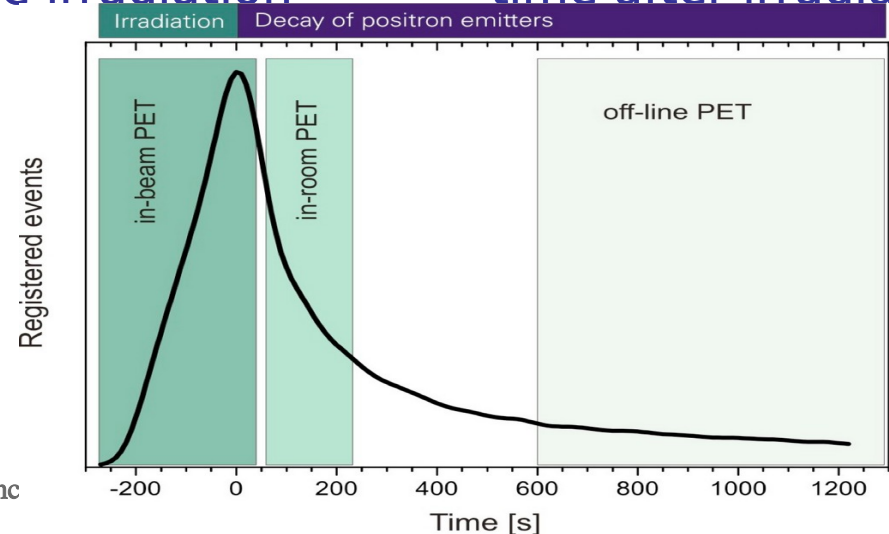


Measurement shortly after the irradiation



Measurement some time after irradiation

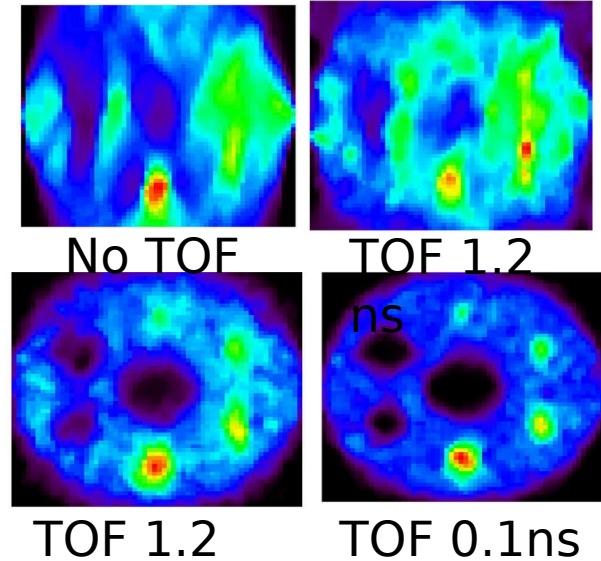
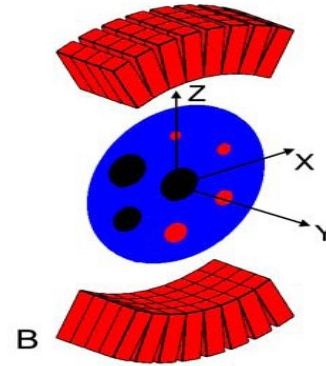
| | |
|----------|------------|
| IN-BEAM | OPEN |
| IN-ROOM | OPEN FULL |
| OFF-LINE | FULL |



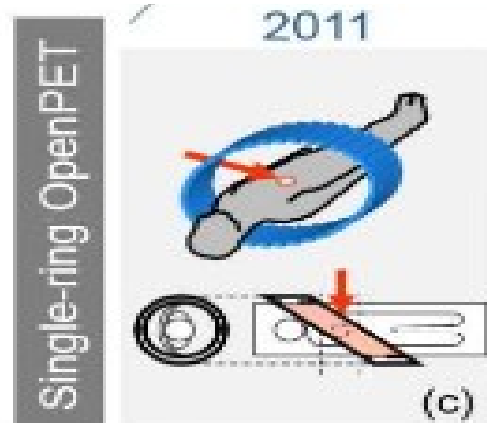
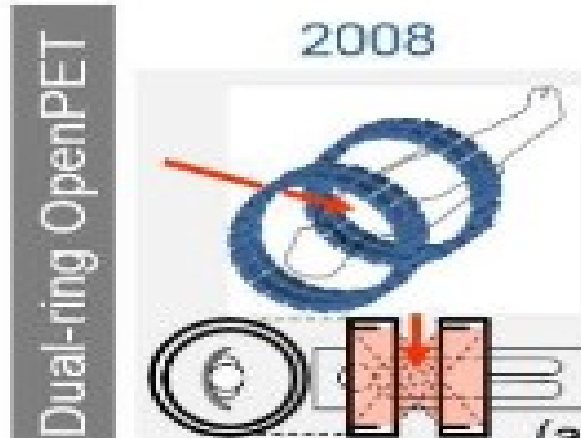
PET Limitations

- Positron production does not follow irradiation immediately.
- Biological washout- activity carried away by metabolic processes.
- Low amount of β^+ activity induced- low efficiency.
- Difficult online studies – partial ring.
- Photons produce significant background.

