



ASTROFÍSICA Y FÍSICA
DE ALTAS ENERGÍAS

Medical applications highlights

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



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Outline

- Challenges in PET instrumentation.
- Hadron therapy monitoring.



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- Improve diagnostic accuracy
- Reduce dose / time

+ Lower cost



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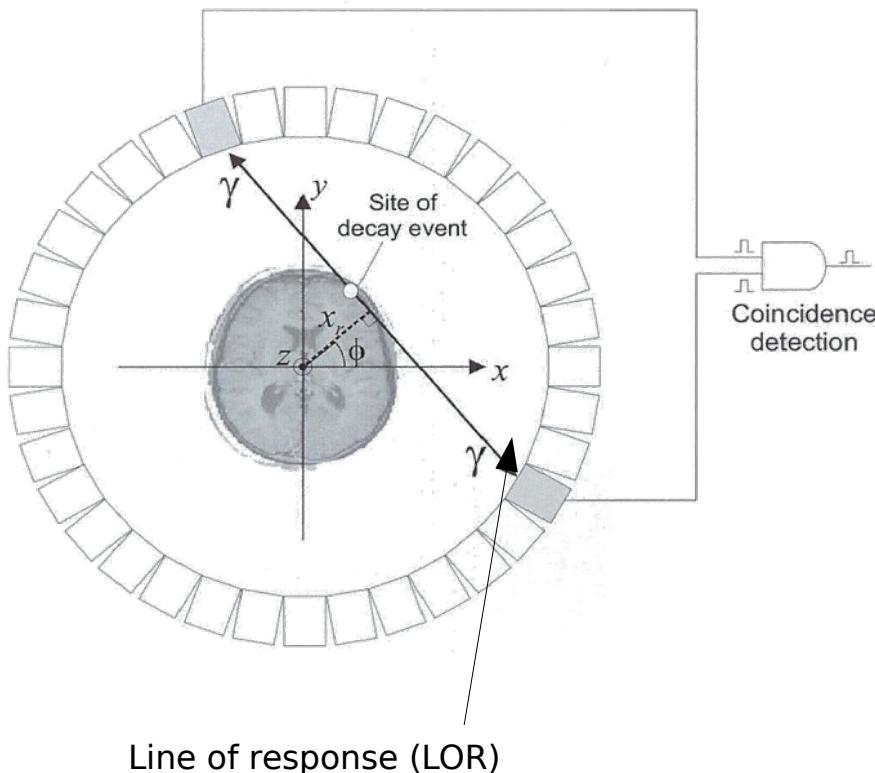
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Positron Emission Tomography (PET)

Ring of detector heads



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

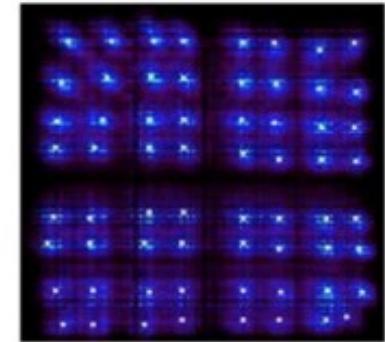
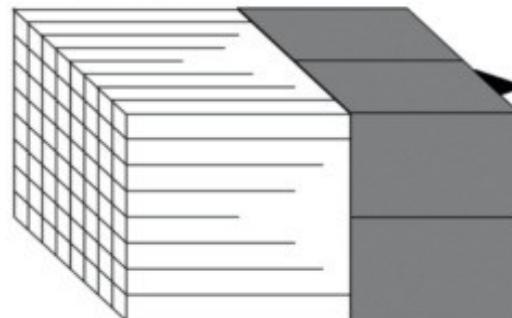


PET - detectors

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

Scintillator with
cut light guides

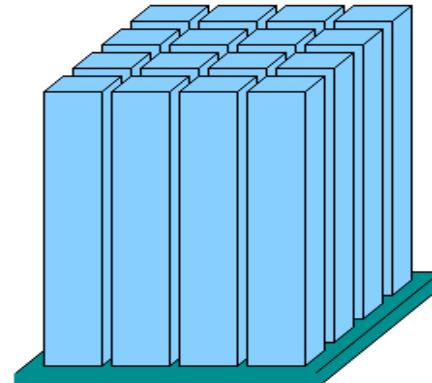
PMTs



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

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

(→ PET/MR)



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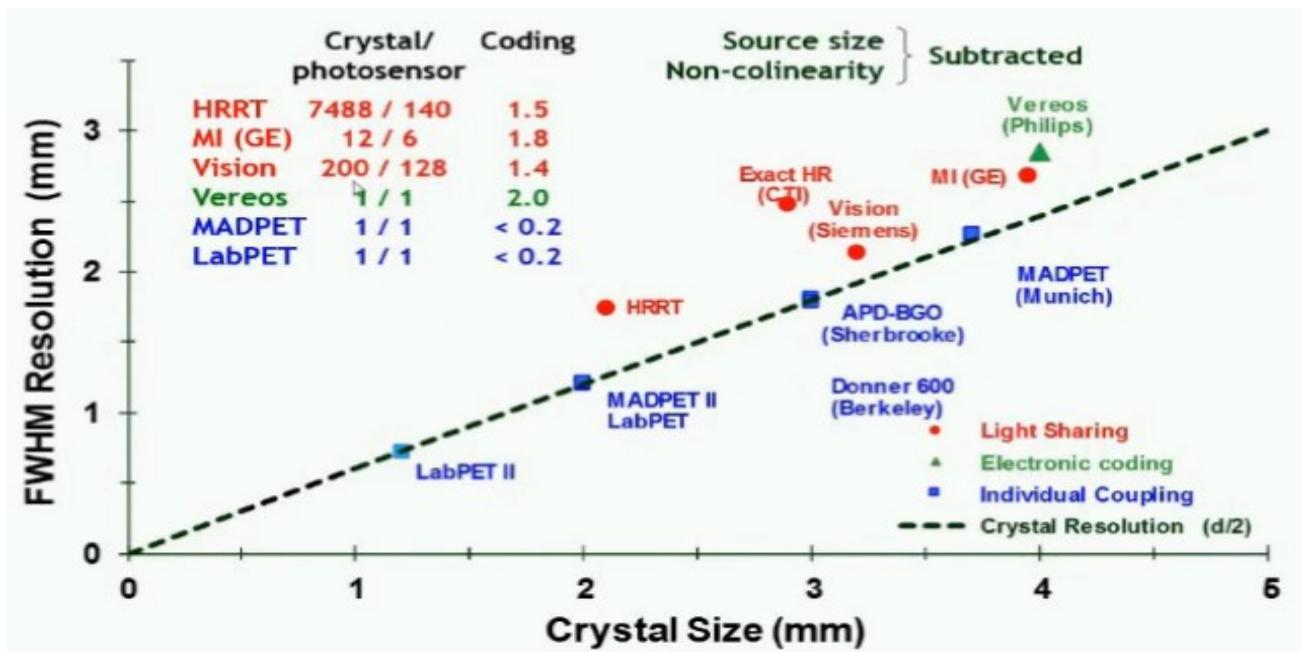
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Spatial resolution in PET scanners

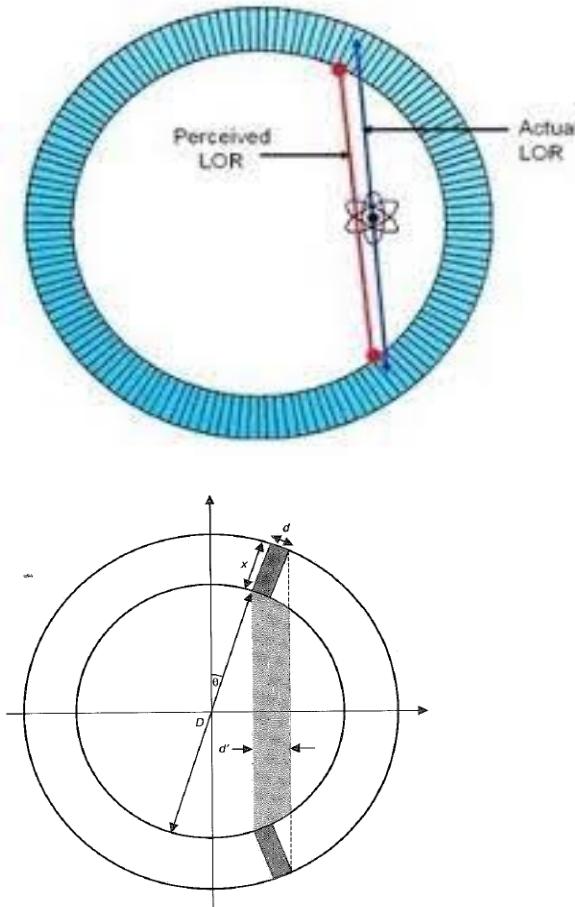
Small animal and dedicated scanners

- In clinical systems:
- 3-4 mm FWHM

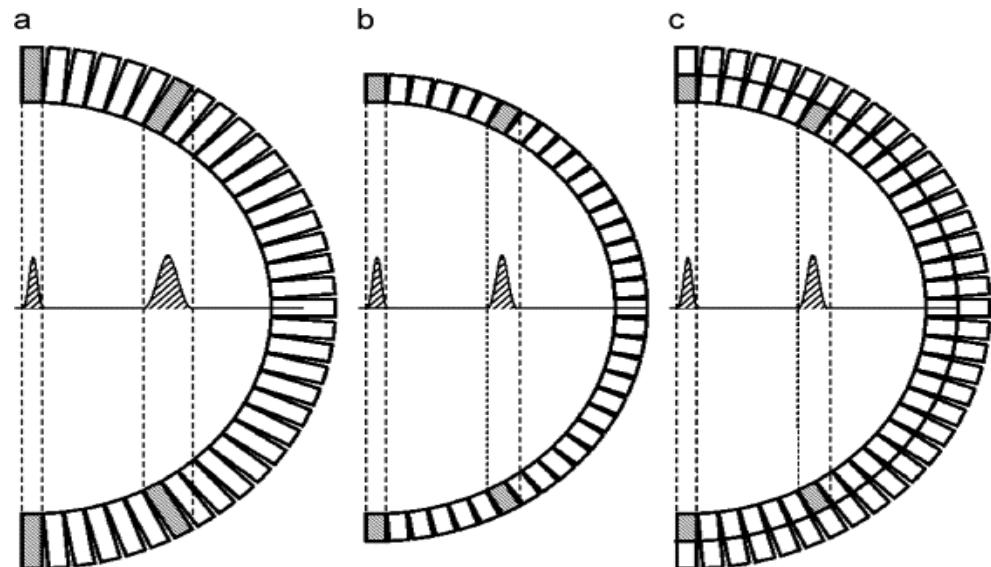


Increase resolution maintaining efficiency, without increasing the number of readout channels

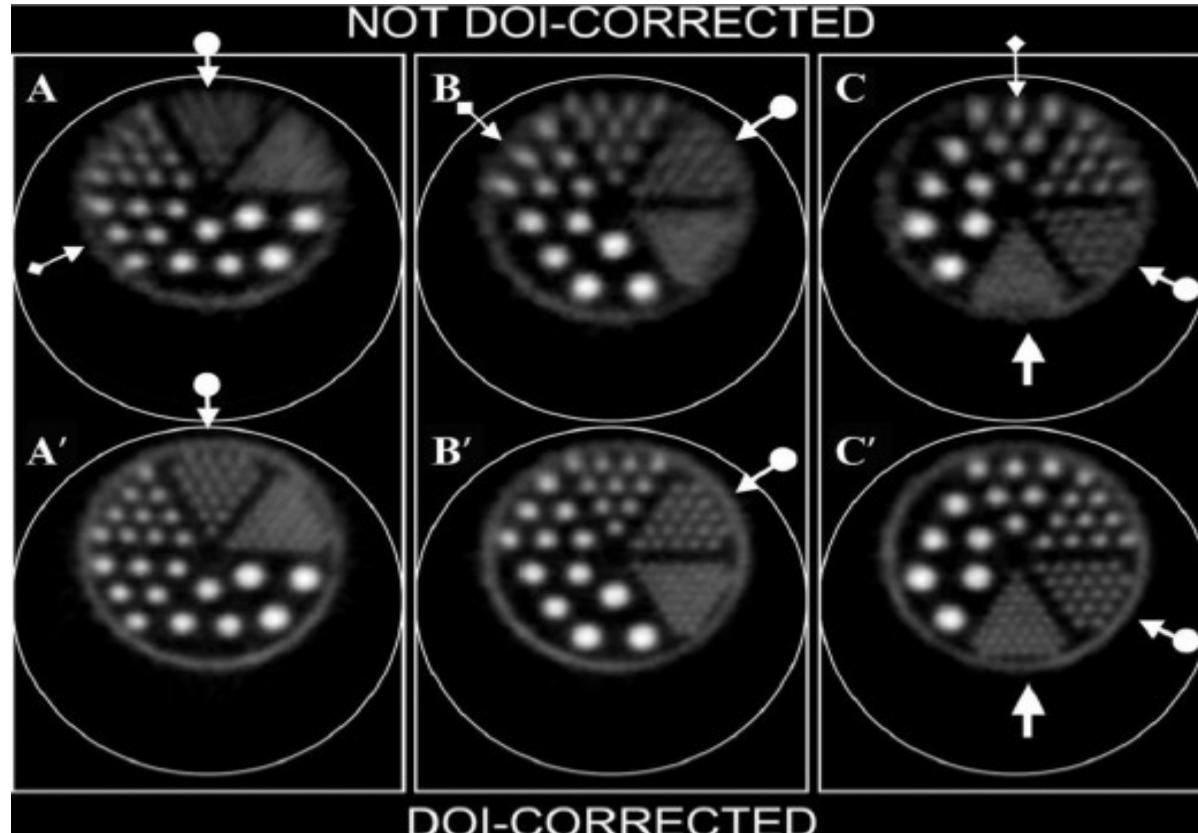
Depth-of-Interaction (DOI) determination



