

$\mu \rightarrow e$ conversion in nuclei: Effective theory and new experimental signals

Evan Rule | CIPANP 2025 | June 11, 2025



Charged leptons: e, μ, τ

Standard model:

Muon decay: $\mu^- \rightarrow e^- + \bar{\nu}_e + \nu_\mu$

Beta decay: $n \rightarrow p + e^- + \bar{\nu}_e$

Pion decay: $\pi^+ \rightarrow \mu^+ + \nu_\mu$

Charged leptons: e, μ, τ

Standard model: Each flavor conserved

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$$\boxed{\mu^-} \rightarrow \boxed{e^-} + \boxed{\bar{\nu}_e} + \boxed{\nu_\mu}$$

$L_\mu = +1$ $L_e = +1$ $L_e = -1$ $L_\mu = +1$

Charged leptons: e, μ, τ

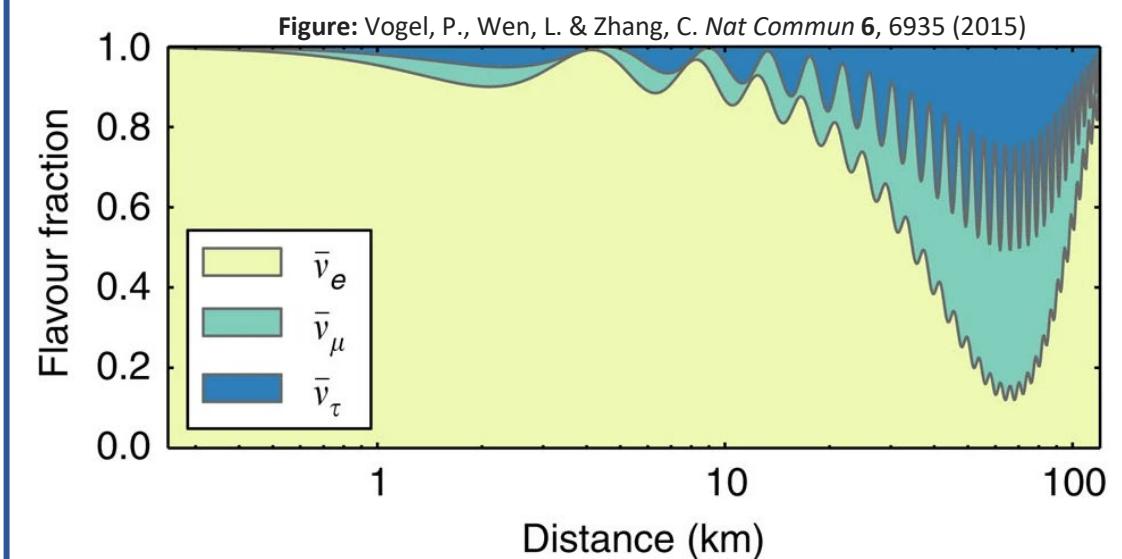
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Neutral leptons: ν_e, ν_μ, ν_τ



Neutrino oscillations: Flavor NOT conserved

Charged leptons: e, μ, τ

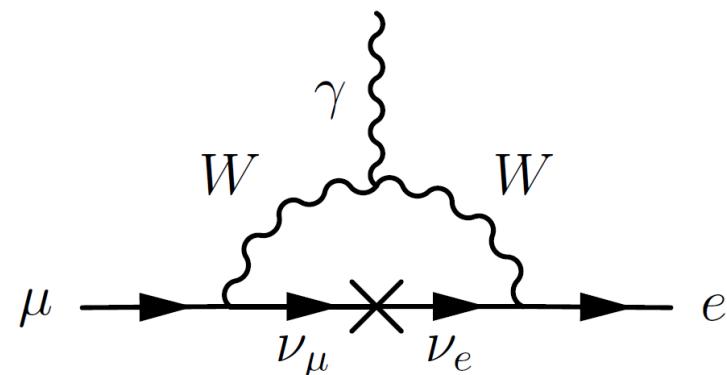
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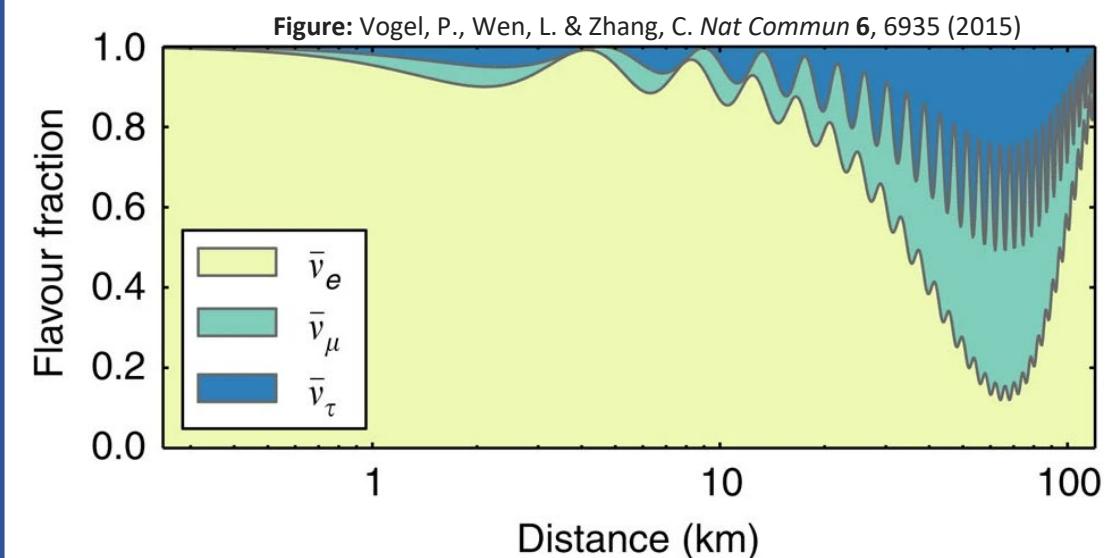
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Pion decay: $\pi^+ \rightarrow \mu^+ + \nu_\mu$