- Models for washout.
- Use of short-lived isotopes.
- TOF PET to minimize gap effects.
- PET integration with the gantry.



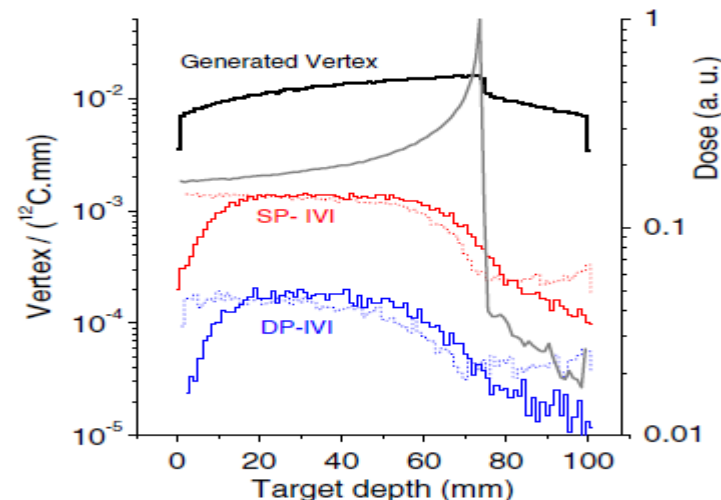
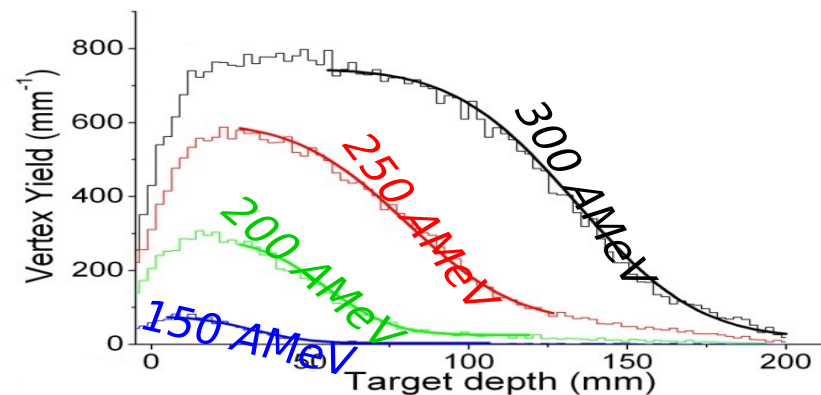
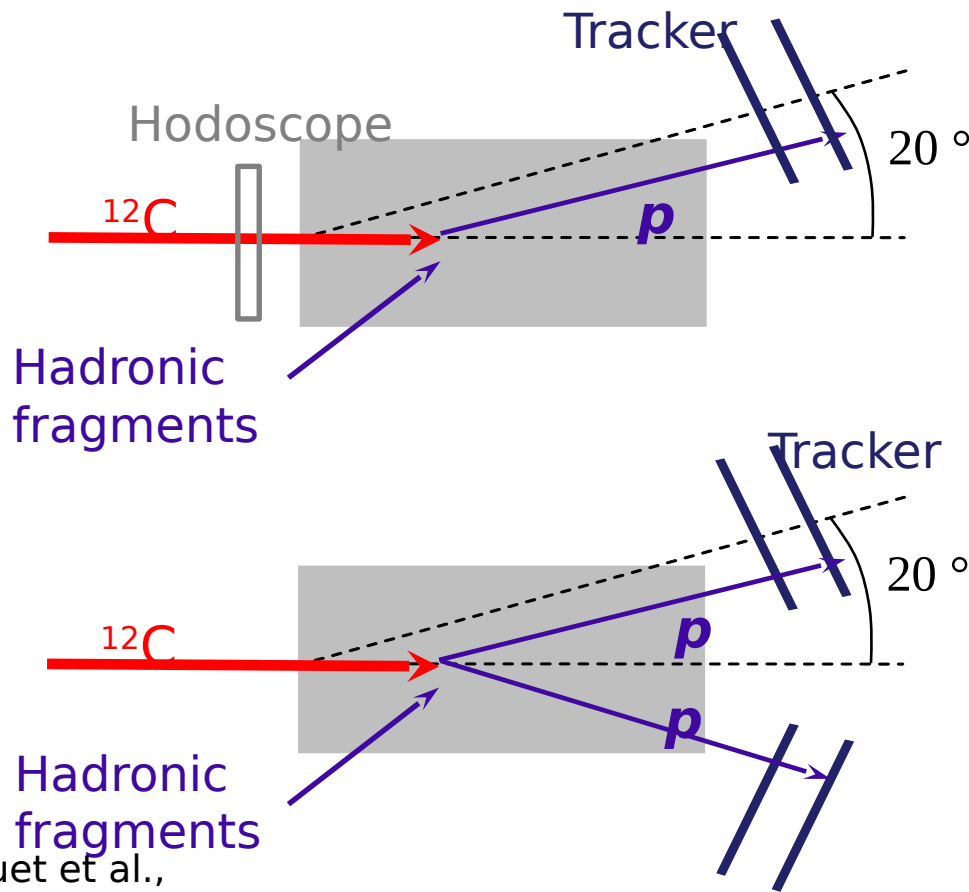
P. Crespo et al.,
Phys. Med. Biol. 51