Parallax error degrades the resolution at the edges of the scanner



DOI determination



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



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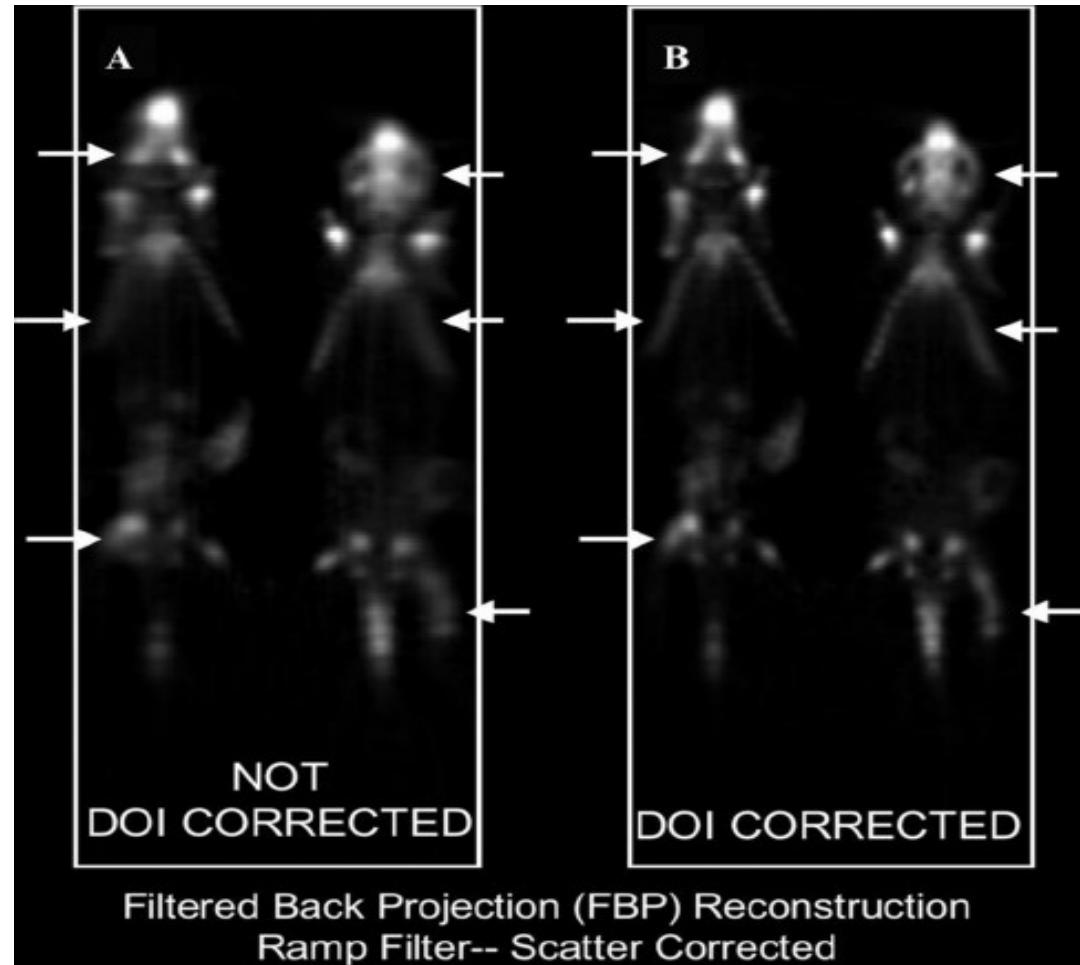
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DOI determination



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

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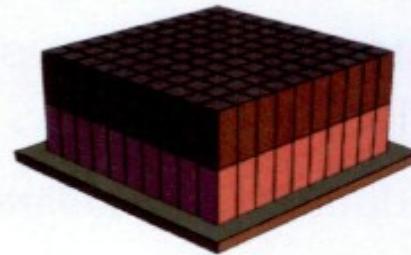


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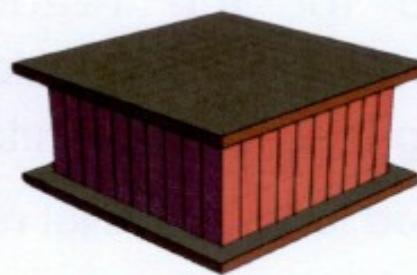


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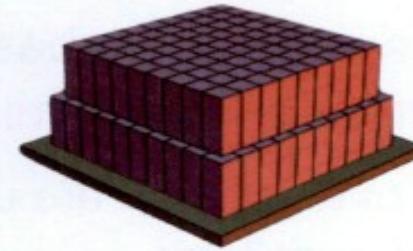
DOI determination



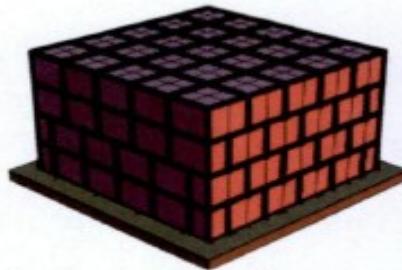
Phoswich design



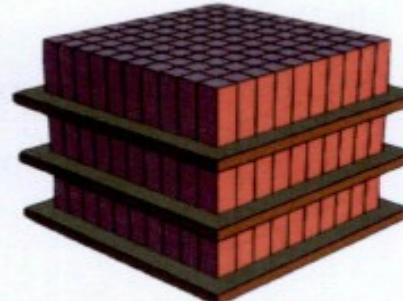
Double-sided readout



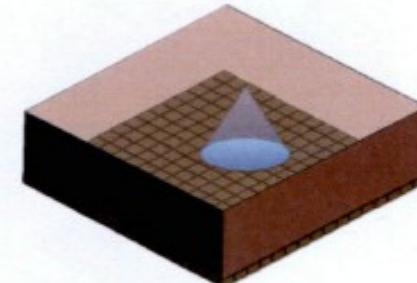
Stacked layers with a relative displacement with respect to each other



Layers with reflective optical structure



Multiple photosensors



Width of the light spot in continuous scintillators



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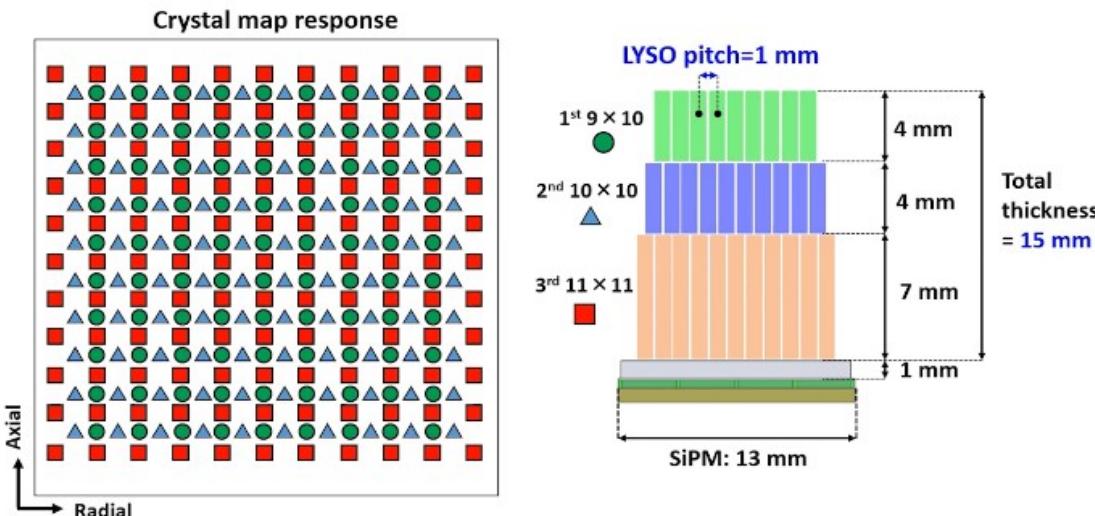
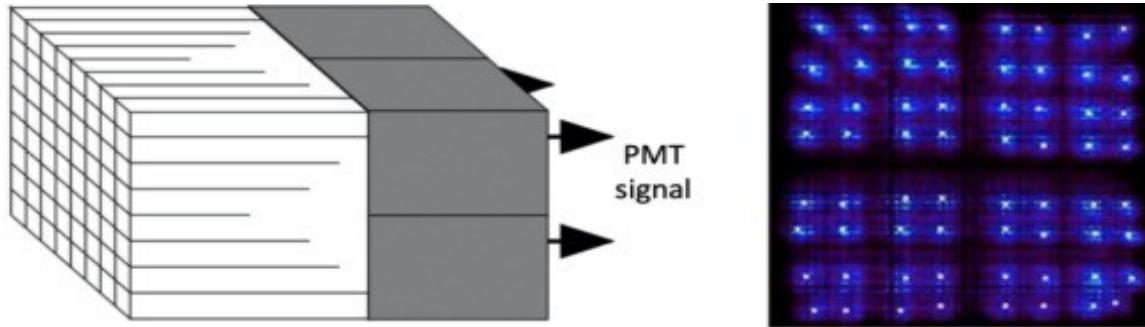


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DOI determination



Higher cost
Generally not included in scanners



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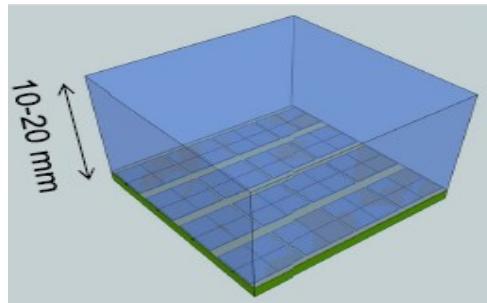
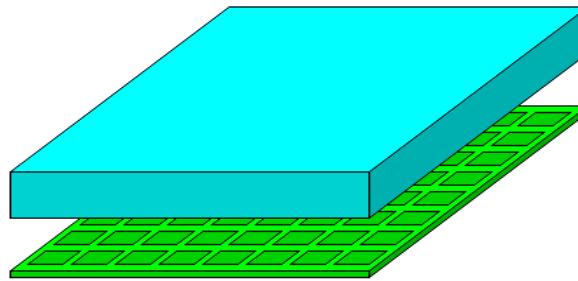
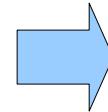
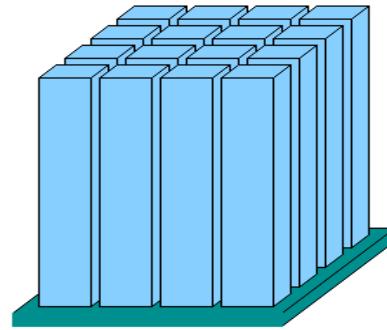
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Monolithic detectors?



D. Schaart.
ICTR-PHE 2014

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



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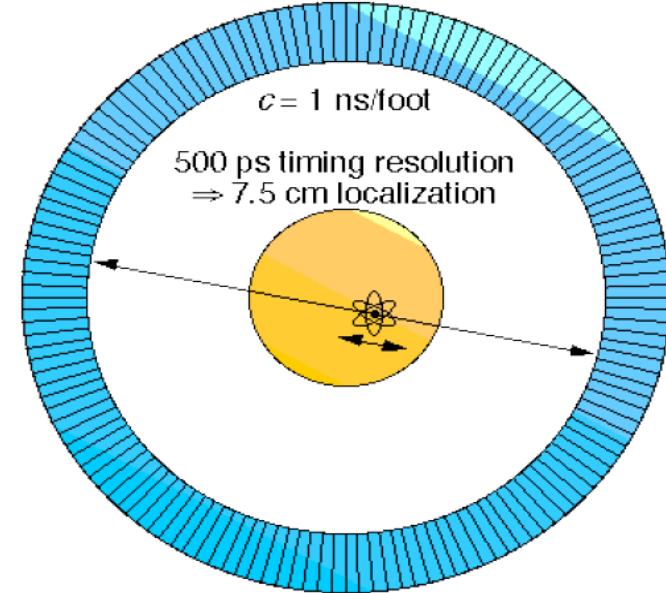
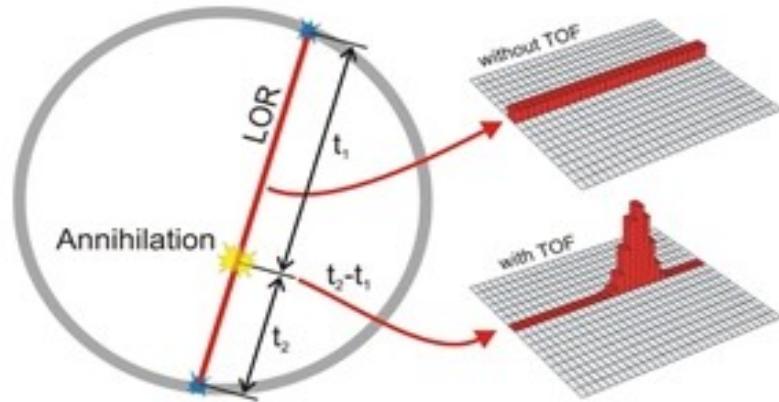


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Time-Of-Flight (TOF) PET

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



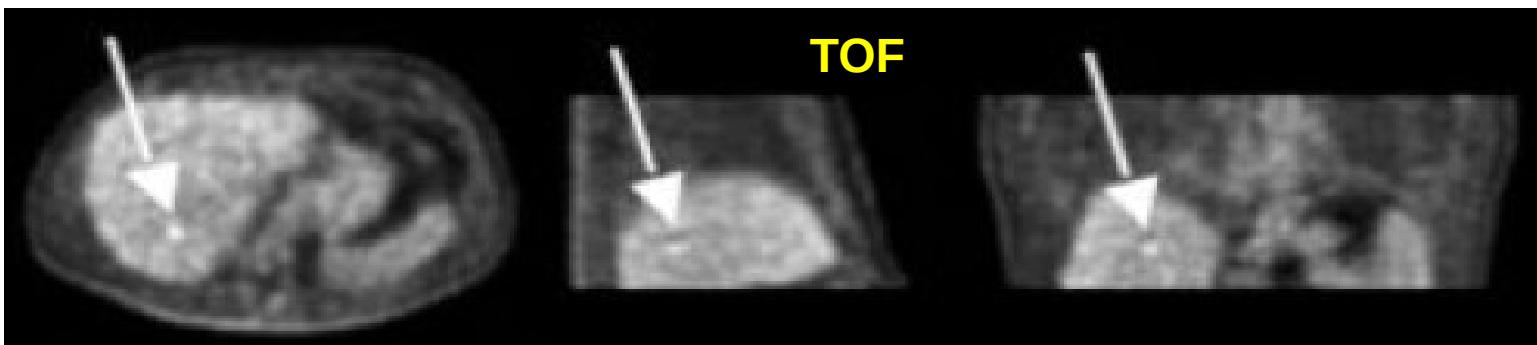
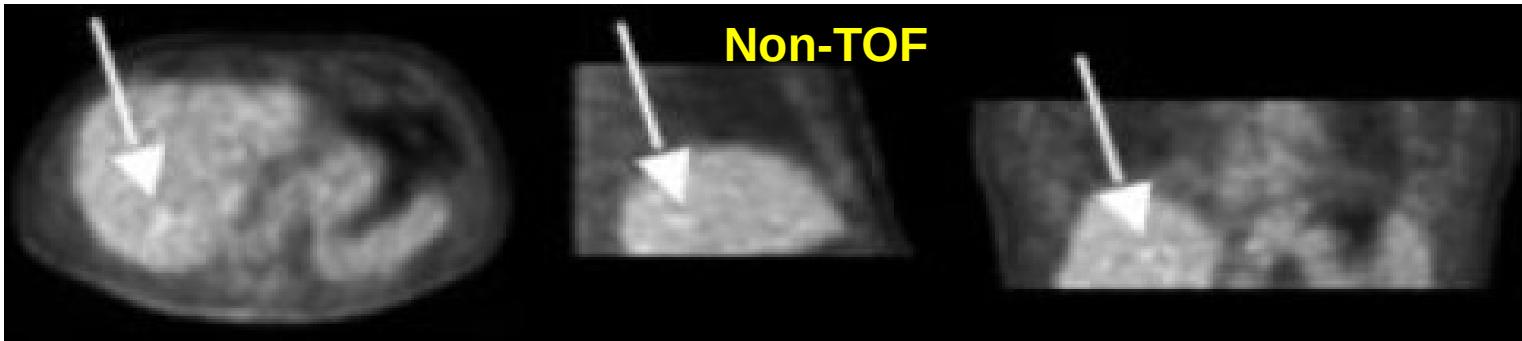
More accurate determination of the emission area of the photons
→ better signal-to-noise ratio (SNR).