Standard model + neutrino oscillations



Neutral leptons: ν_e, ν_μ, ν_τ



Neutrino oscillations: Flavor NOT conserved

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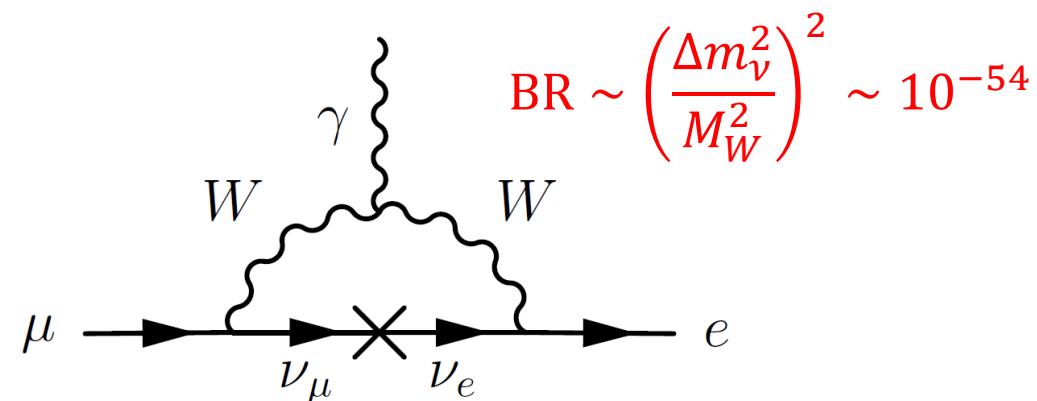
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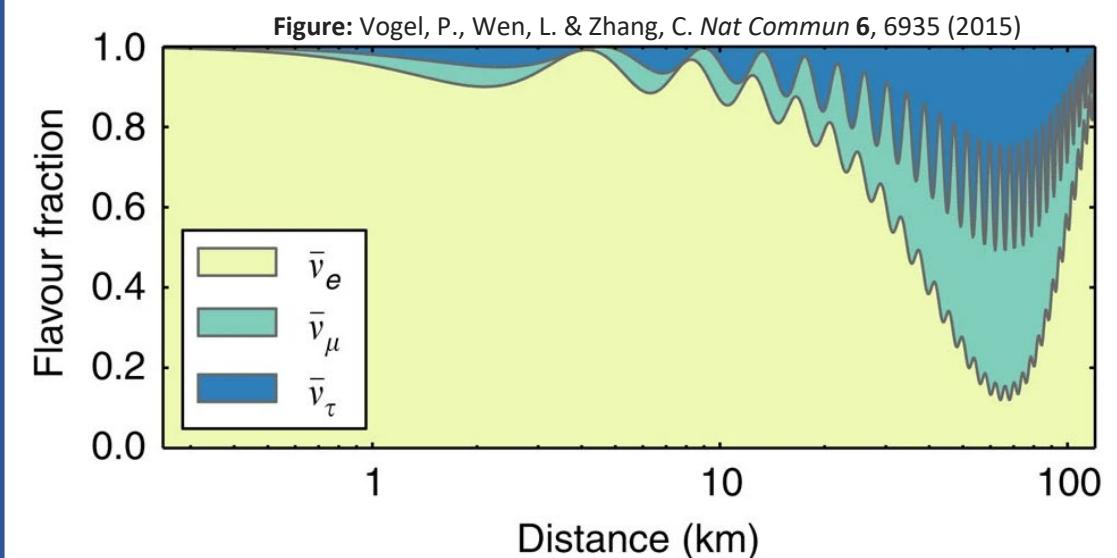
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Neutrino oscillations: Flavor NOT conserved

Charged lepton flavor violation (CLFV) \rightarrow BSM Physics

Charged leptons: e, μ, τ

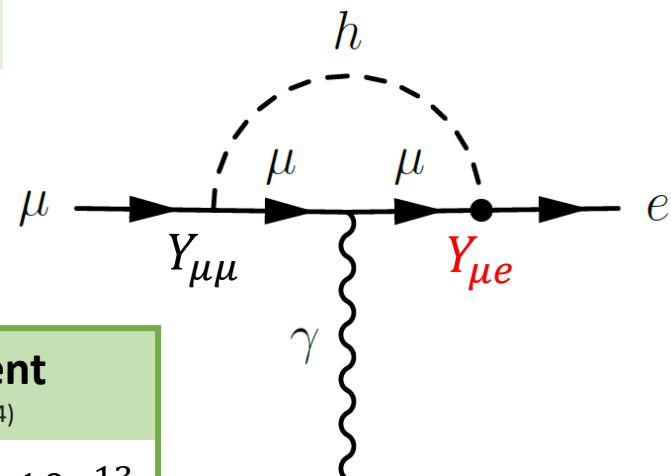
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BSM model



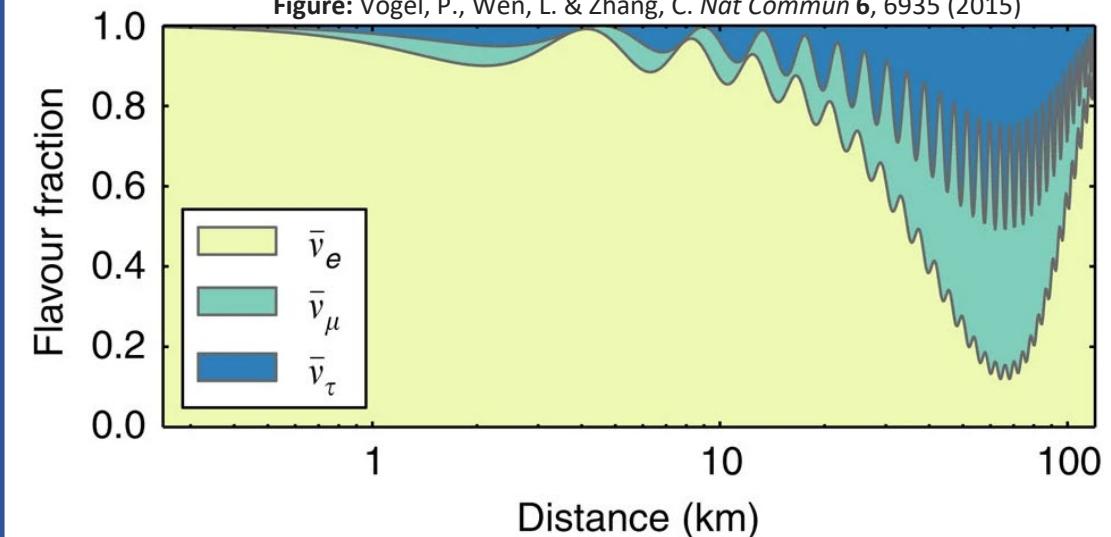
MEG II experiment

Eur. Phys. J. C 84, 216 (2024)

$\text{BR}(\mu \rightarrow e\gamma) < 3.1 \times 10^{-13}$

Neutral leptons: ν_e, ν_μ, ν_τ

Figure: Vogel, P., Wen, L. & Zhang, C. Nat Commun 6, 6935 (2015)



Neutrino oscillations: Flavor NOT conserved

Charged lepton flavor violation (CLFV) \rightarrow BSM Physics

- CLFV limits constrain BSM theories

Collider Constraints

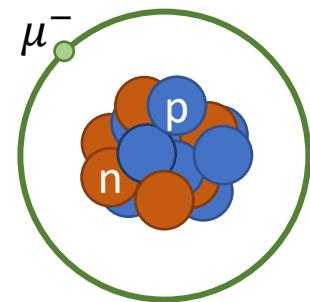
Process	BR Limit	CL	Experiment
$Z \rightarrow e\tau$	5.0×10^{-6}	95%	ATLAS
$Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$	6.5×10^{-6}	95%	ATLAS
$Z \rightarrow e\mu$	7.5×10^{-7}	95%	ATLAS
$h \rightarrow e\tau$	2.2×10^{-3}	95%	CMS
$h \rightarrow \mu\tau$	1.5×10^{-3}	95%	CMS
$h \rightarrow e\mu$	6.1×10^{-5}	95%	ATLAS
$B^+ \rightarrow K^+ \mu^- \tau^+$	2.8×10^{-5}	90%	BaBar
$B^+ \rightarrow K^+ e^- \mu^+$	6.4×10^{-9}	90%	LHCb
$D^+ \rightarrow K^+ e^+ \mu^-$	7.5×10^{-8}	90%	LHCb
$\tau^- \rightarrow e^- \gamma$	3.3×10^{-8}	90%	BaBar
$\tau^- \rightarrow \mu^- \gamma$	4.2×10^{-8}	90%	Belle
$\tau^- \rightarrow e^- e^+ e^-$	2.7×10^{-8}	90%	Belle