29 May 2025

Monitoring with secondary charged particles

Interaction Vertex Imaging (mainly Carbon ions)



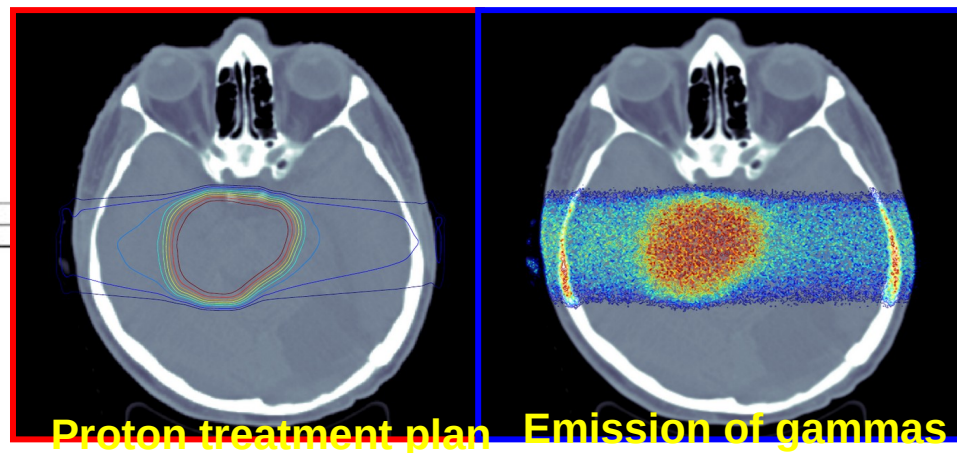
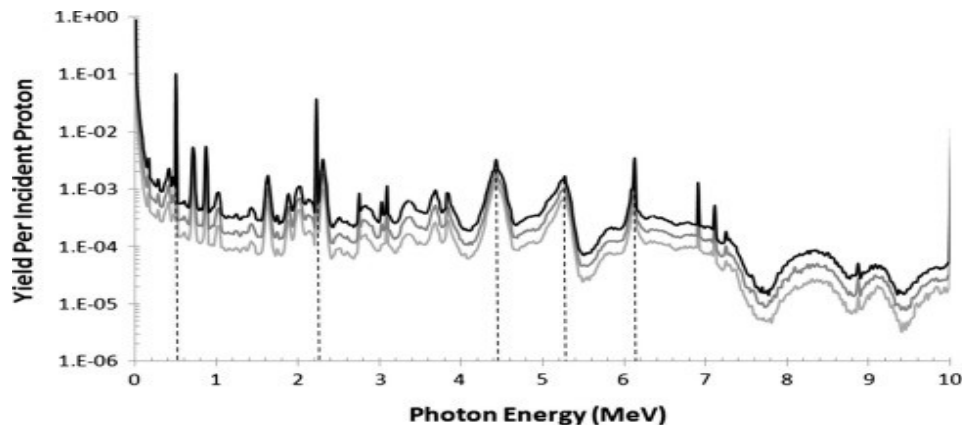
P Henriquet et al.,