TOF-PET first generation

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



TOF-PET



Liver lesion

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



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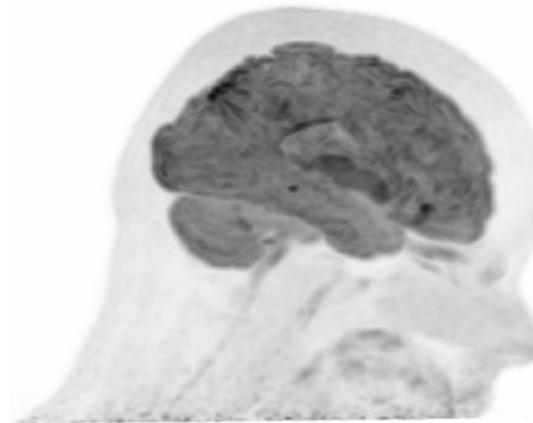
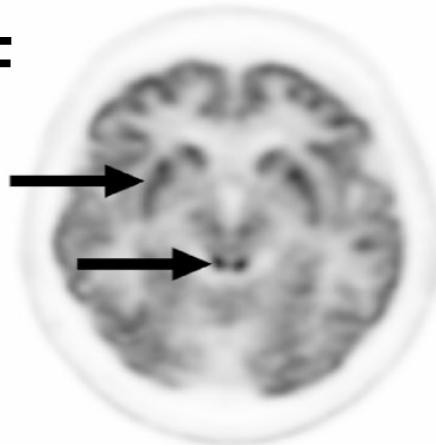


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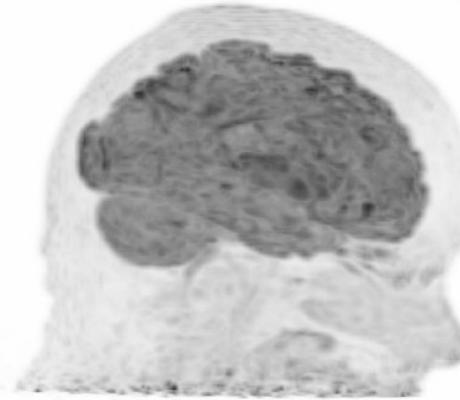
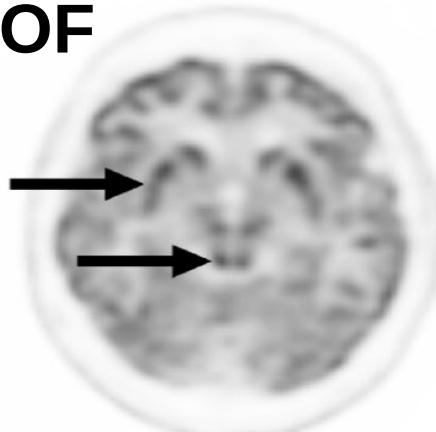


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TOF

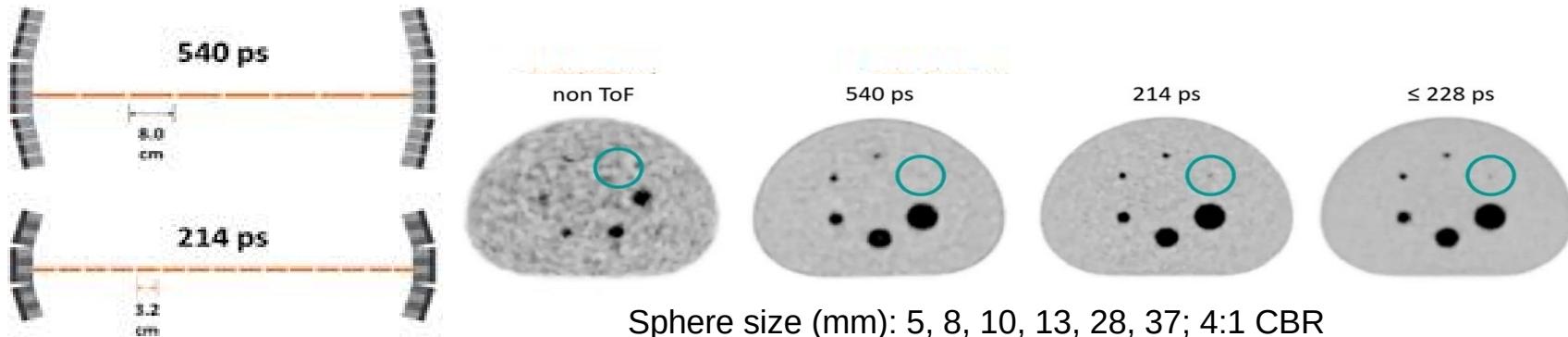


NON-TOF



Van Sluis et al.
J Nuc Med 2019

Last generation with SiPMs: 214-380 ps FWHM



Sphere size (mm): 5, 8, 10, 13, 28, 37; 4:1 CBR



The 10 ps challenge → 1.5 mm LOR



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 Križan⁶ , 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 to fused PET/CT and PET/MR images, thus complementing for the modern intrinsic spatial

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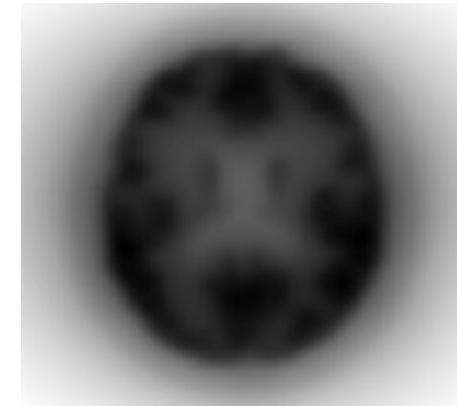
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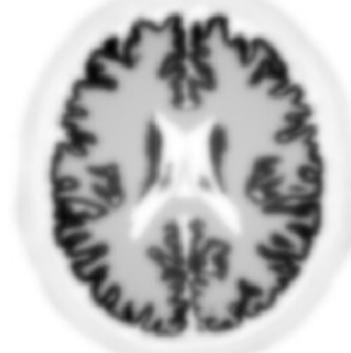


Abstract

Non-TOF



TOF 10 ps



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



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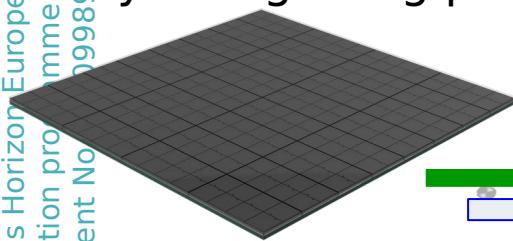
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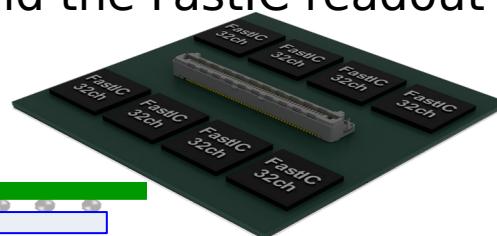
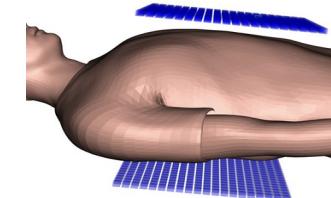
Funded by the European Union

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

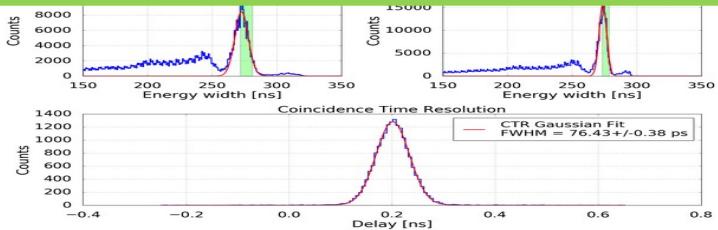
<http://petvision.org>



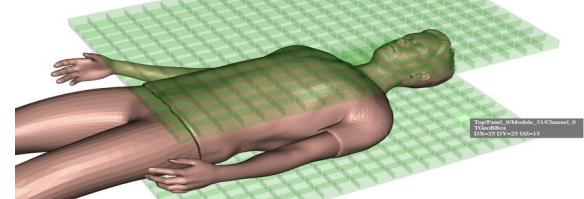
Enable limited angle and affordable total body devices



Preliminary results (non-integ. sensor)

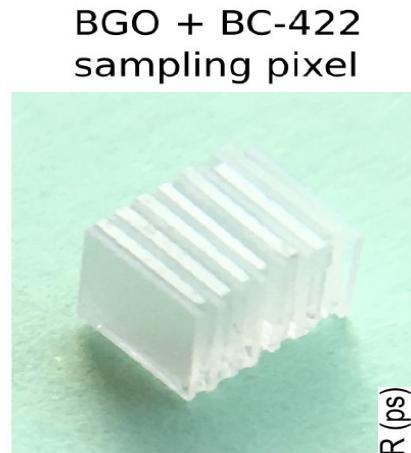
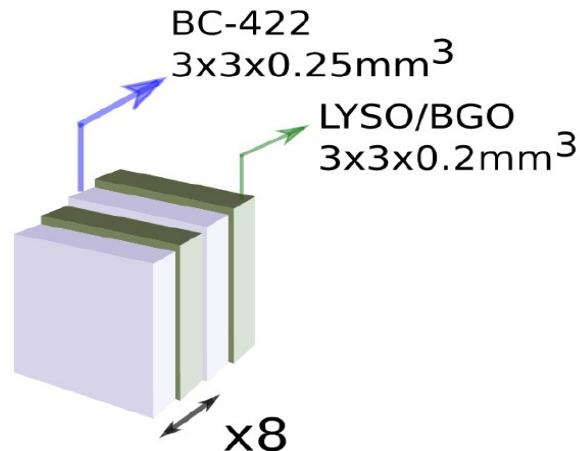


FastIC+ FBK NUV-HD +
2x2x3mm³ LSO
FWHM = 76 ps

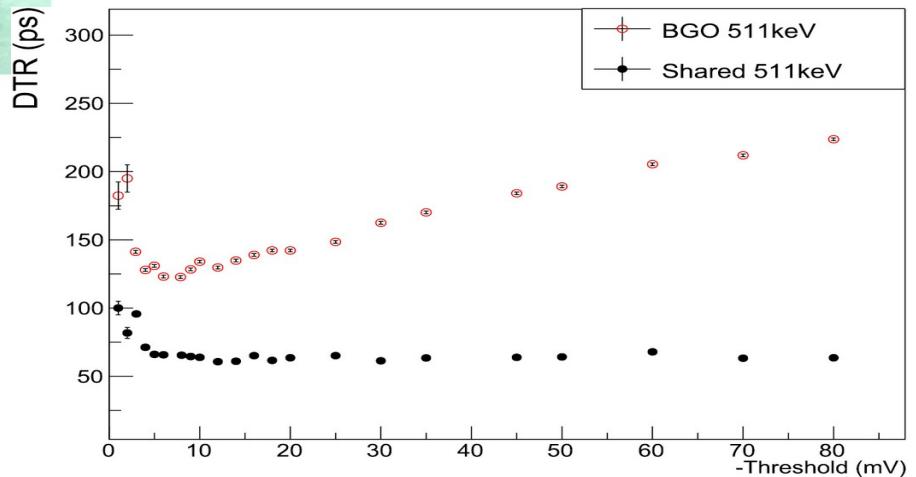


Courtesy of Rok Pestotnik

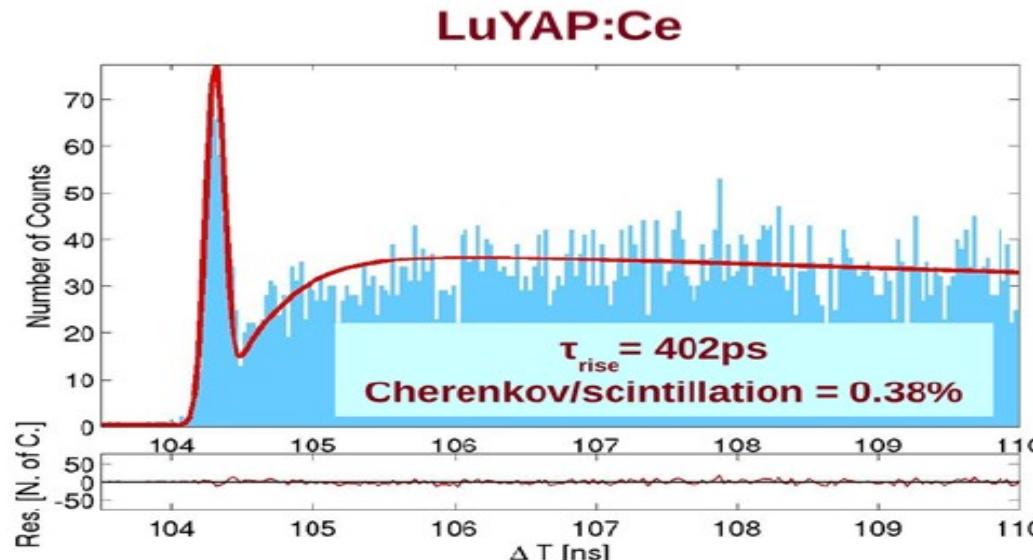
New materials / metamaterials.



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



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Cherenkov PET

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

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

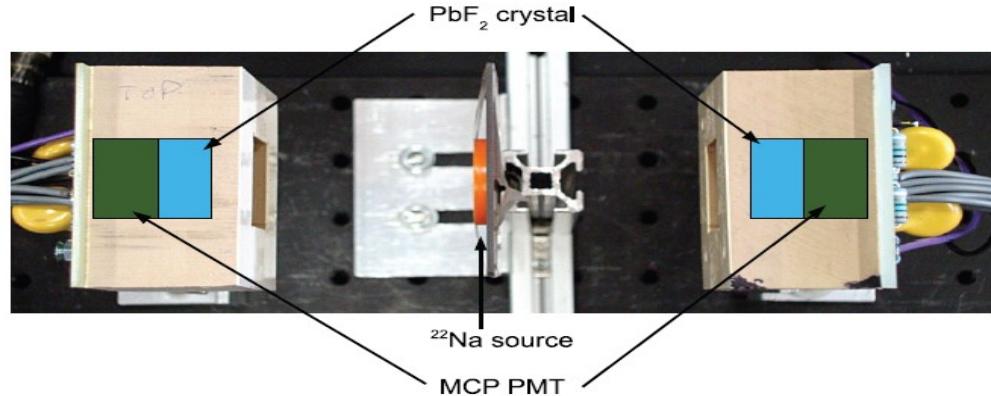


Fig. 1. The experimental setup with ^{22}Na source in between the two PbF_2 crystals coupled to MCP PMTs.