Stopped Muon Constraints

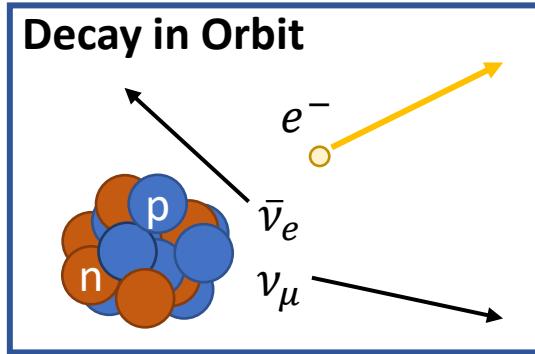
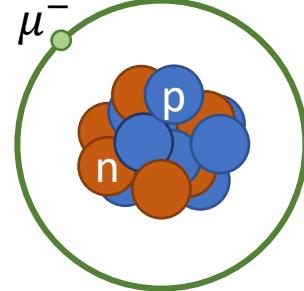
Process	BR Limit	CL	Experiment
$\mu^+ \rightarrow e^+ \gamma$	3.1×10^{-13}	90%	MEG + MEG II
$\mu^+ \rightarrow e^+ e^- e^+$	1.0×10^{-12}	90%	SINDRUM
$\mu^- + \text{Cu} \rightarrow e^- + \text{Cu}$	1.6×10^{-8}	90%	SINDRUM II
$\mu^- + {}^{32}\text{S} \rightarrow e^- + {}^{32}\text{S}$	7×10^{-11}	90%	SIN
$\mu^- + \text{Pb} \rightarrow e^- + \text{Pb}$	4.6×10^{-11}	90%	SINDRUM II
$\mu^- + \text{Ti} \rightarrow e^- + \text{Ti}$	6.1×10^{-13}	90%	SINDRUM II
$\mu^- + \text{Au} \rightarrow e^- + \text{Au}$	7.0×10^{-13}	90%	SINDRUM II
$\mu^+ \rightarrow e^+ \gamma$	6×10^{-14}	90%	MEG II
$\mu^+ \rightarrow e^+ e^- e^+$	4×10^{-16}	90%	Mu3e
$\mu^- + \text{Al} \rightarrow e^- + \text{Al}$	8×10^{-17}	90%	Mu2e
$\mu^- + \text{Al} \rightarrow e^- + \text{Al}$	7×10^{-17}	90%	COMET

Next-Generation Experiments

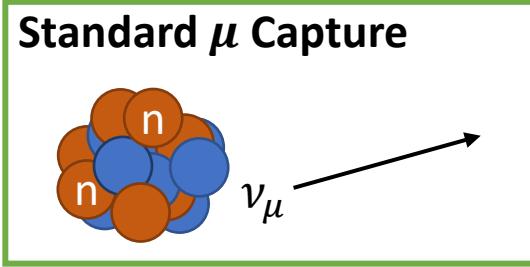
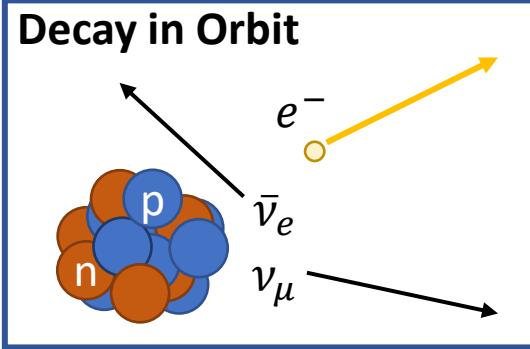
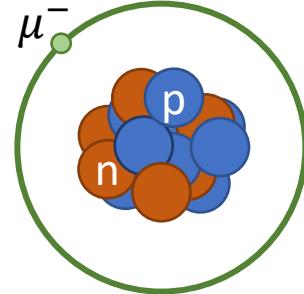
Muon captured
in 1s orbital