Phys. Med. Biol. 57 (2012) 4655

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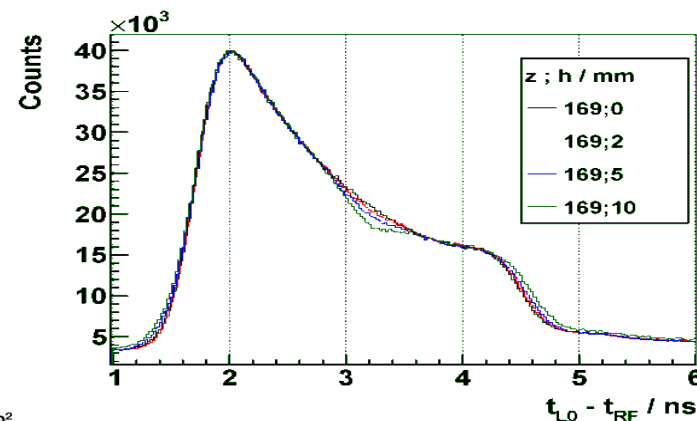
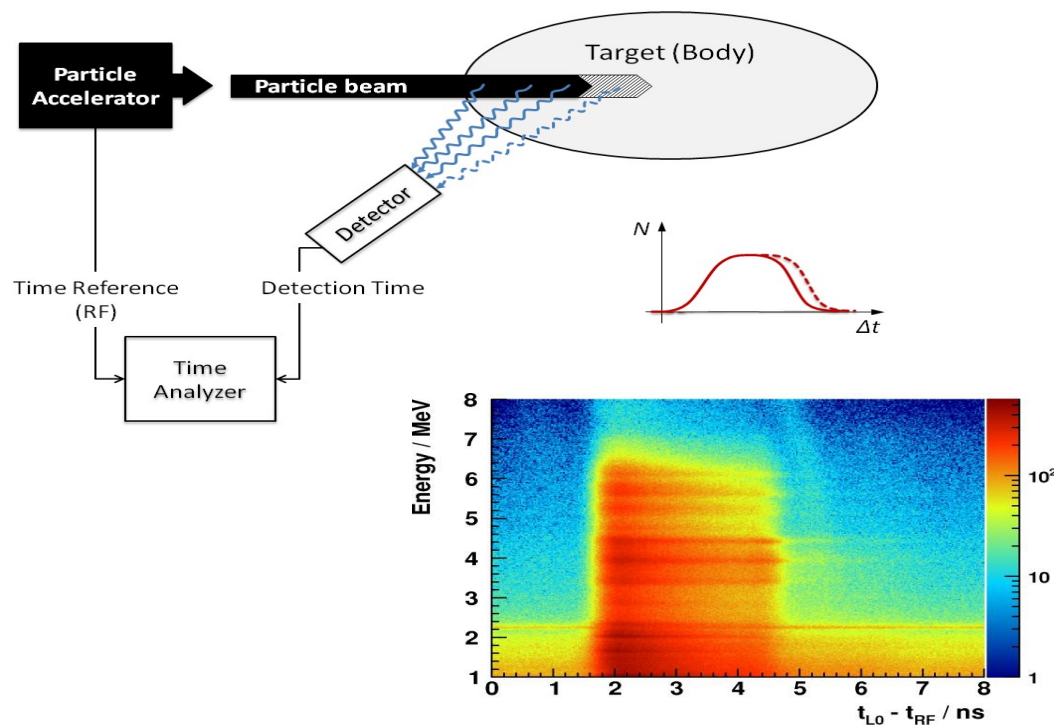
Monitoring with prompt gammas

- Emission \sim ns after irradiation.
- ~ 7 x more photons /cGy than positrons.
- Emitted in a continuous energy spectrum in the MeV range with characteristic peaks.



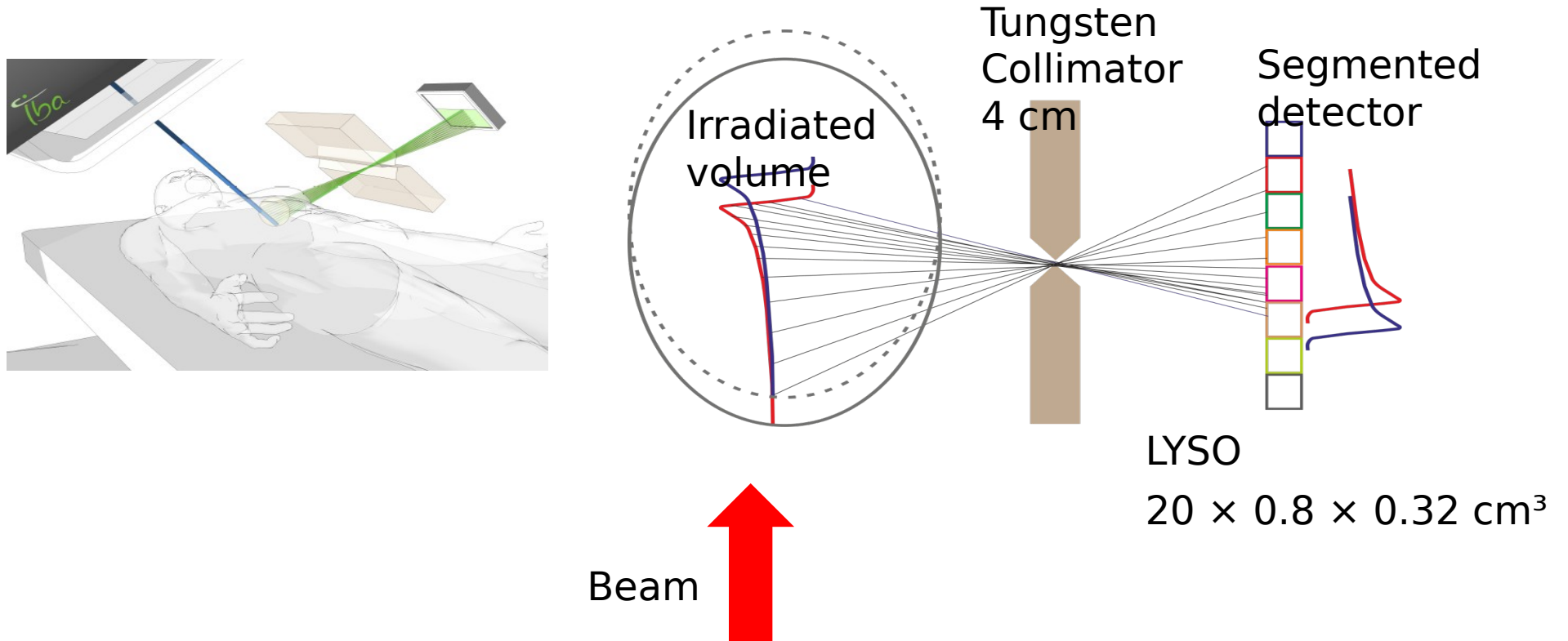
Prompt gamma timing

Gamma emission time is correlated with proton stopping time in the tissue, and thus with range.