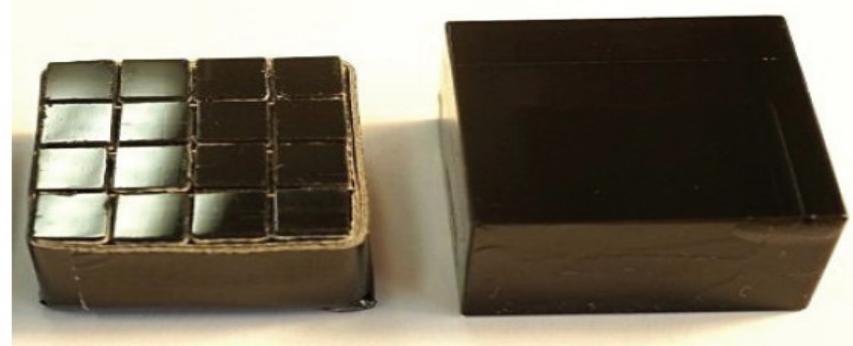


Fig. 2. Cherenkov radiator crystals used for detection of 511 keV photons in the present experiment.

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



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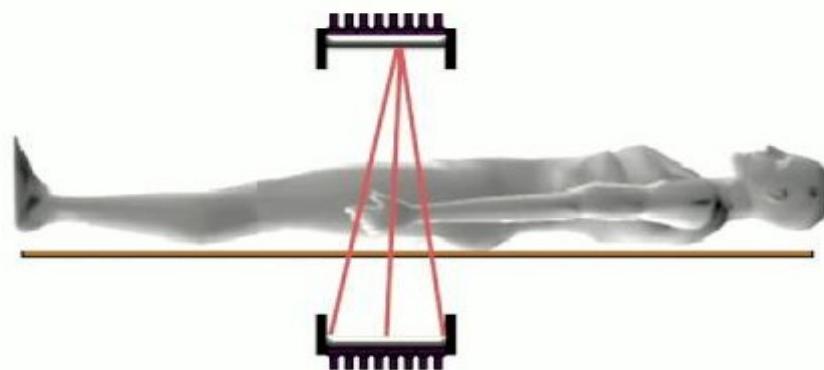
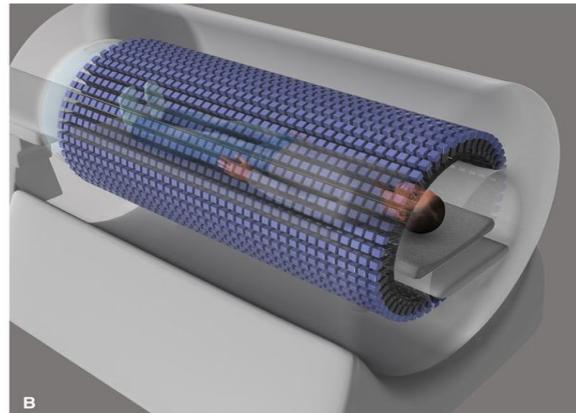
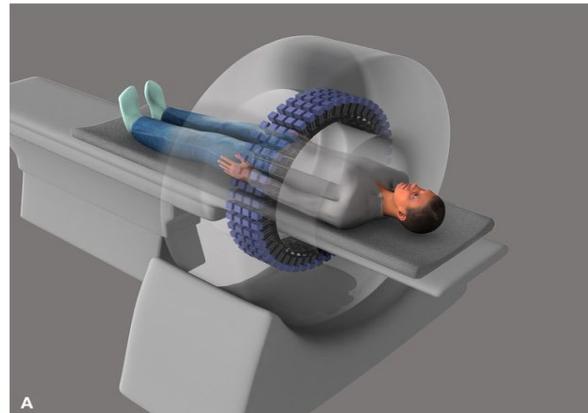


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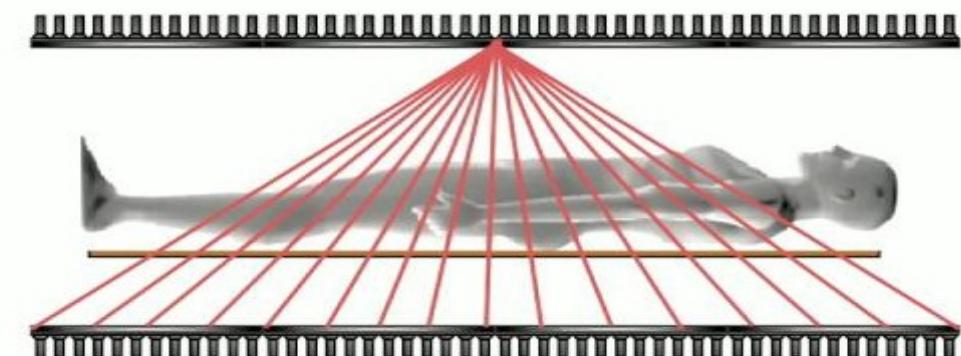


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Total Body PET

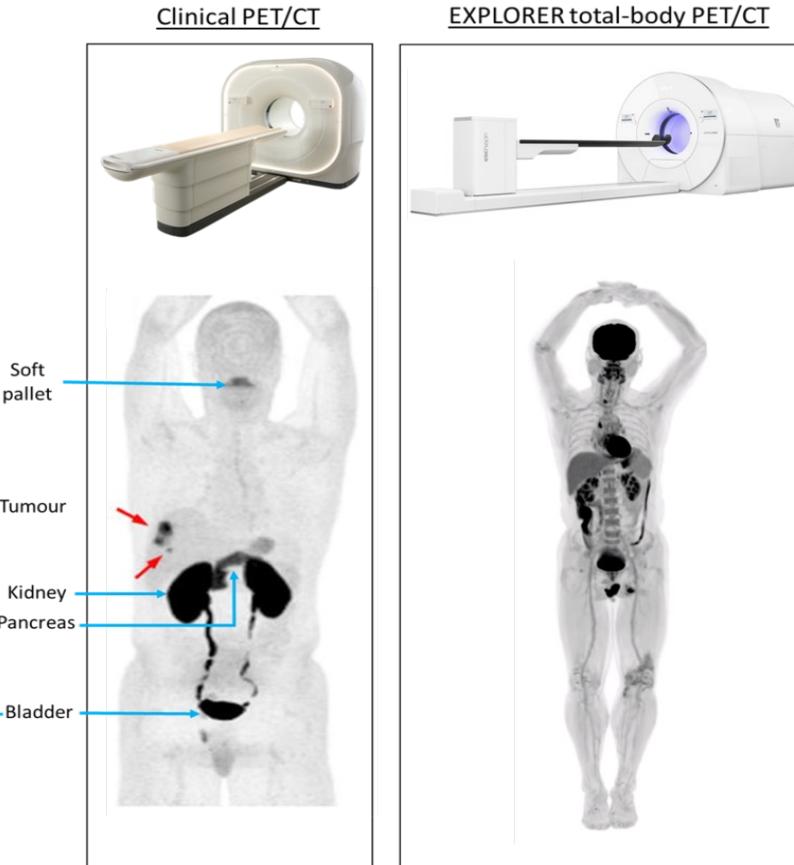


WHOLE BODY PET CONVENTIONAL PET



TOTAL BODY PET EXPLORER

Total Body PET



- 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



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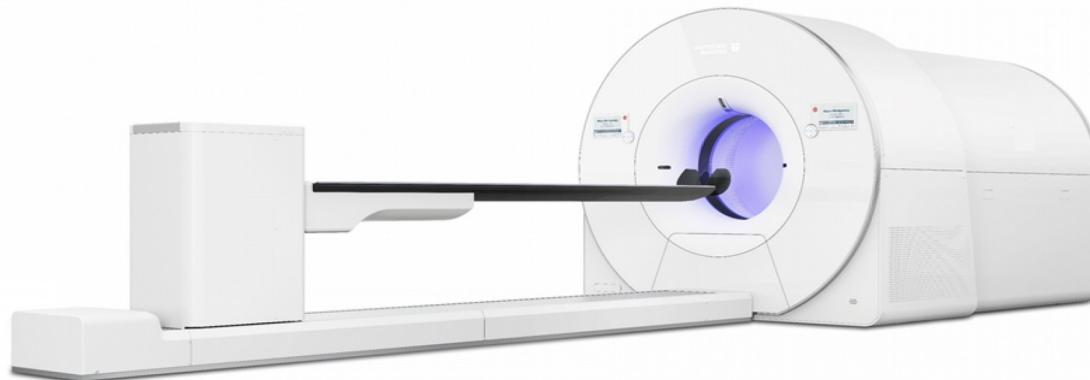
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Total Body PET



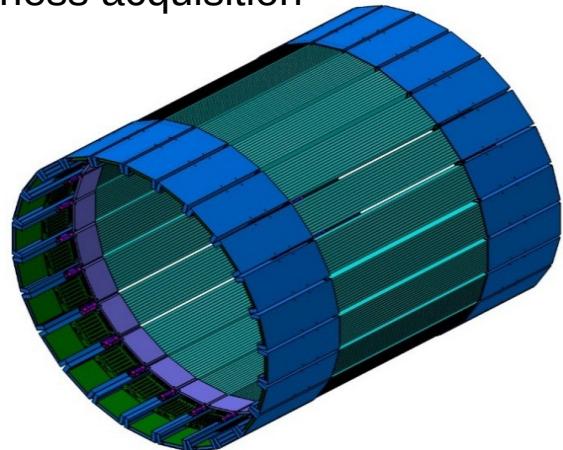
Biograph Vision Quadra
1 m length



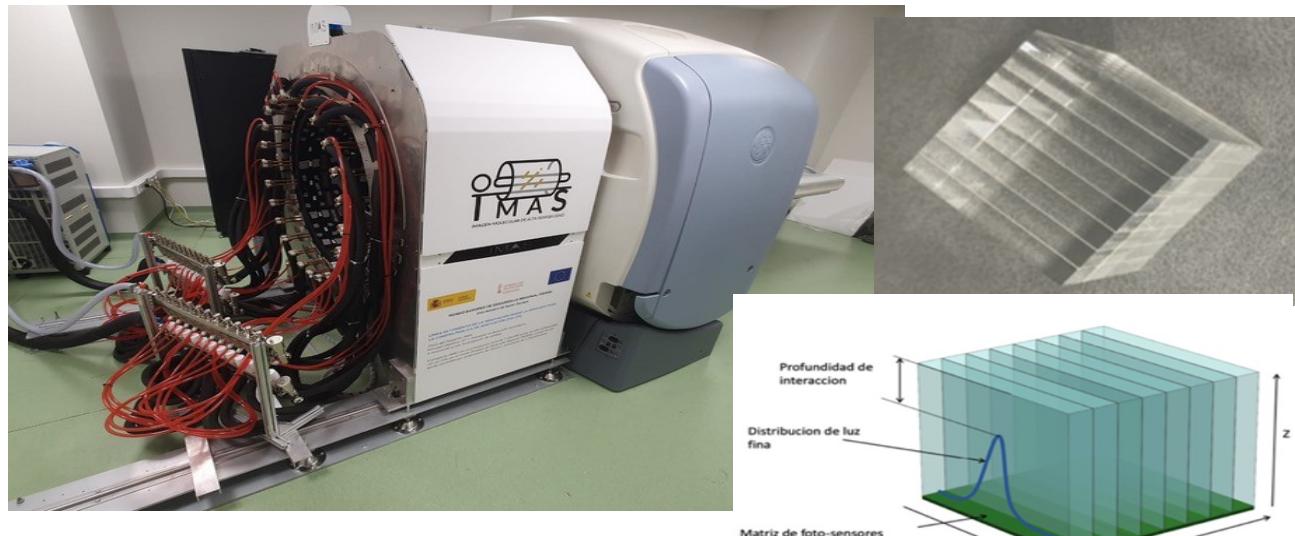
EXPLORER
Whole body length

Total Body PET – affordable approaches

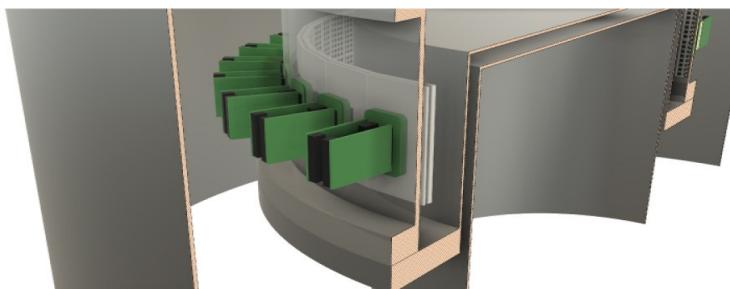
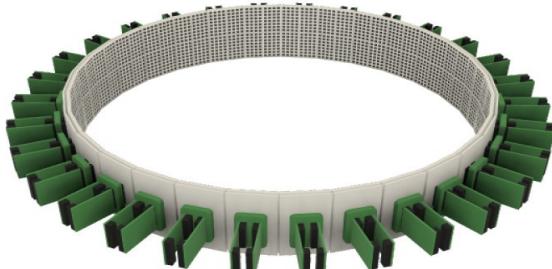
JPET: plastic scintillators
+ triggerless acquisition



IMAS: semi-monolithic LYSO detectors



PETALO: liquid Xenon + SiPMs – continuous volume



Courtesy of A. González

Again BGO?
Other?