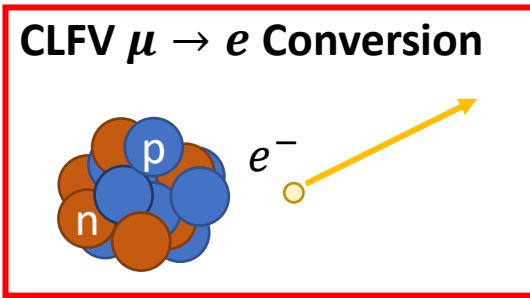
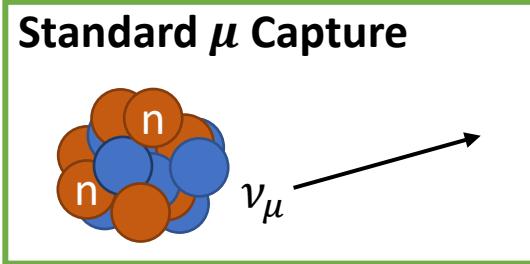
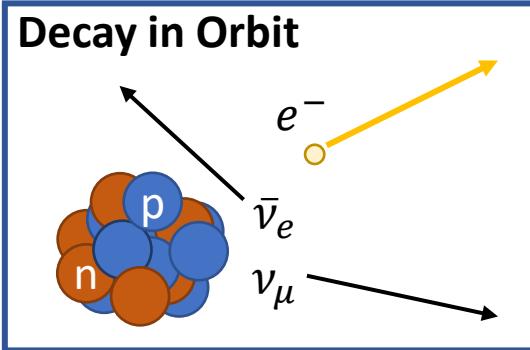
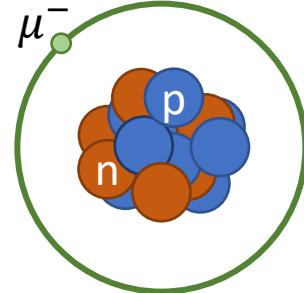
Muon captured
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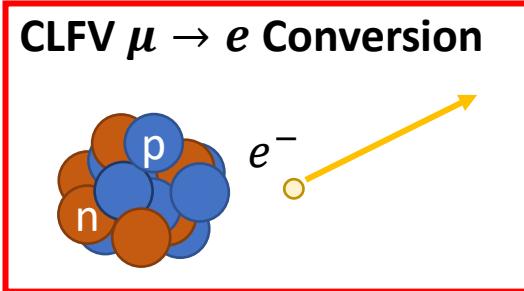
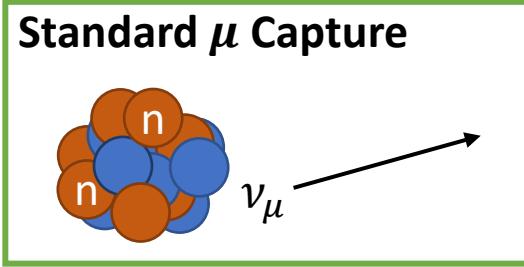
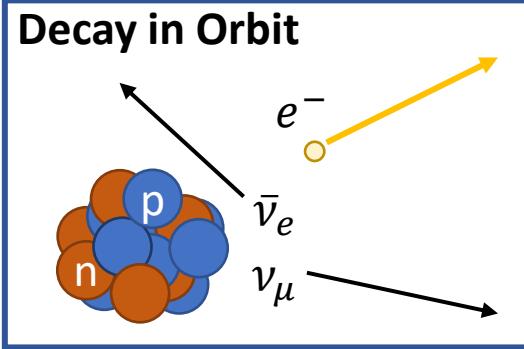
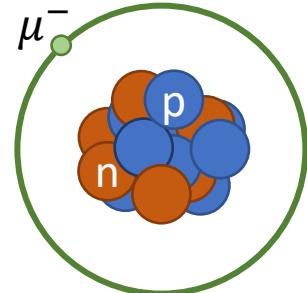
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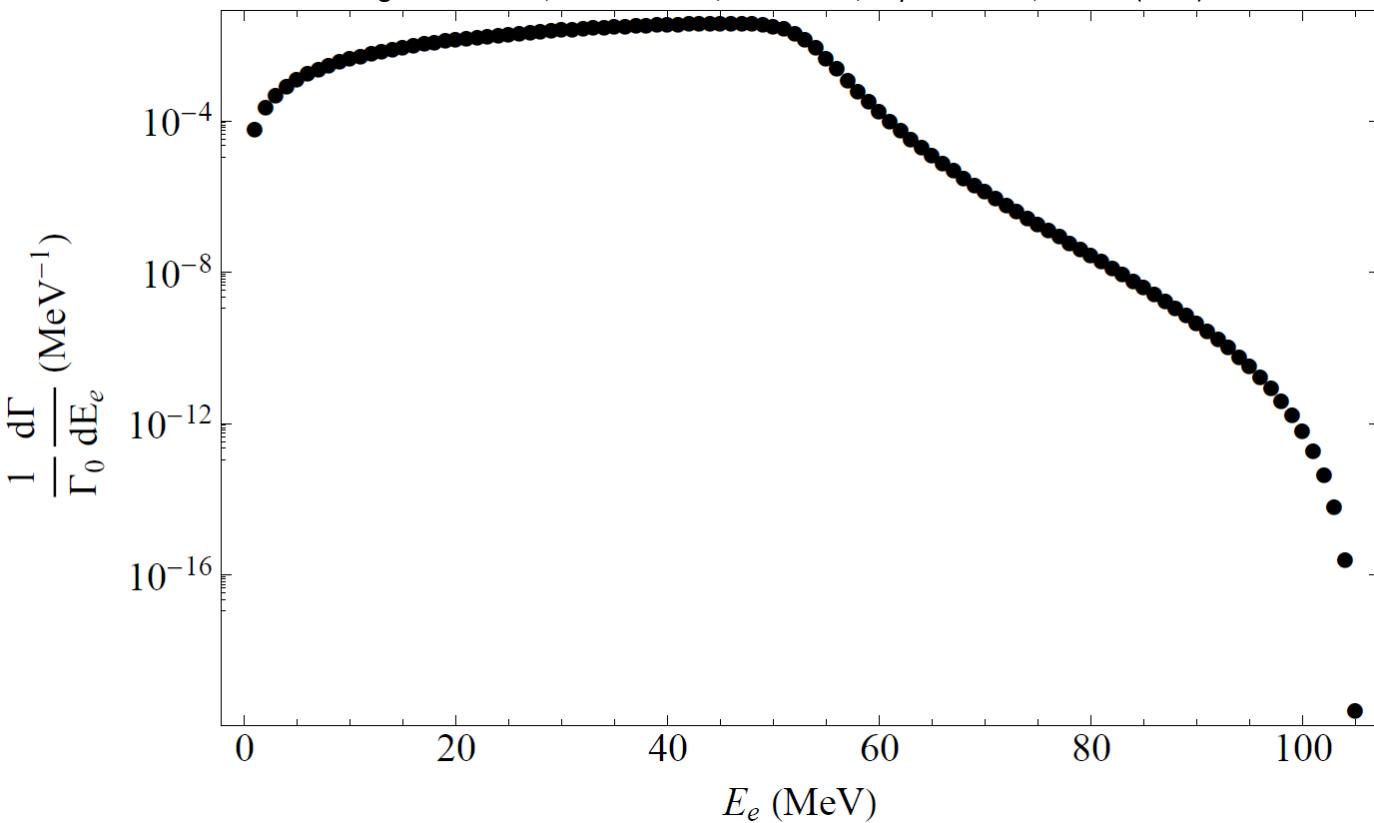


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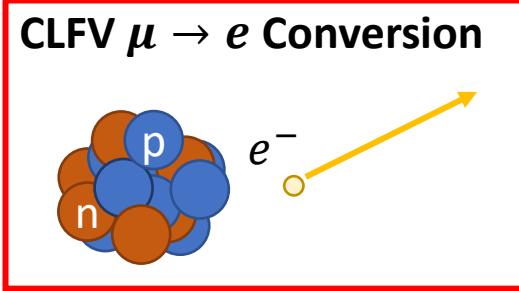
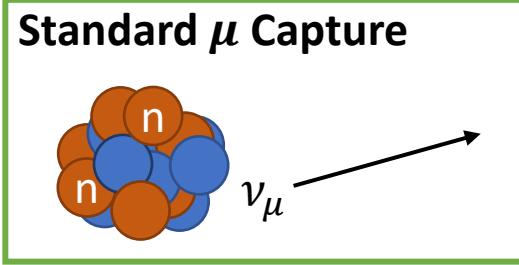
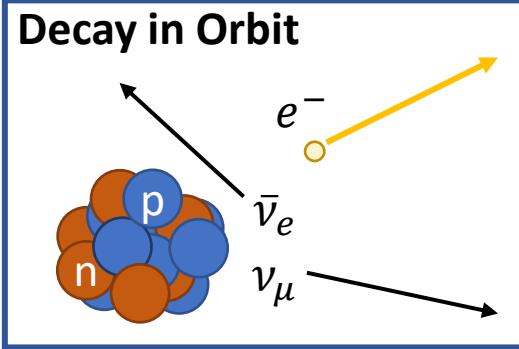
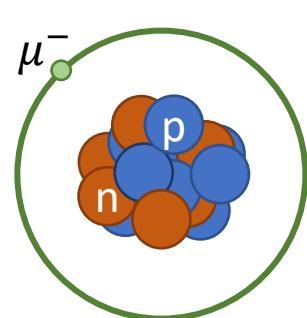


Decay-in-Orbit Spectrum

Figure: Czarnecki, Garcia i Tormo, & Marciano, Phys. Rev. D 84, 013006 (2011)