*Hueso González et al.,
PMB 60 (2015) 6247.*

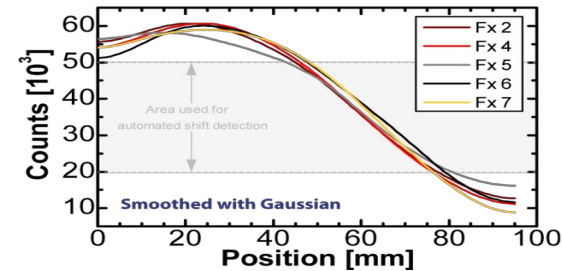
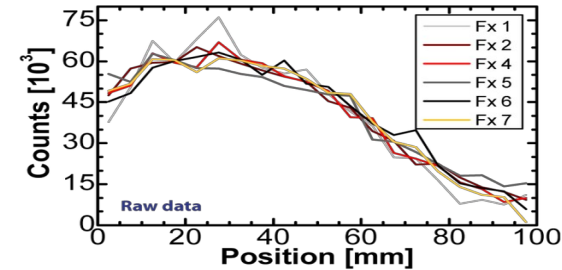
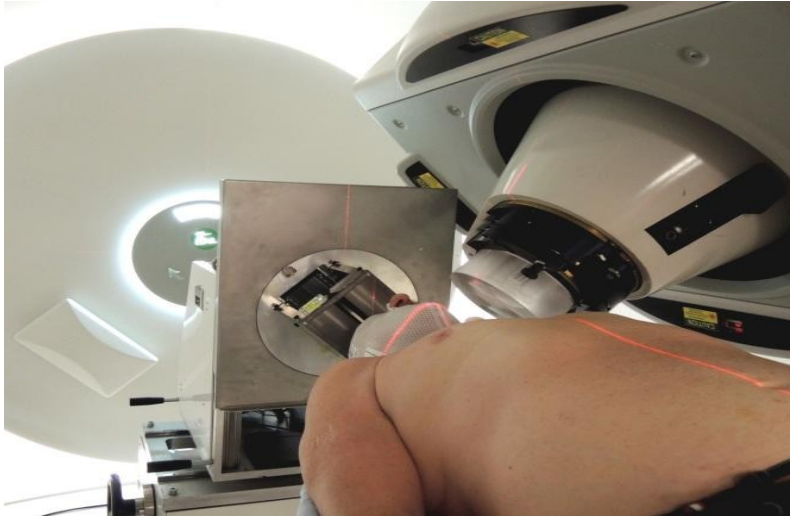
Prompt gamma imaging with collimated cameras



J. Smeets et al.: Phys. Med Biol. 57 (2012) 3371

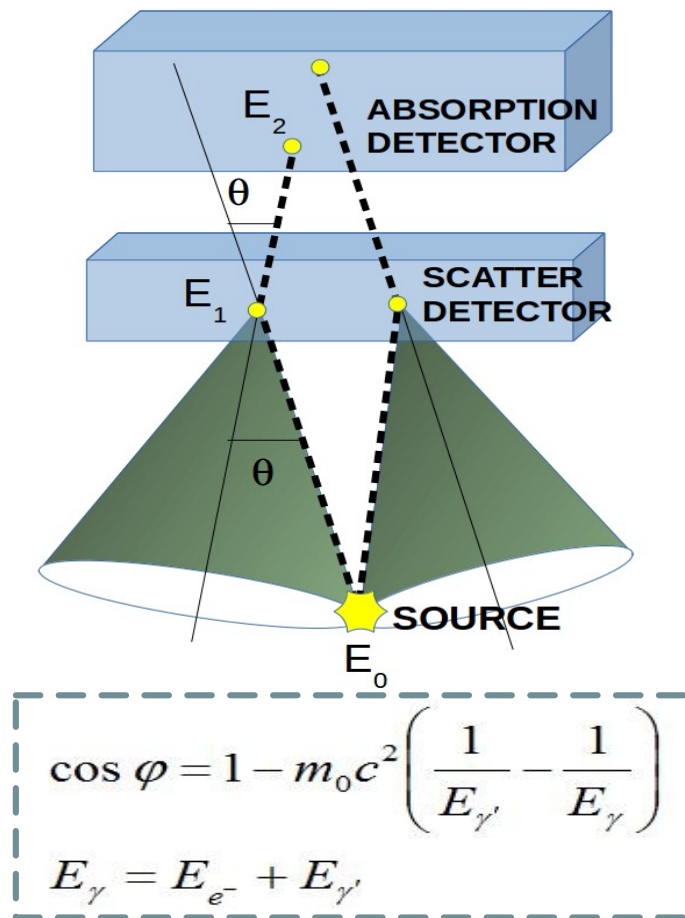
Prompt gamma imaging with collimated cameras

- Range variations in the \sim mm range have been observed.
- Successful results at therapeutic doses.
- Large, heavy system.