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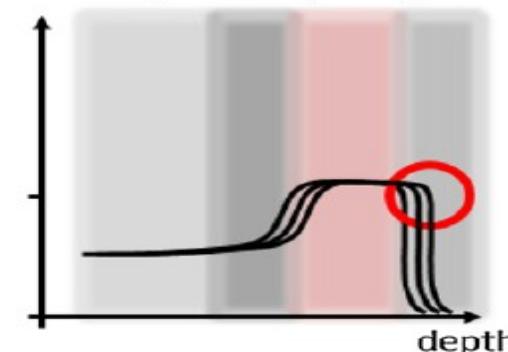
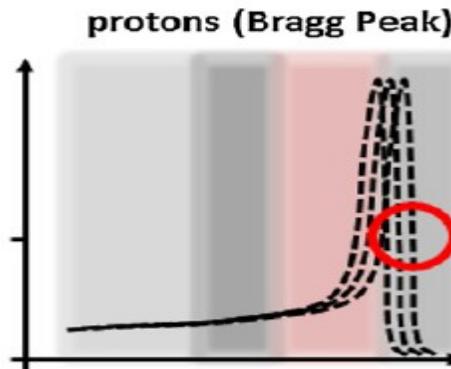
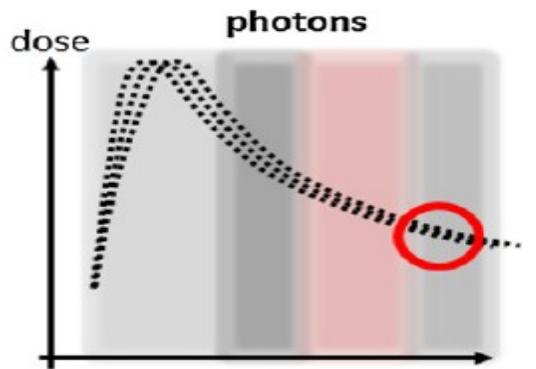
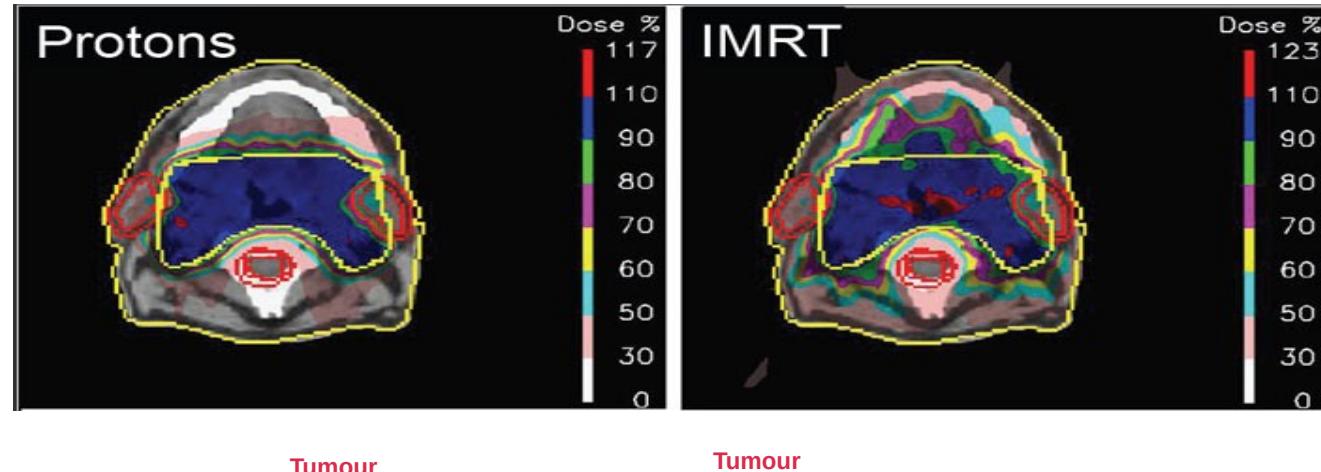
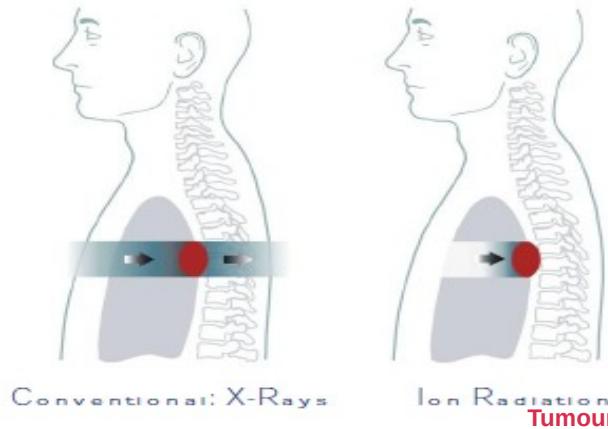
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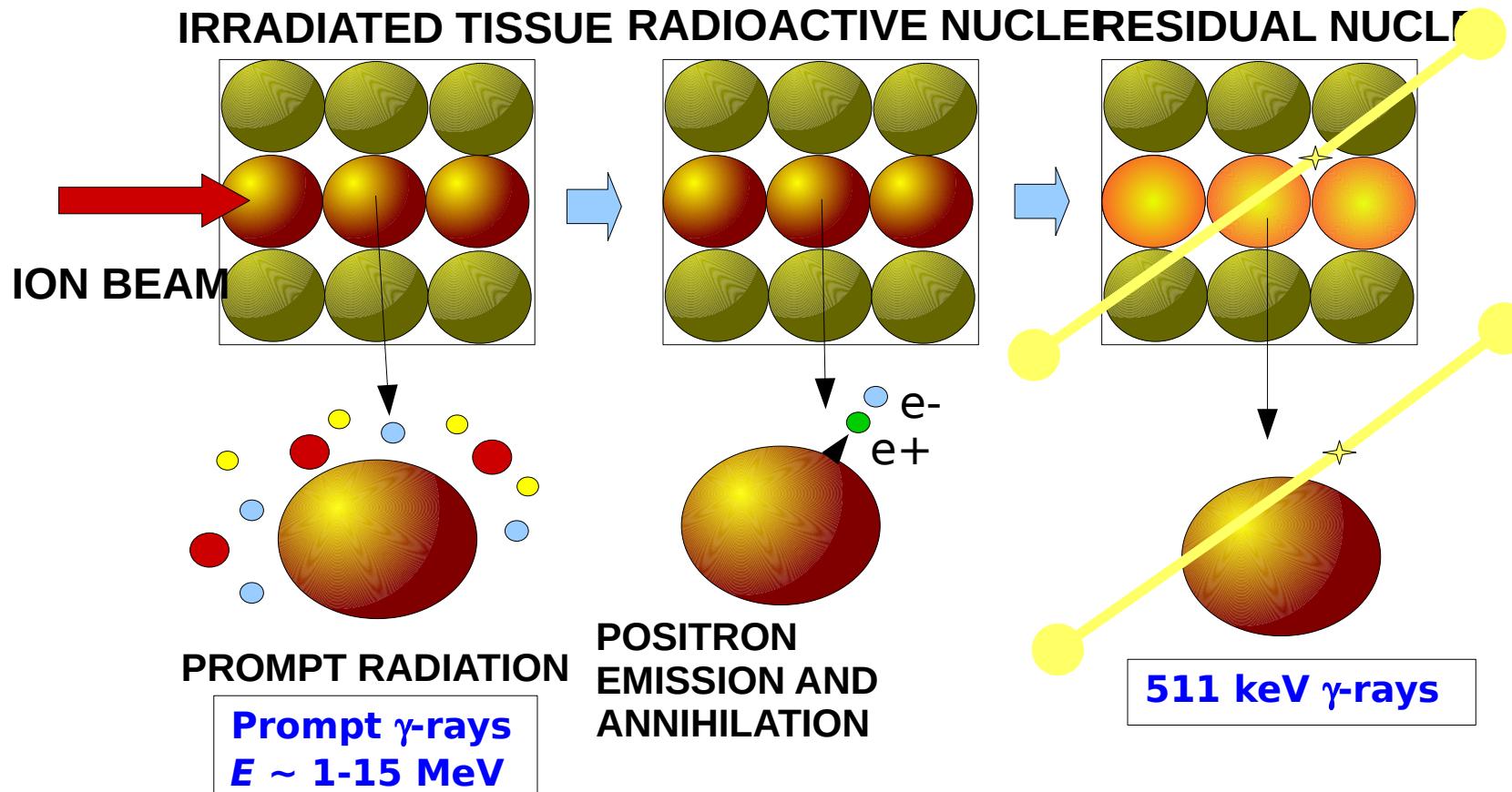


Hadron therapy treatment monitoring



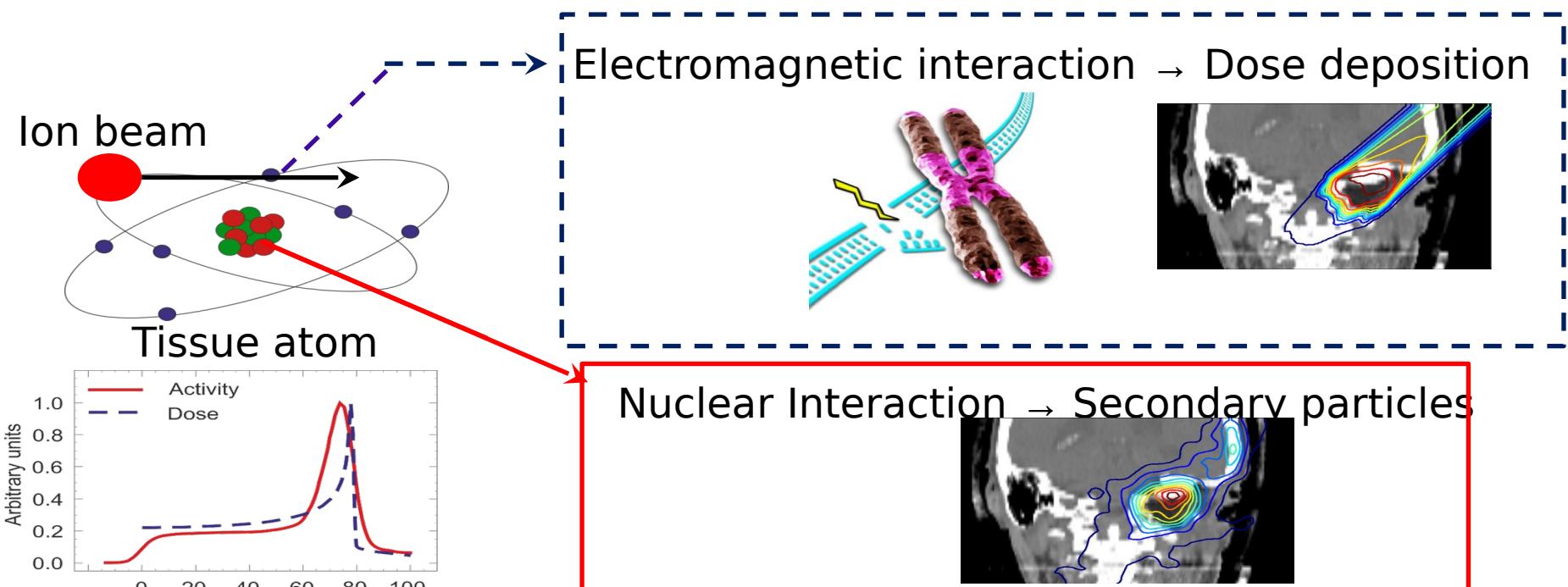
Large safety margins applied to treatment plans.

Hadron therapy treatment monitoring



Treatment monitoring

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



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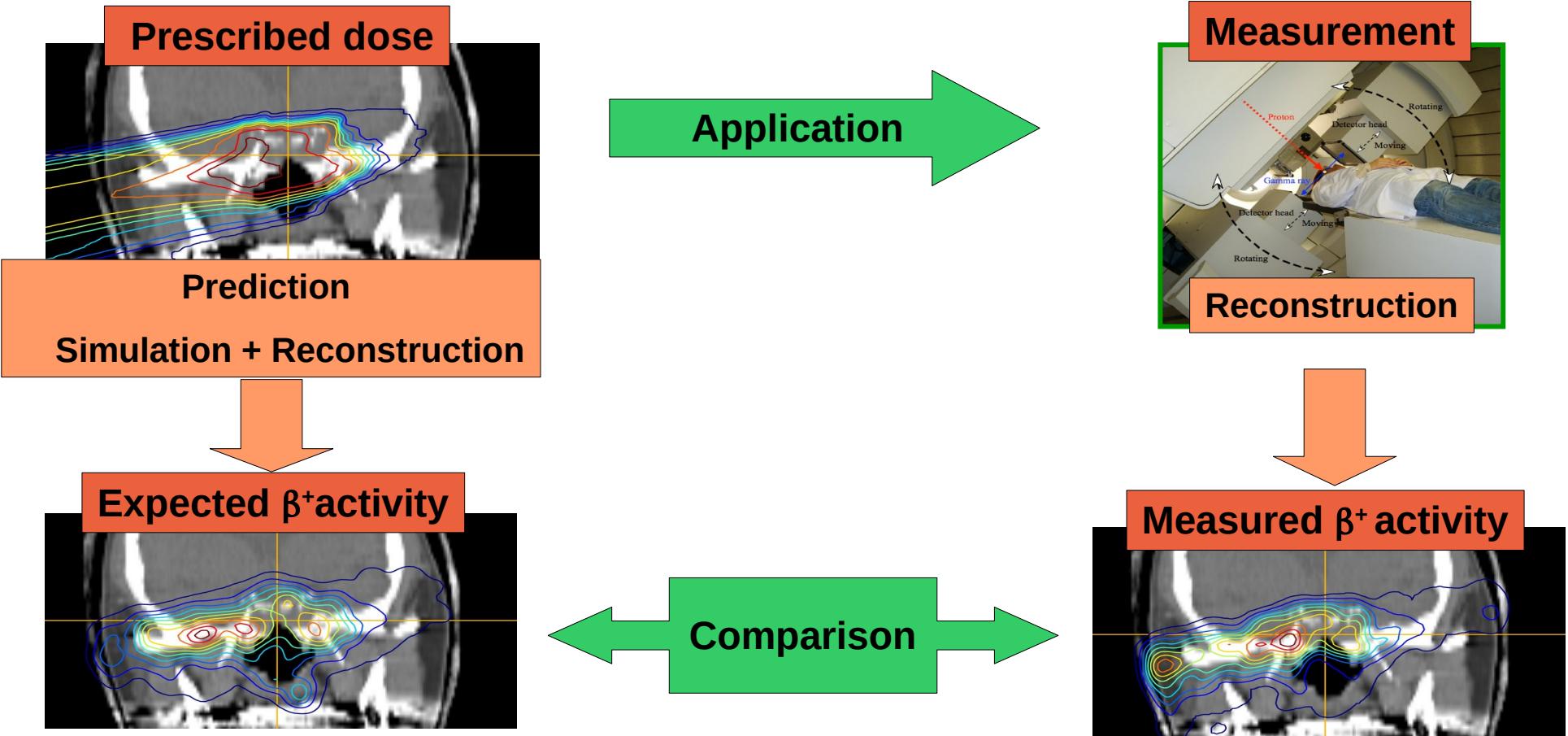