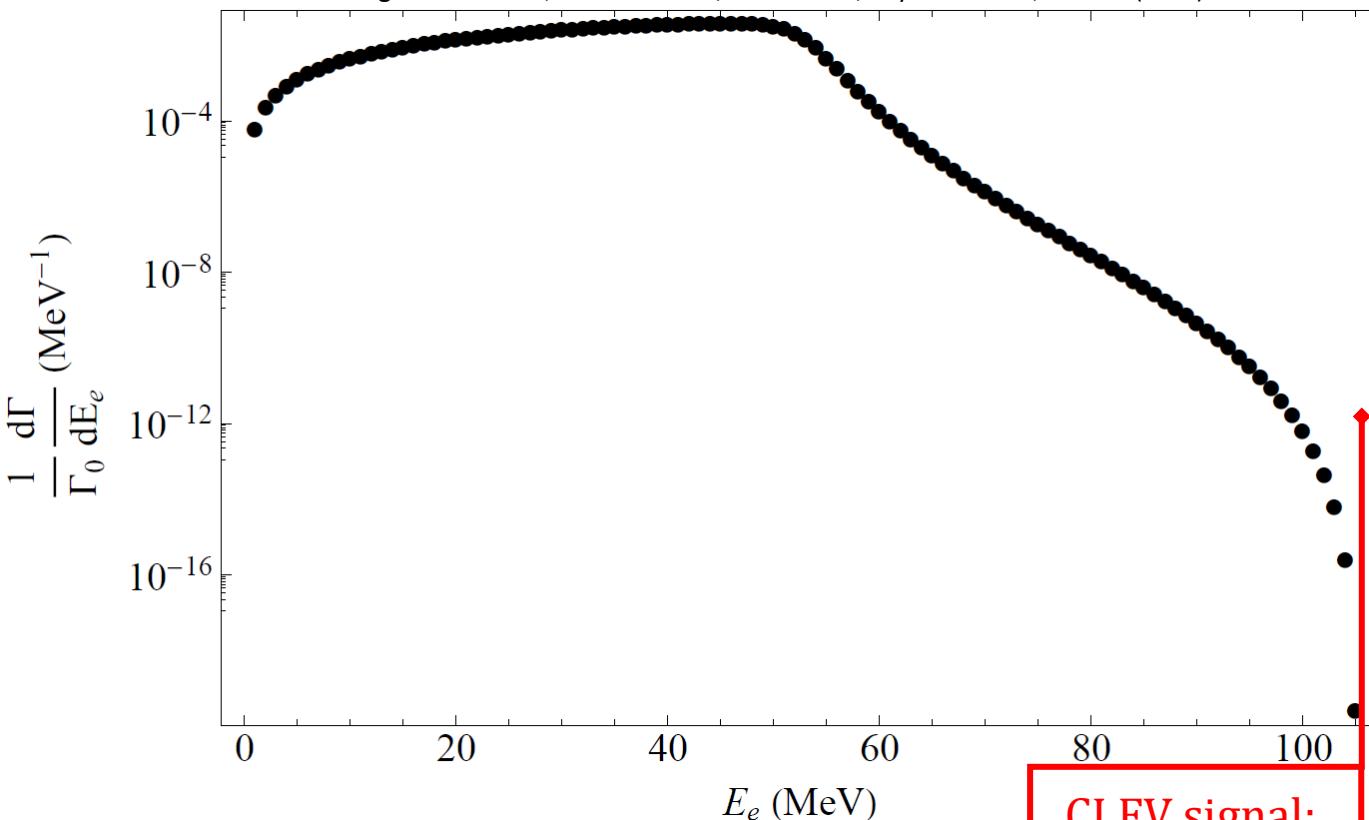


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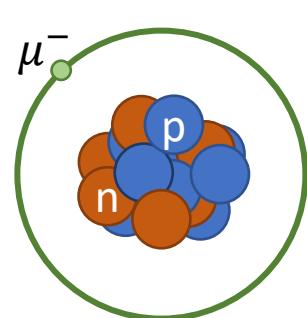
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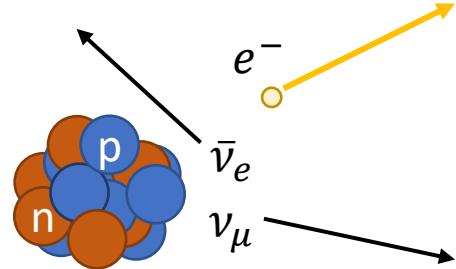


CLFV signal:
 $E_e \approx m_\mu - B_\mu$

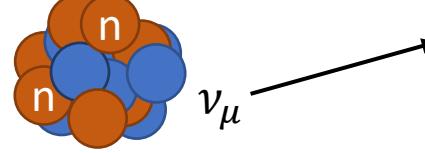
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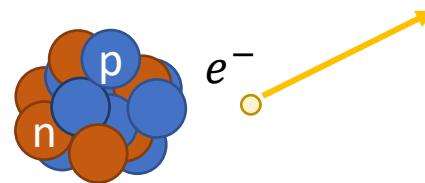
Decay in Orbit



Standard μ Capture

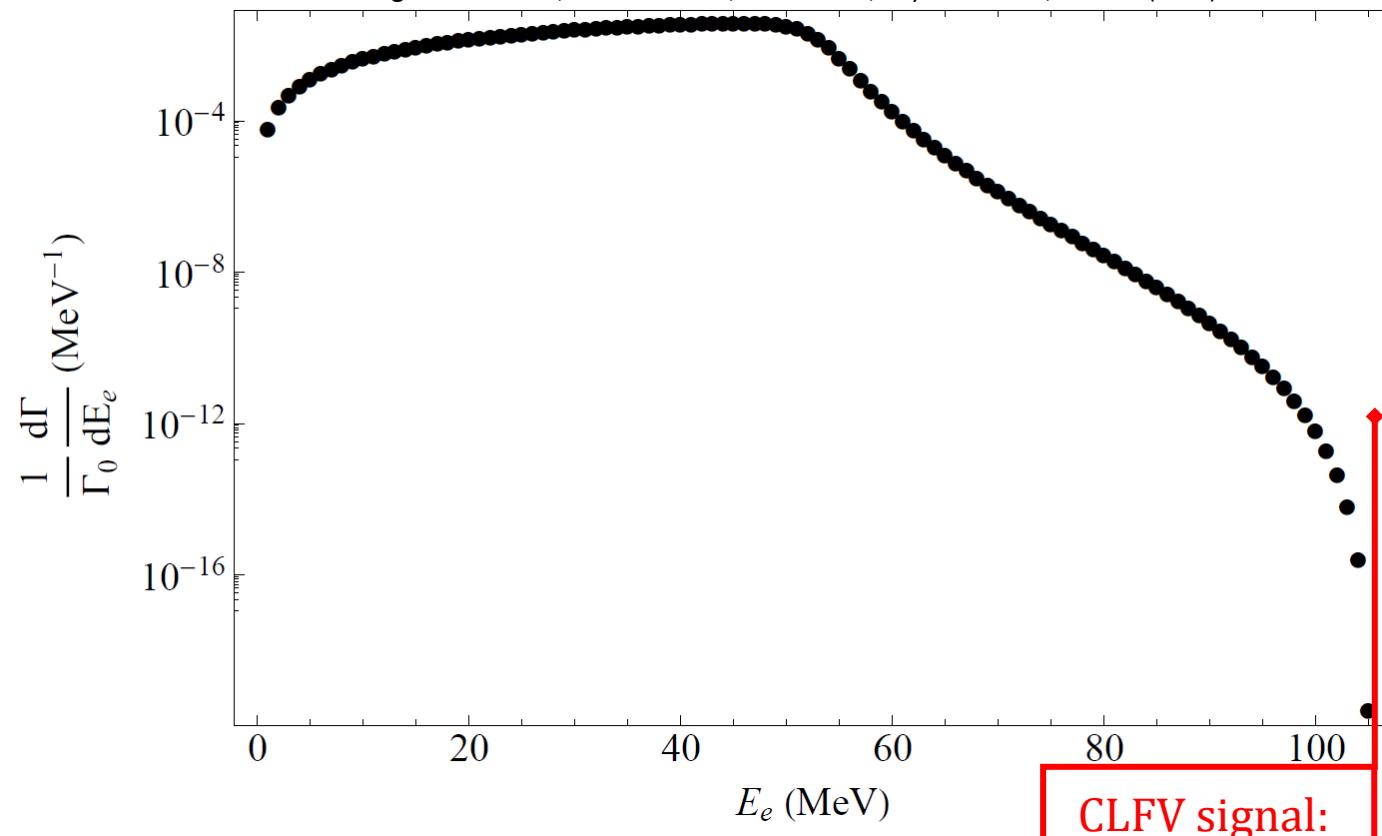


CLFV $\mu \rightarrow e$ Conversion



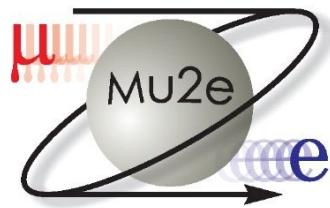
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**** Assuming nucleus remains in ground state ****
“Elastic conversion”