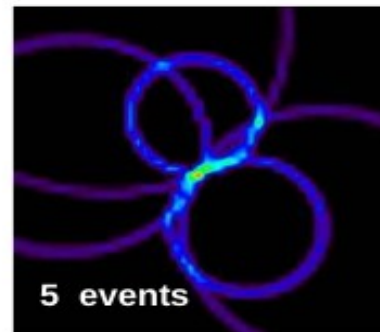


$$\Delta R = [-2.0 \text{ mm}, 1.3 \text{ mm}]$$

Compton cameras



Backprojection

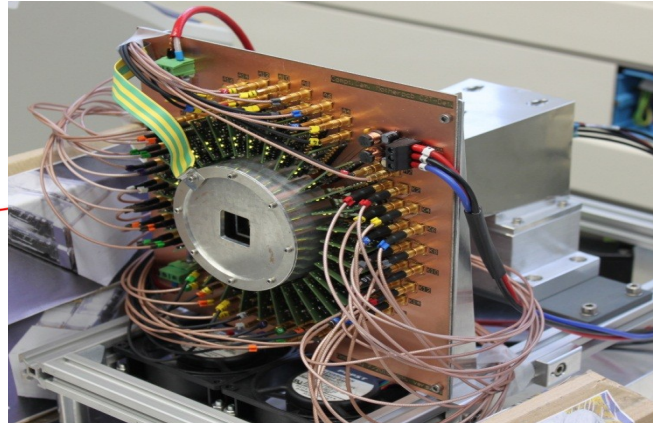
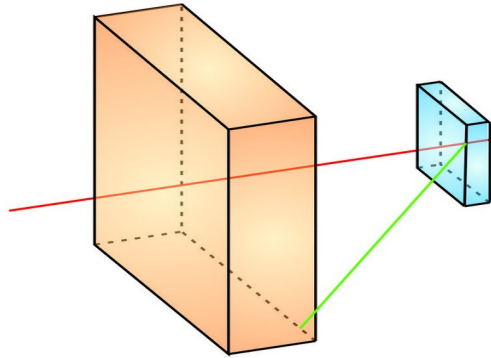


+ Image reconstruction

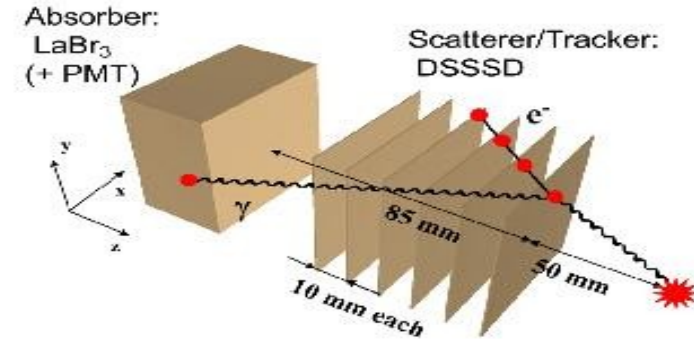
- Higher efficiency than gamma cameras
- Better at higher energies
- Better for multiple energies

Prompt gamma imaging with Compton cameras

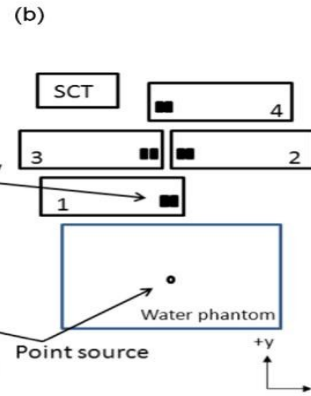
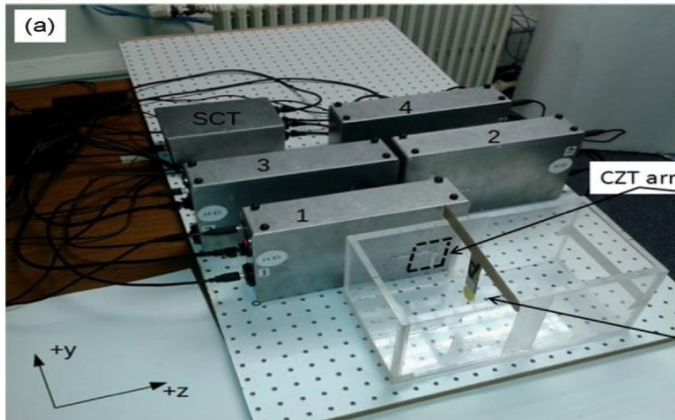
CZT + BGO