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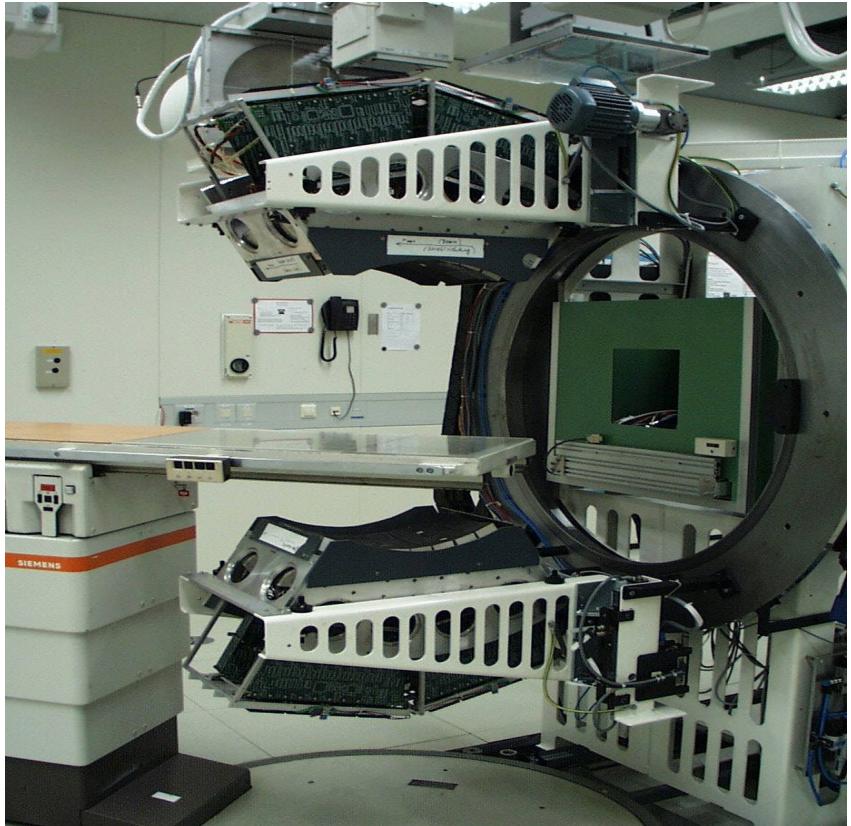
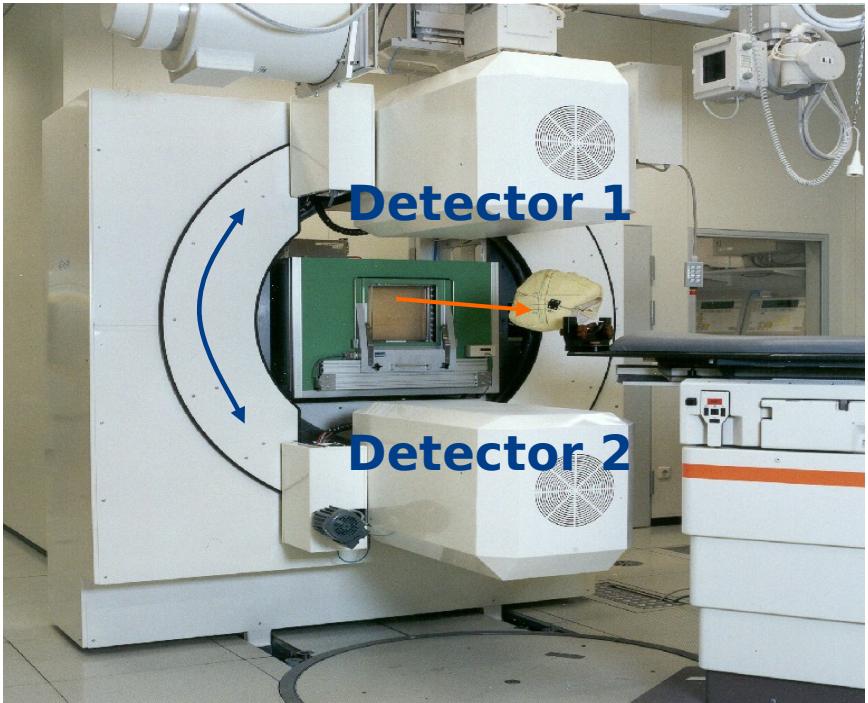


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Monitoring with PET



Monitoring with PET



PT PET Scanner @ GSI



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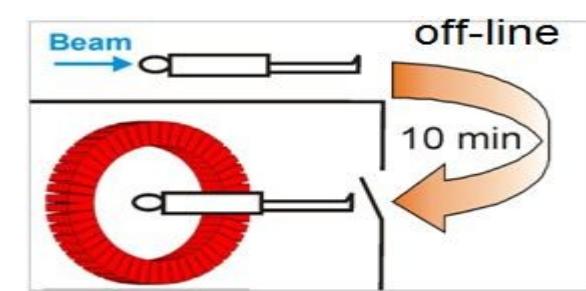
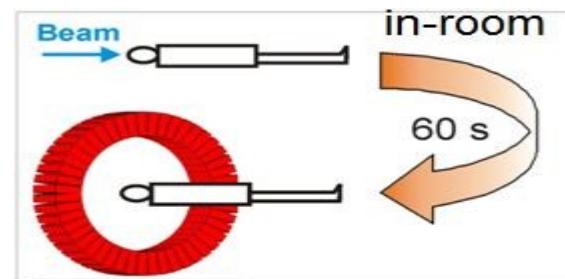
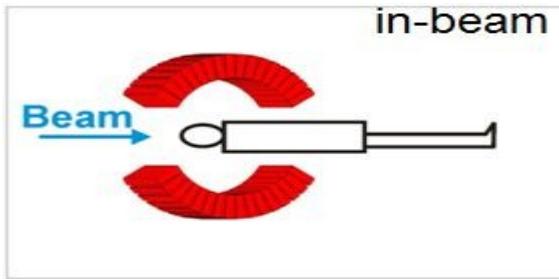
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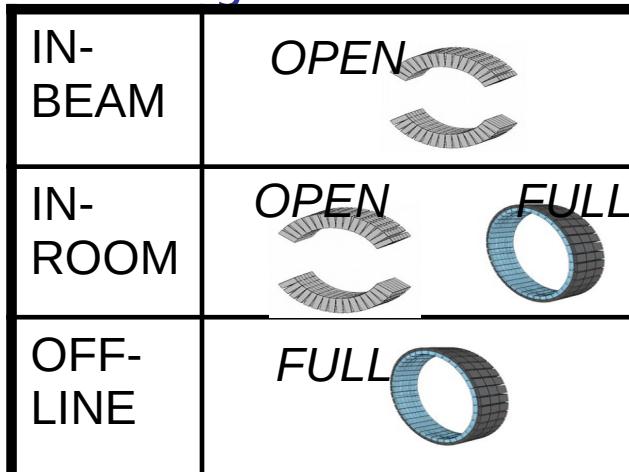
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Modalities

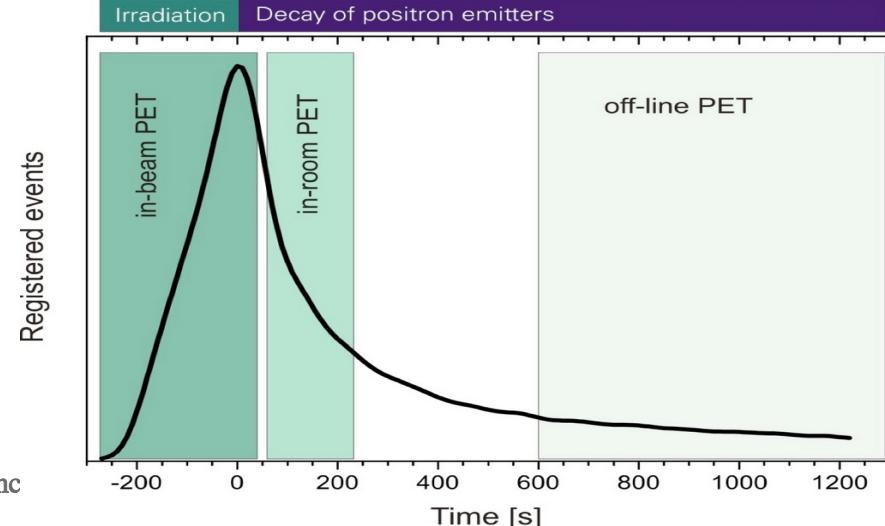
→ Higher influence of the metabolism, lower beta activity →



Measurement
during irradiation



Measurement shortly
after the irradiation



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.



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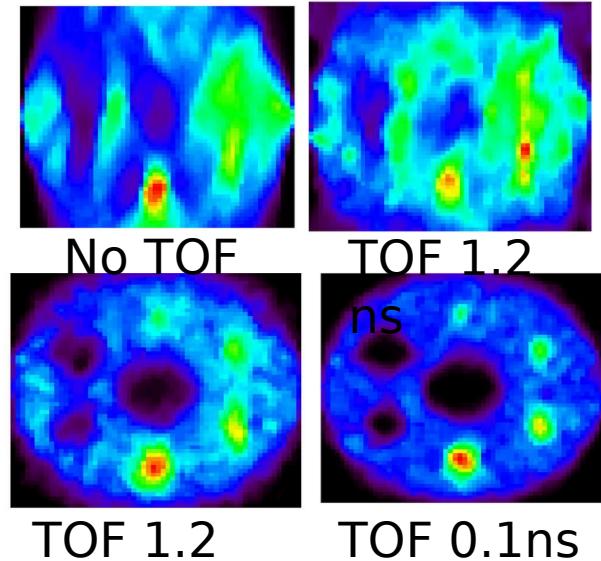
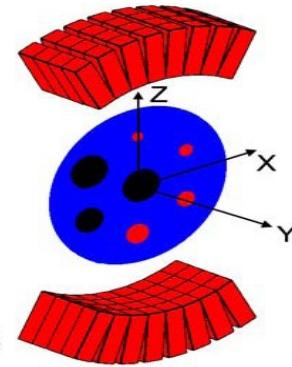
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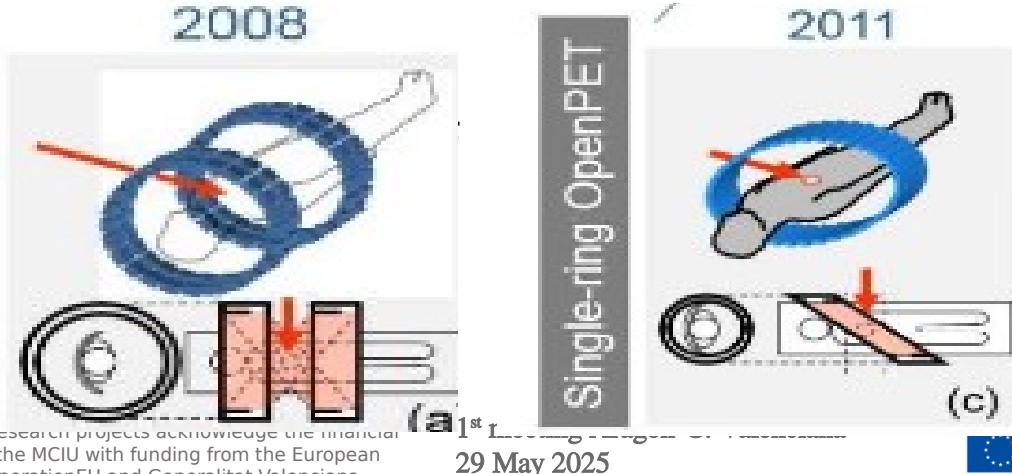
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- Models for washout.
- Use of short-lived isotopes.
- TOF PET to minimize gap effects.
- PET integration with the gantry.



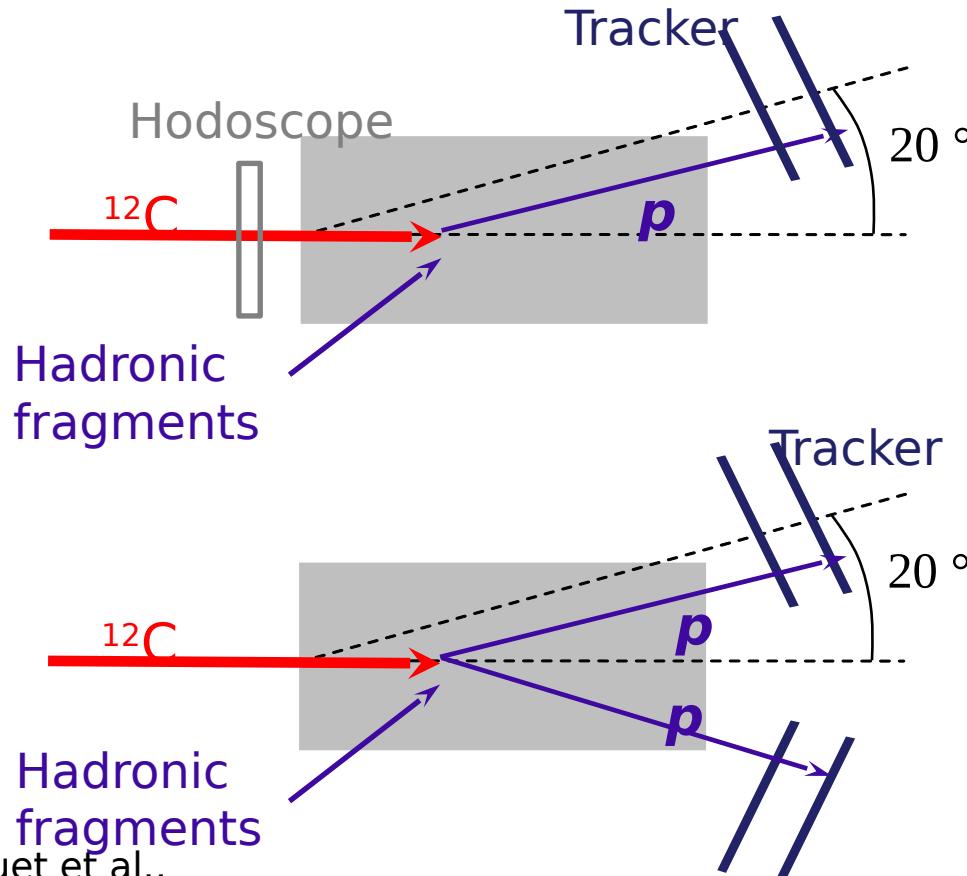
P. Crespo et al.,
Phys. Med. Biol. 51

Dual-ring OpenPET



Monitoring with secondary charged particles

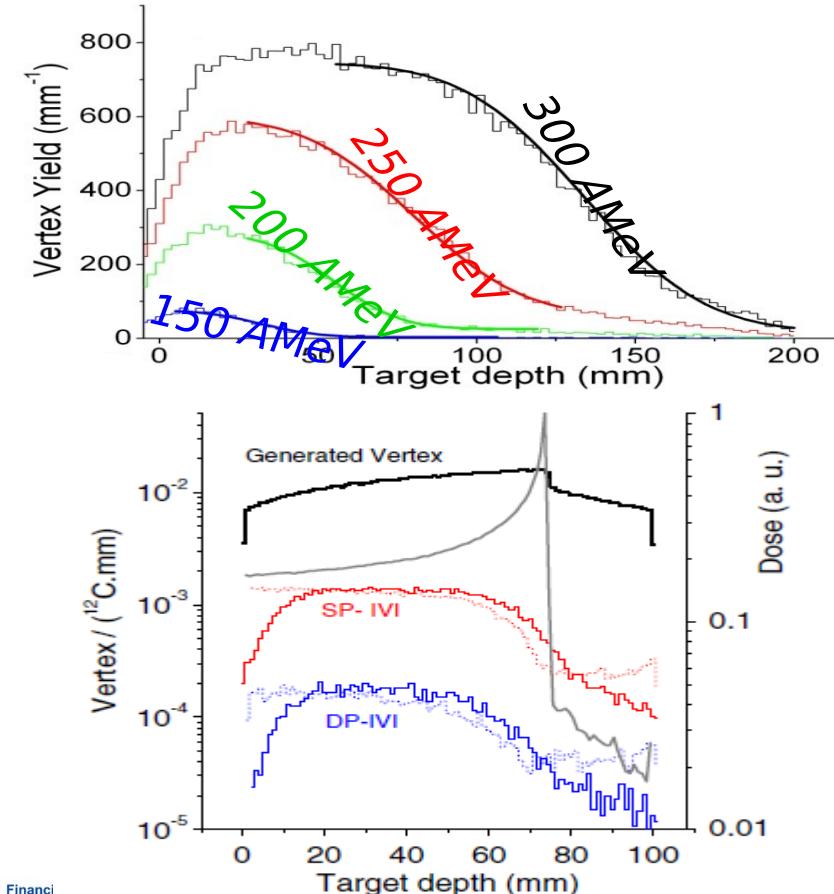
Interaction Vertex Imaging (mainly Carbon ions)