Mu2e Experiment



 Fermilab

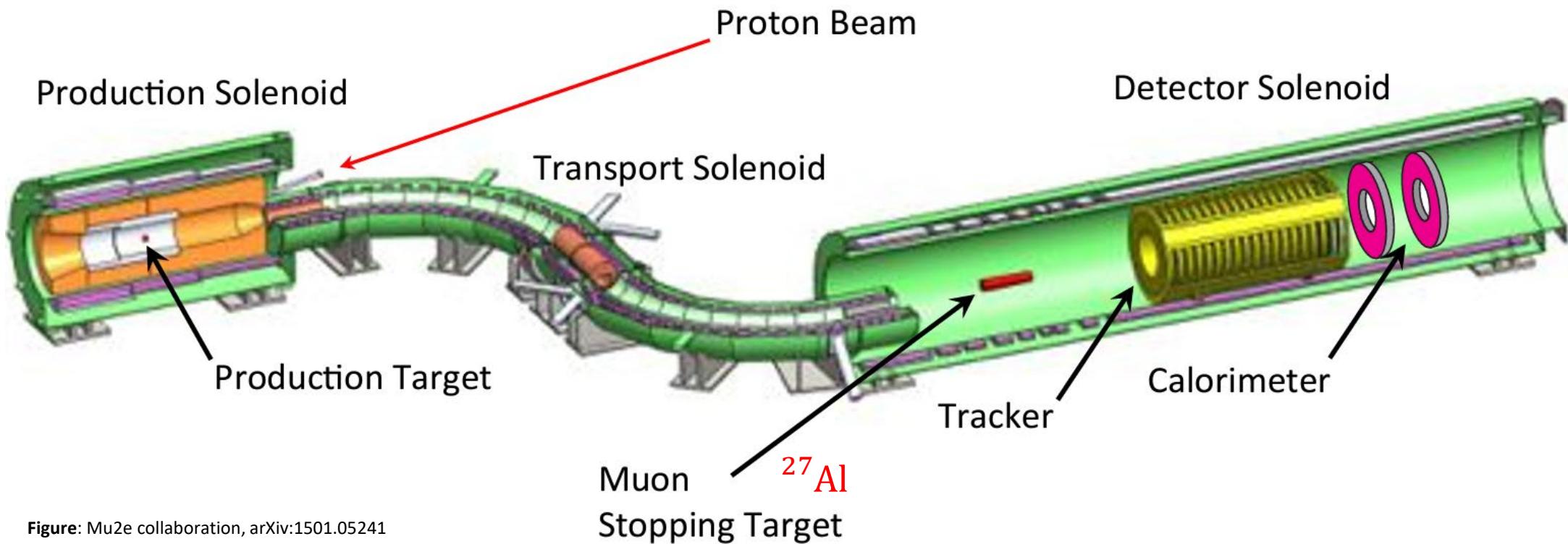
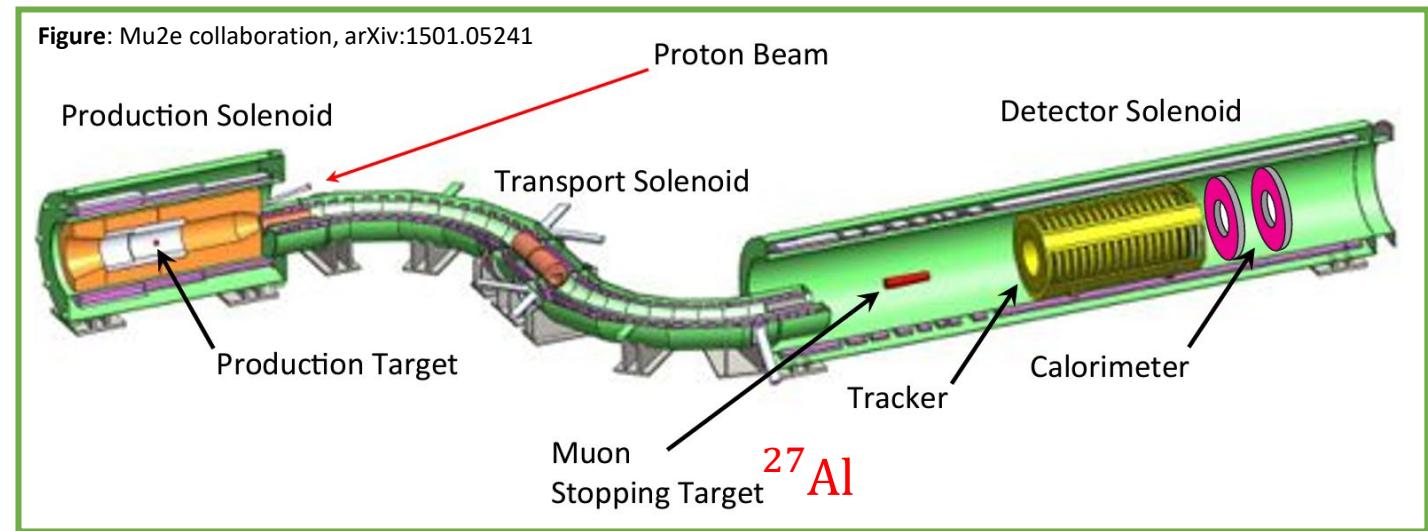


Figure: Mu2e collaboration, arXiv:1501.05241

Mu2e Experiment



 Fermilab



Advantages

Huge Intensity: 10^{18} muons captured

Single-event sensitivity: $\text{BR}(\mu \rightarrow e) < 3 \times 10^{-17}$
(1 in 30 quadrillion)