Thirolf et al., NN 2015



DSSD + LaBr₃



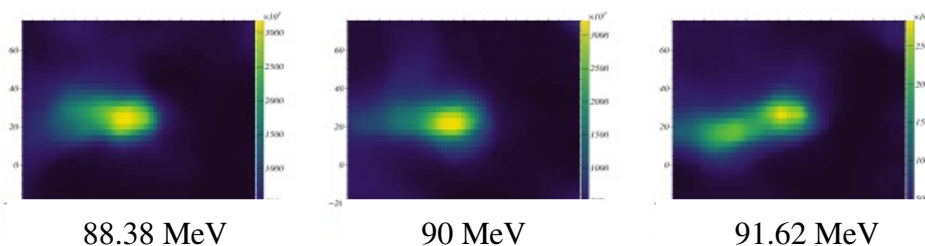
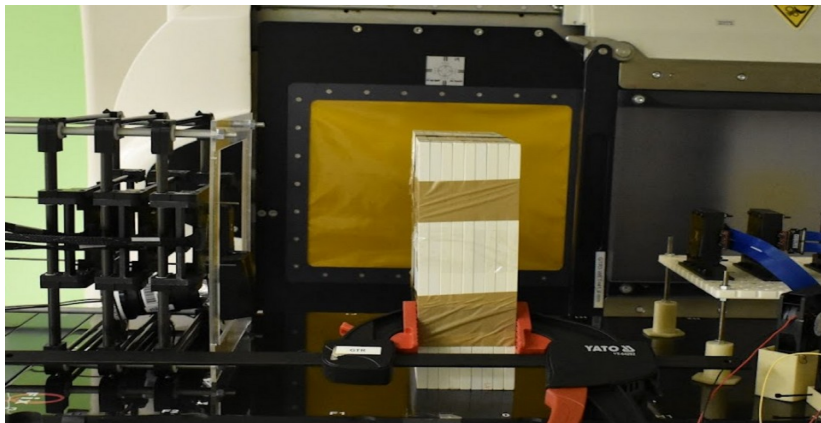
CZT

Polf et al., PMB 60 (2015) 7085

McCleskey et al., NIM A785 (2015) 163

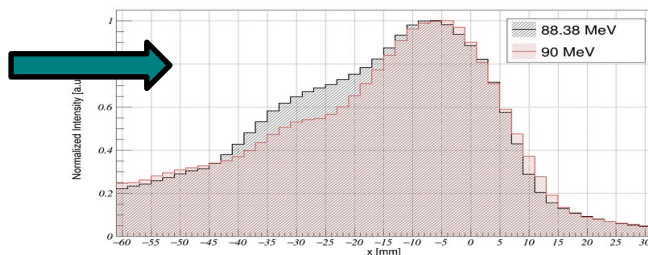
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MACACO with LaBr₃ detectors

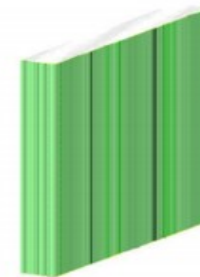
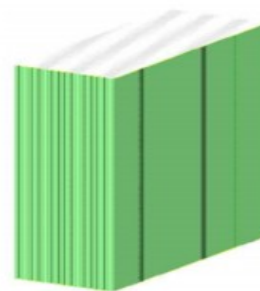