P. Henrique et al.,

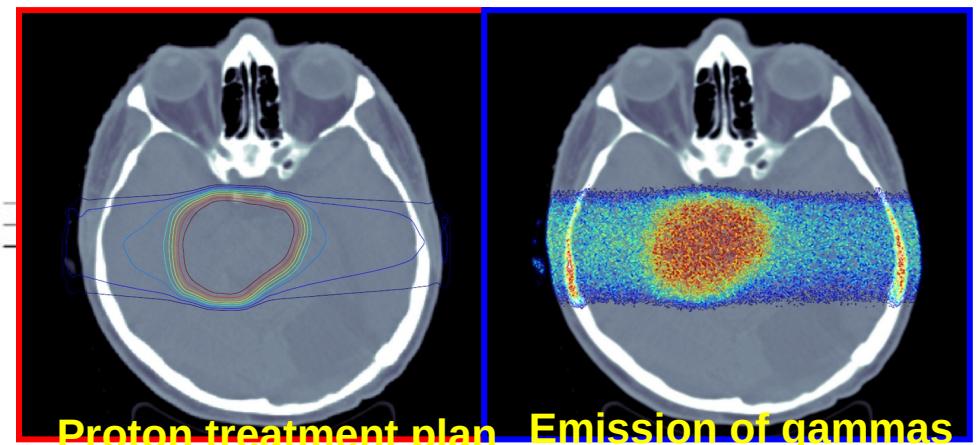
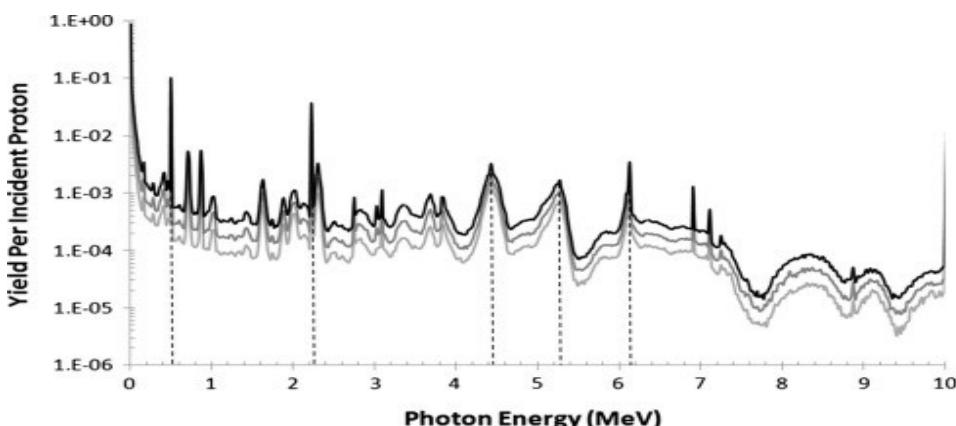
Phys. Med. Biol. 57
(2012) 4655
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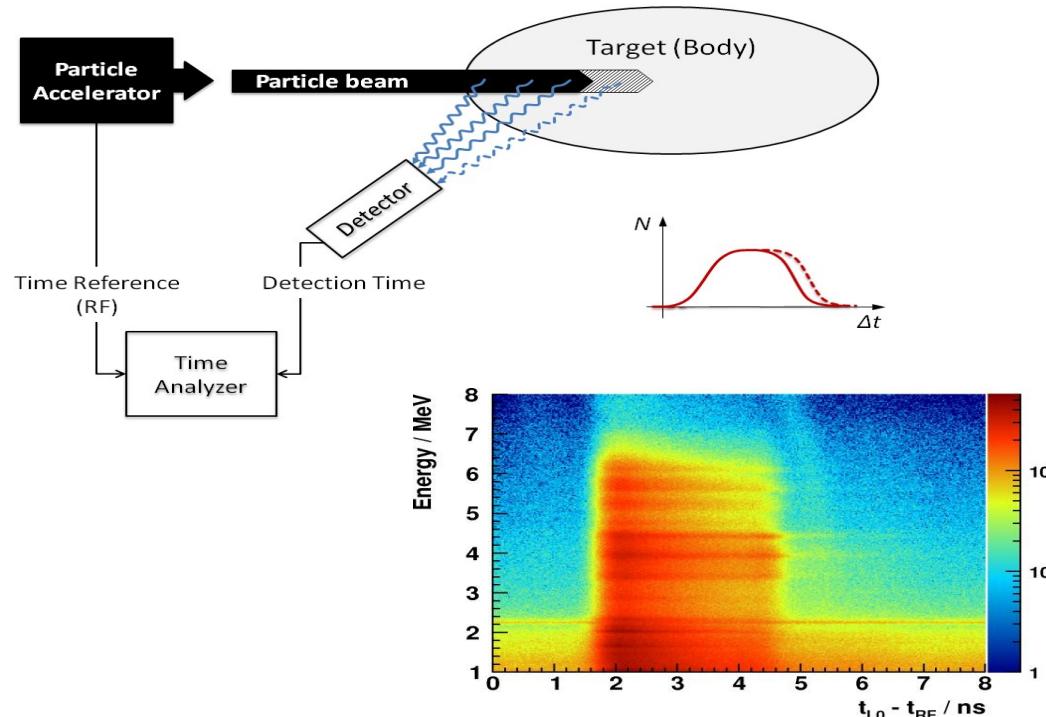
Monitoring with prompt gammas

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



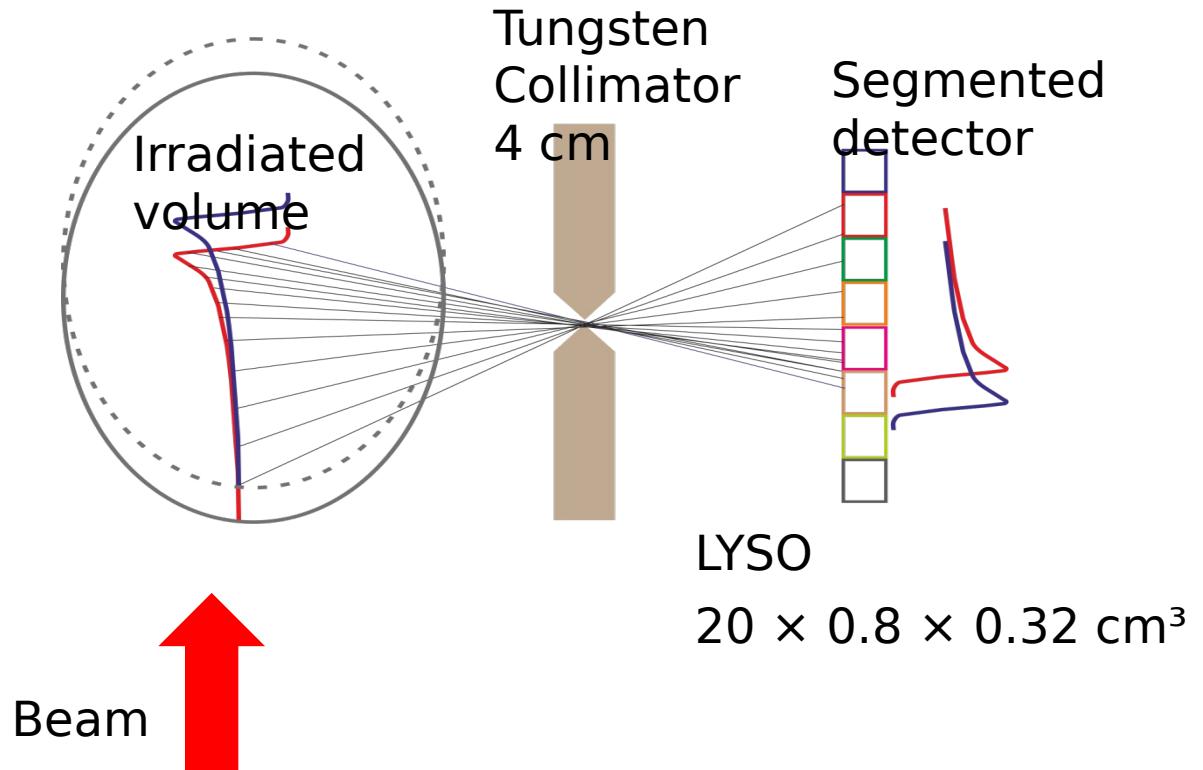
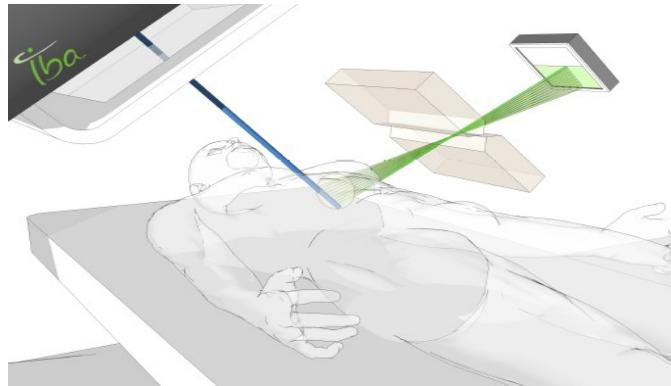
Prompt gamma timing

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



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

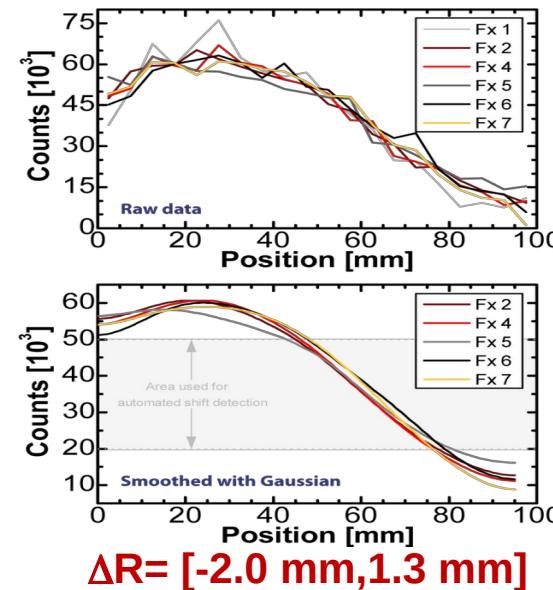
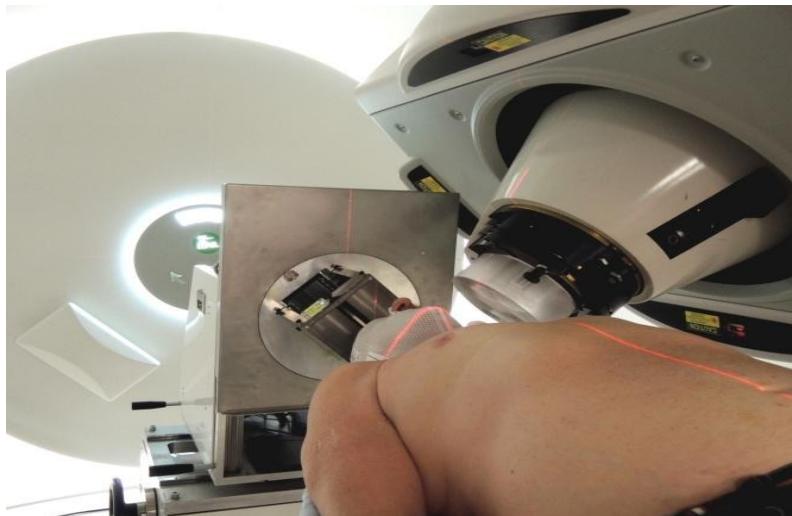
Prompt gamma imaging with collimated cameras



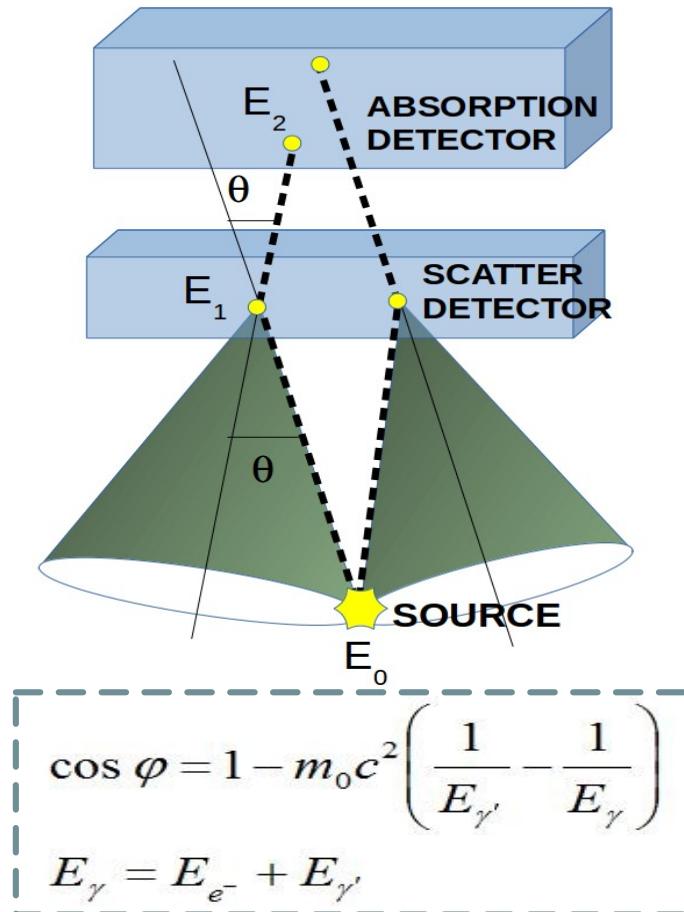
J. Smeets et al.: Phys. Med Biol. 57 (2012) 3371

Prompt gamma imaging with collimated cameras

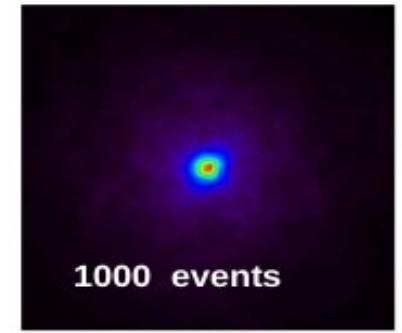
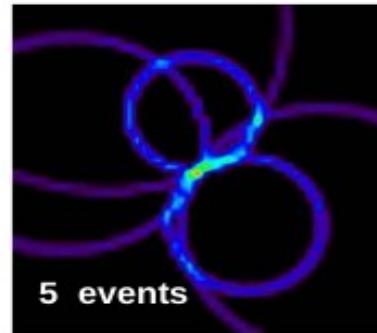
- Range variations in the ~mm range have been observed.
- Successful results at therapeutic doses.
- Large, heavy system.