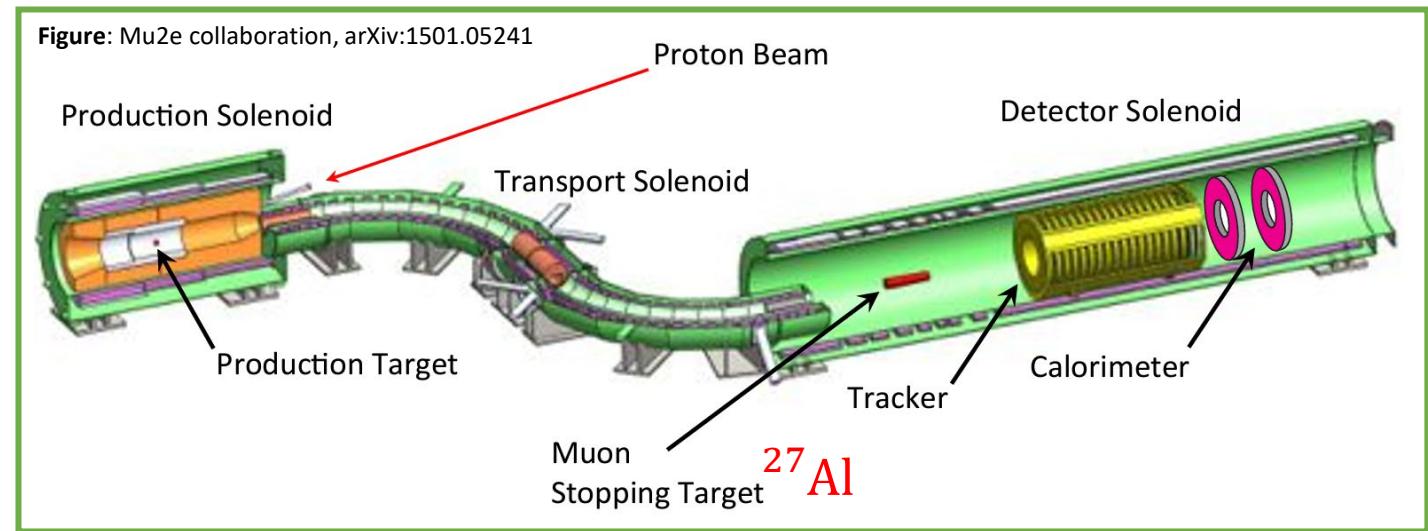
Definitive signal of new physics

Varying nuclear target probes **different CLFV physics**

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 Fermilab



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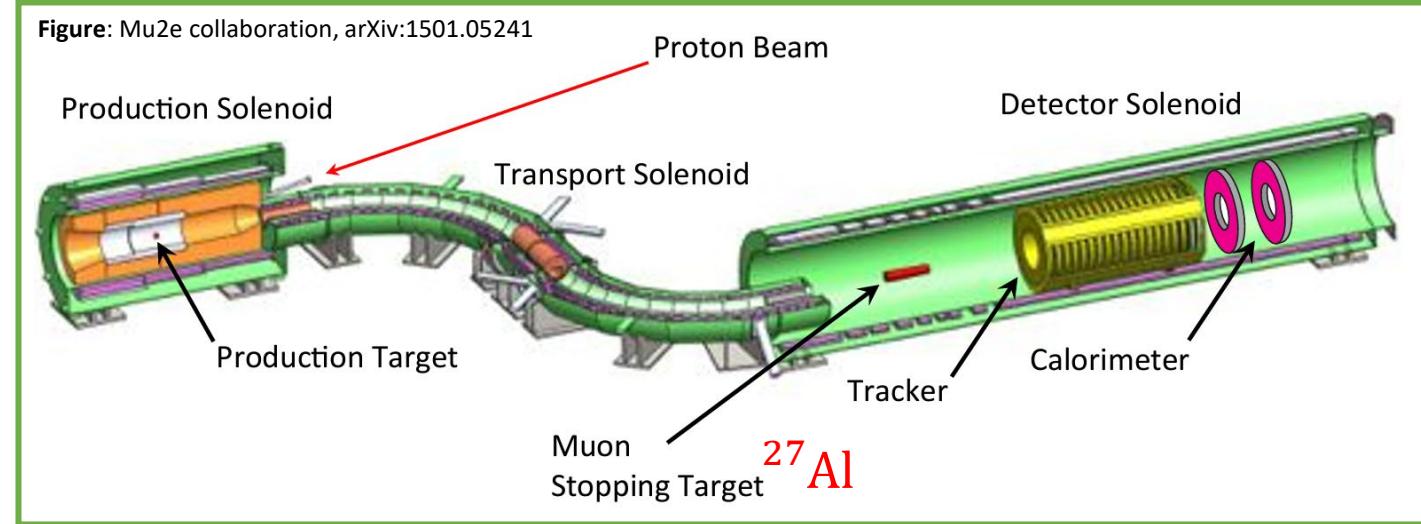
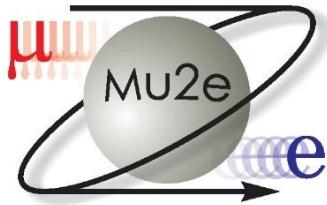
Varying nuclear target probes **different CLFV physics**

Challenges

CLFV physics filtered by nuclear physics

Large scale separation between experiments
and **UV theories**

Mu2e Experiment



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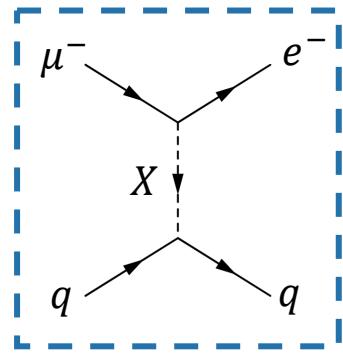
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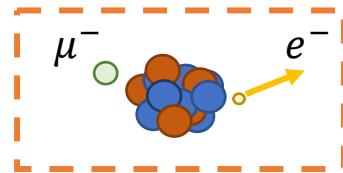
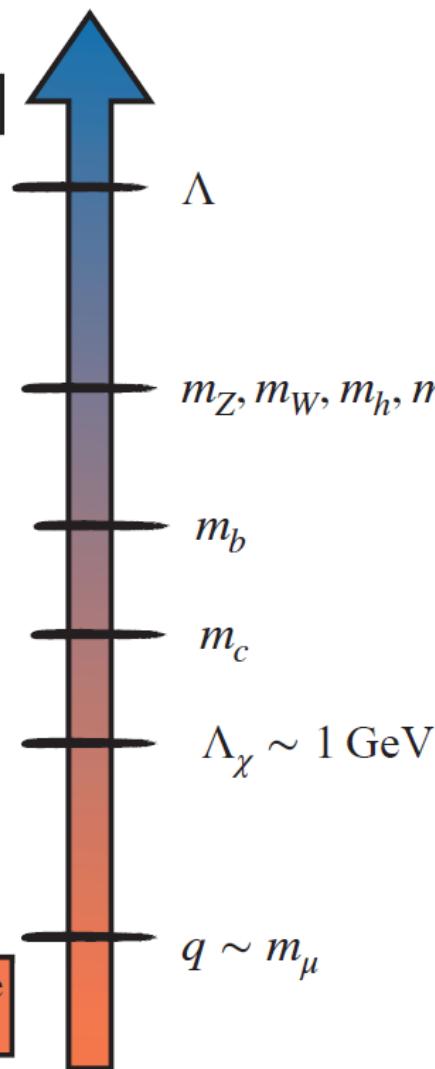
Large scale separation between **experiments** and **UV theories**