SiFi- CC: Compton camera with scintillating fibers under development

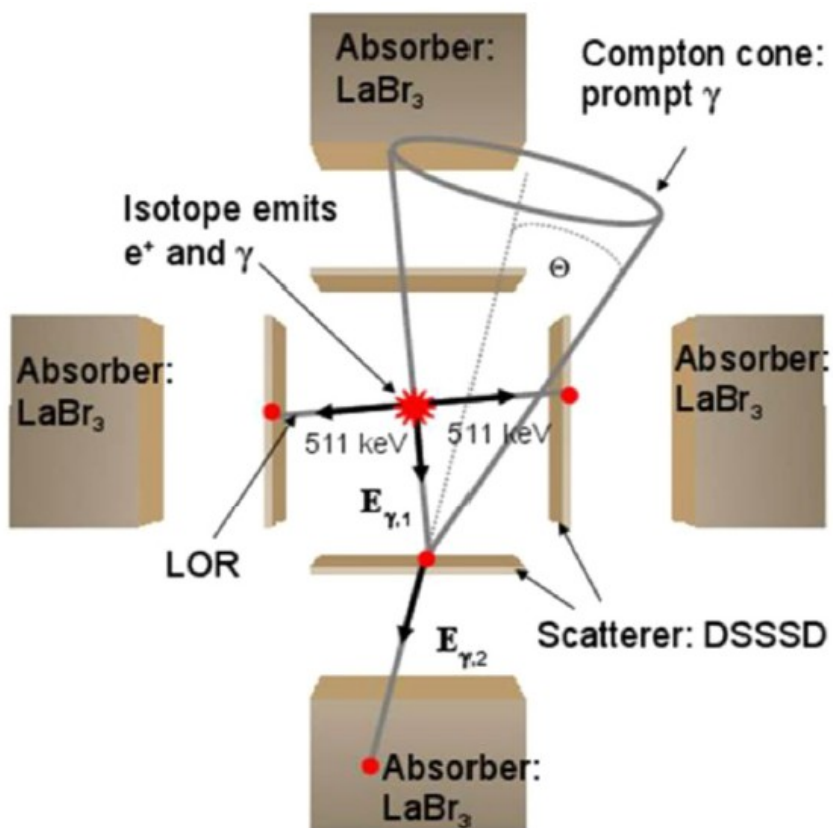
Proton beam at different energies



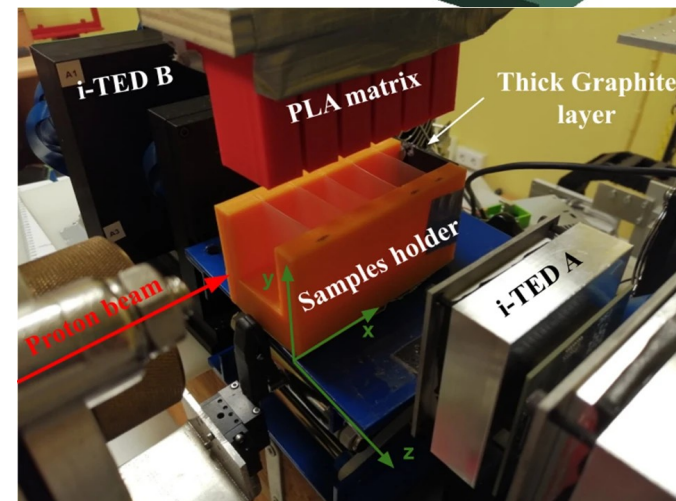
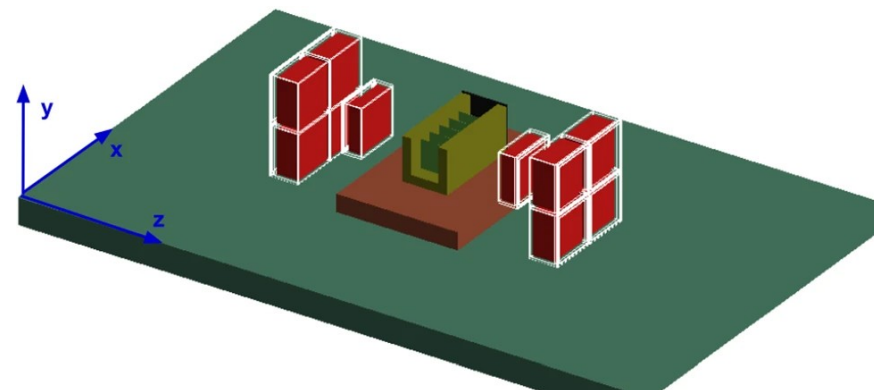
2 mm steps detected



Combination Compton-PET



K. Parodi. NIM A 809 (2016) 113-119



J. Balibrea-Correa et al. Eur. Phys. J. Plus (2022) 137:1258

The *InSide* Project

DOSE PROFILER
Prompt secondary
particles imaging

BI-MODAL IMAGING SYSTEM
for particle range monitoring and verification



Hadron therapy treatment monitoring

Unsolved problem

Challenging application

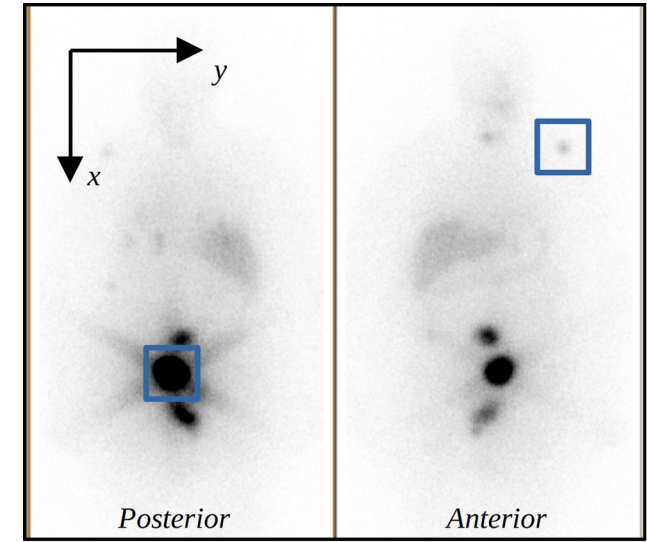
Even more challenging with modern synchrocyclotrons and flash (UHDR) therapy

Needs to be compatible with treatment



ICOR: Compton cameras for radionuclide therapy assessment

- Radionuclide therapy is expanding due to its good results.
- Imaging can be used to visualize their distribution in the body and carry out dosimetry employing secondary gamma radiation.
- More challenging than diagnostic imaging since photon energies and activities are not optimized for gamma cameras.
- Particularly complicated for alpha emitting radionuclides due to low activities and high photon energies.
- Compton cameras, initially developed for astroparticle physics experiments, can overcome the difficulties encountered by gamma cameras.
 - Higher efficiency.
 - Better suited for high energy photons.
 - Better suited for multi-gamma emission.



Gamma camera images of a patient treated with $^{131}\text{I-NaI}$.

Compton cameras are a promising tool for theranostics

ASFAE/2022/019

Conclusions

- Many aspects in which the performance of medical imaging devices can be improved.
- Instrumentation from astrophysics and HEP can lead to improvements in this field.
- Necessary contact with hospitals / specialized groups to know what the requirements are and to address properly the needs.



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Thank you

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<http://ific.uv.es/iris>



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