Compton cameras



Backprojection



+ Image reconstruction

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



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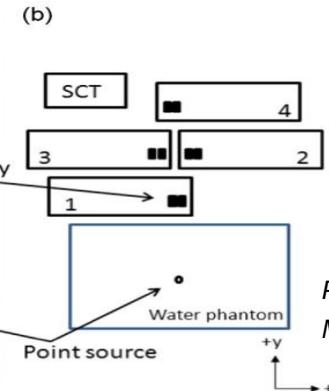
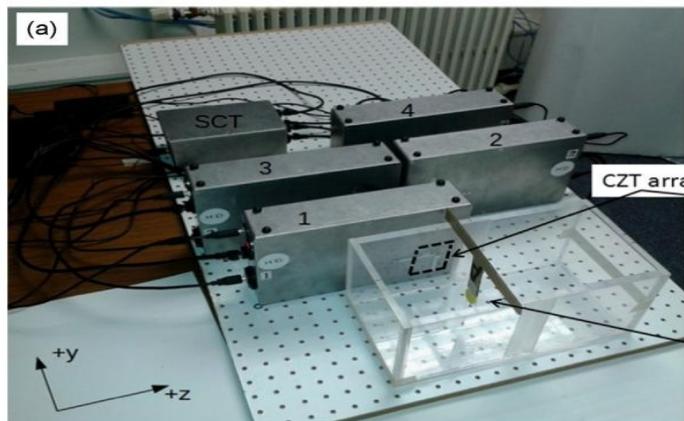
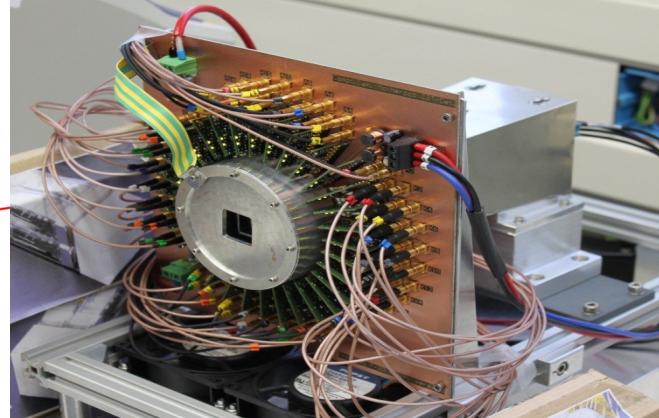
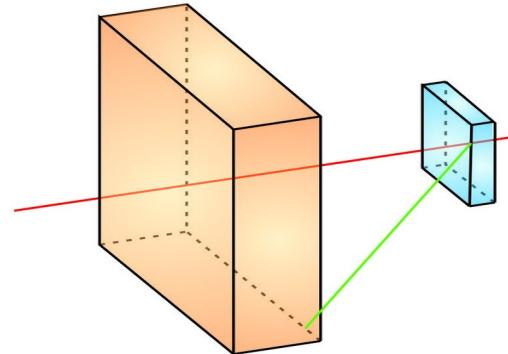


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Prompt gamma imaging with Compton cameras

CZT + BGO

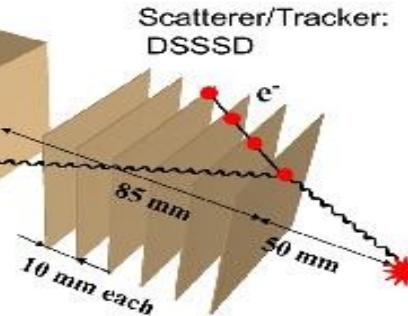
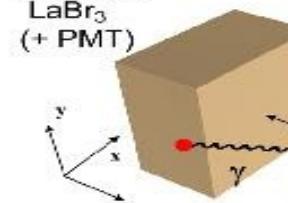


CZT

Polf et al., PMB 60 (2015) 7085
McCleskey et al., NIM A785 (2015) 163

Thirolf et al., NN 2015

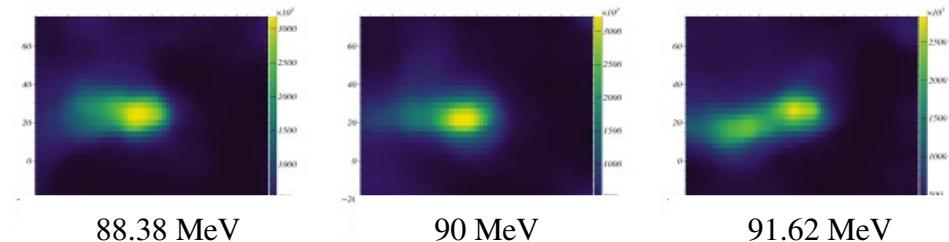
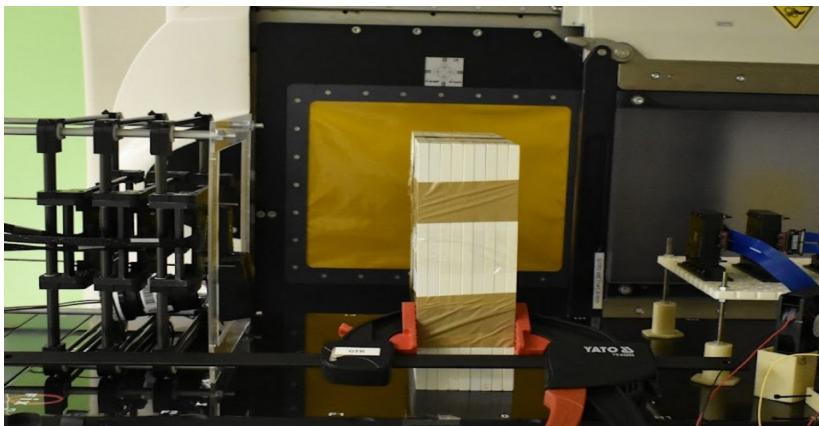
Absorber:
 LaBr_3
(+ PMT)



DSSD + LaBr_3

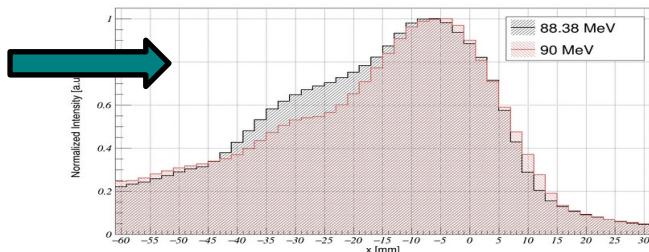
Scintillator CCs

MACACO with LaBr₃ detectors

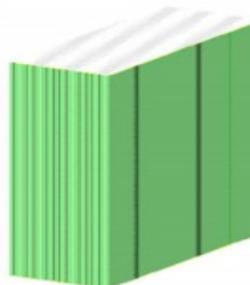


SiFi- CC: Compton camera with scintillating fibers under development

Proton beam at different energies



2 mm steps detected



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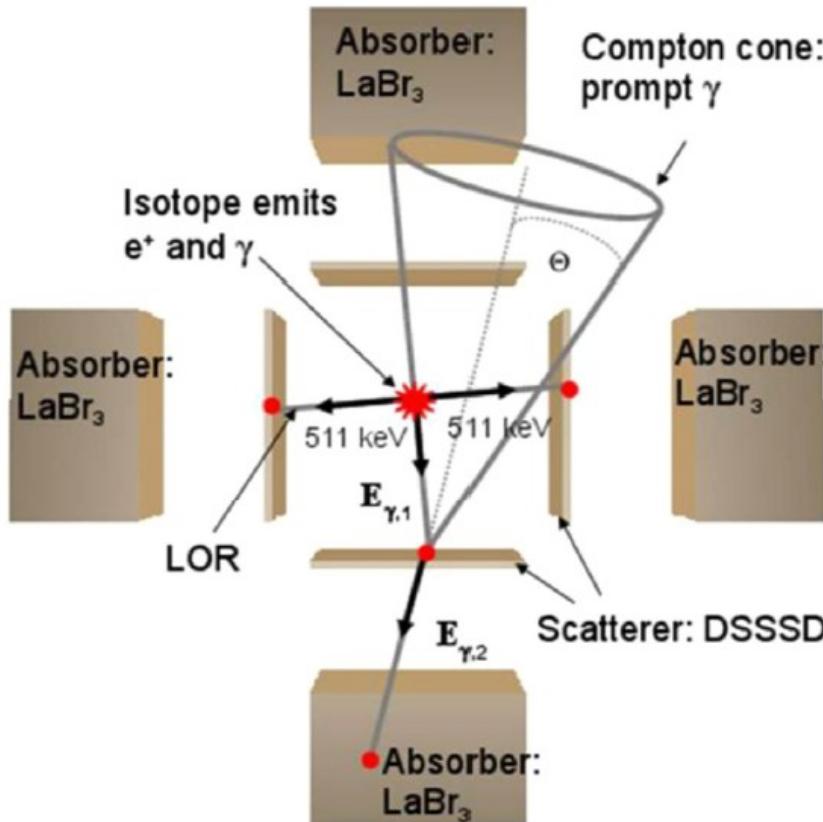
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Combination Compton-PET

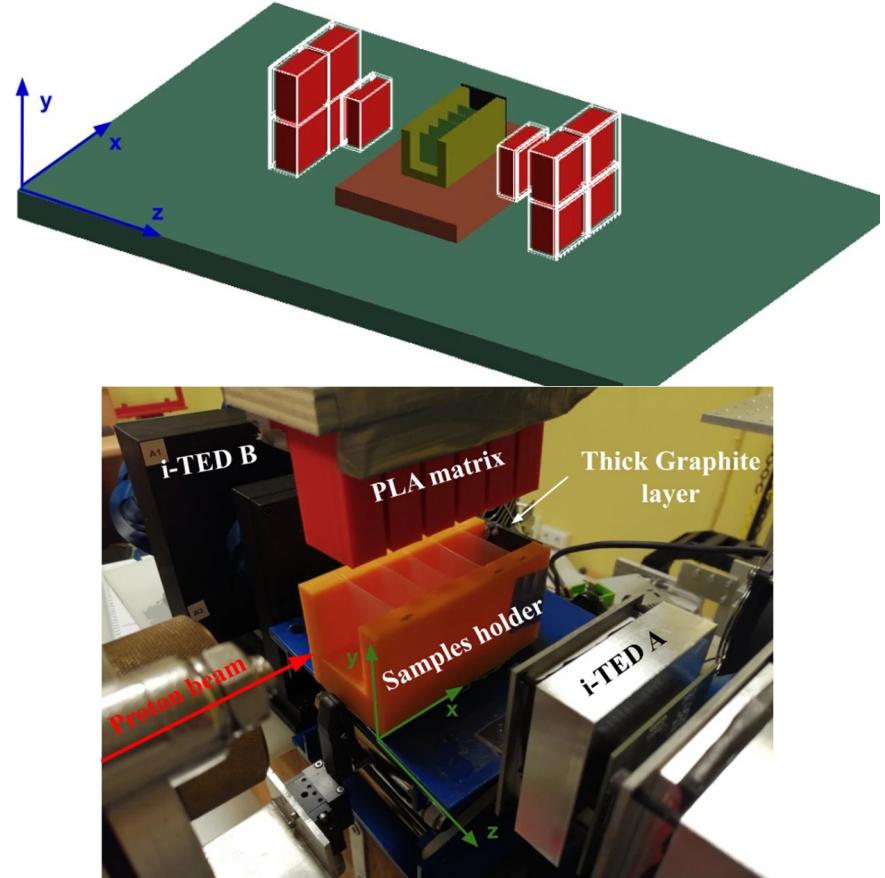


K. Parodi. NIM A 809 (2016) 113-119



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



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The *Inside* Project

DOSE PROFILER
Prompt secondary
particles imaging

BI-MODAL IMAGING SYSTEM
for particle range monitoring and verification



IN-BEAM PET
induced β^+ activity
imaging



Unsolved problem

Challenging application

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

Needs to be compatible with treatment



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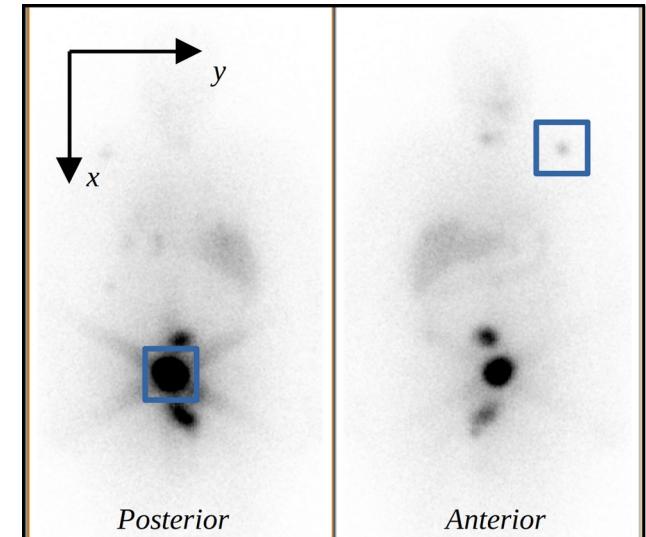
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ICOR: Compton cameras for radionuclide therapy assessment

- 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}I -NaI.

Compton cameras are a promising tool for theranostics

ASFAE/2022/019



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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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Acknowledgements

- MCIU with funding from the European Union NextGenerationEU (PRTR-C17.I1) and Generalitat Valenciana. Proj. ICOR, ref. ASFAE/2022/019
- MCIU /AEI (PID2022-143246OB-I00).



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Thank you

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



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