Goal: Extract maximum information from experiment

A Tower of Effective Theories

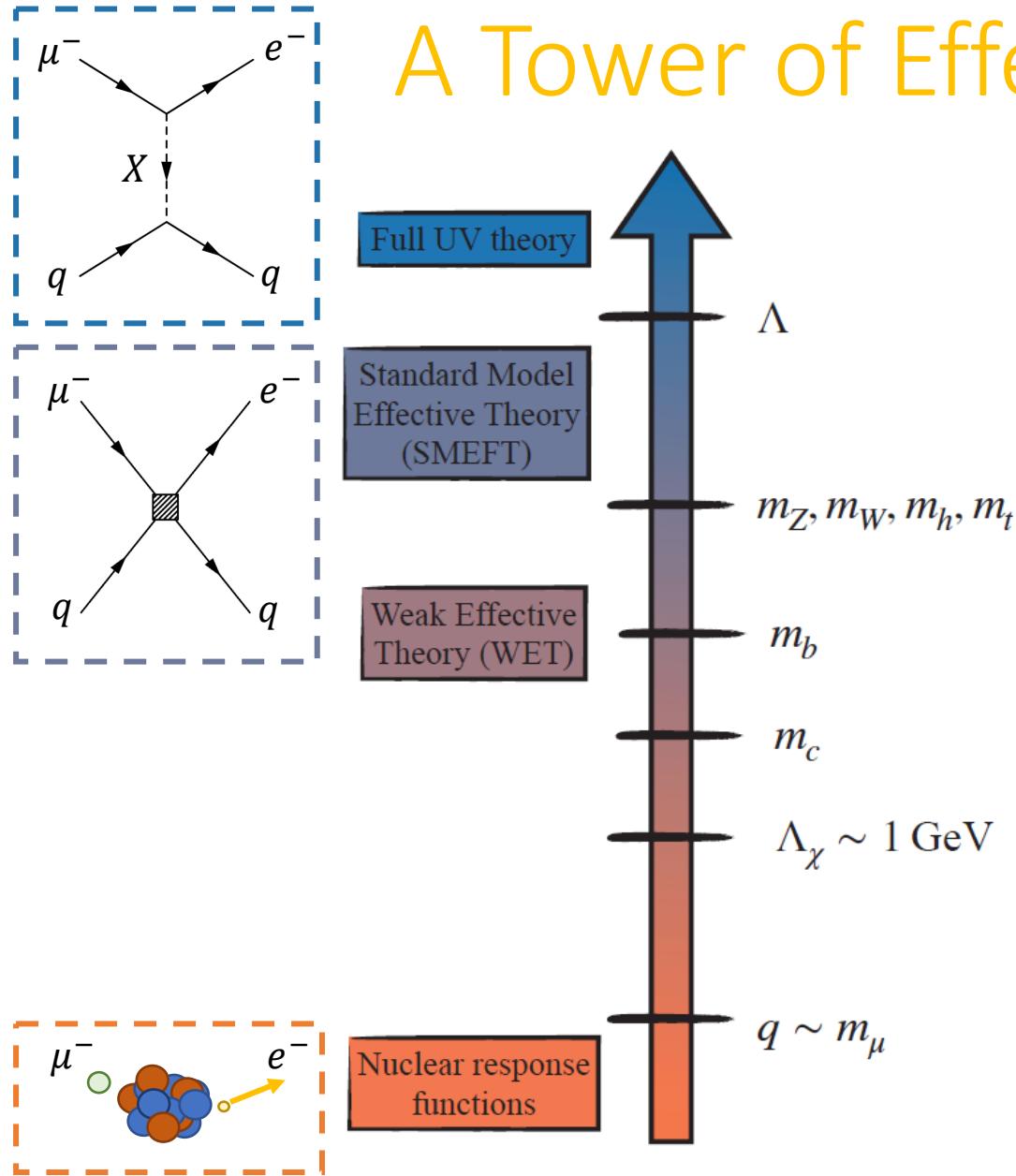


Full UV theory

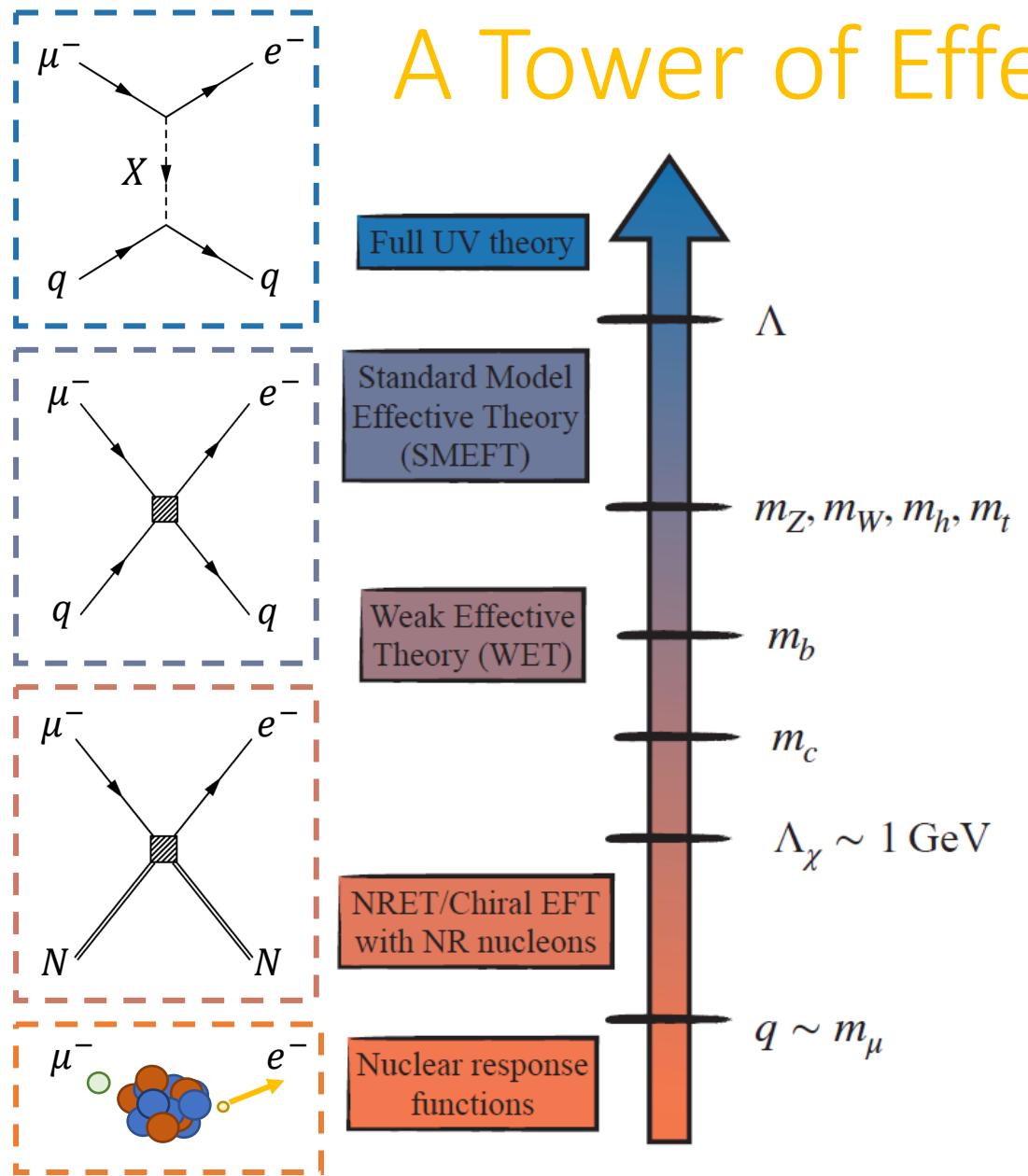


Nuclear response
functions

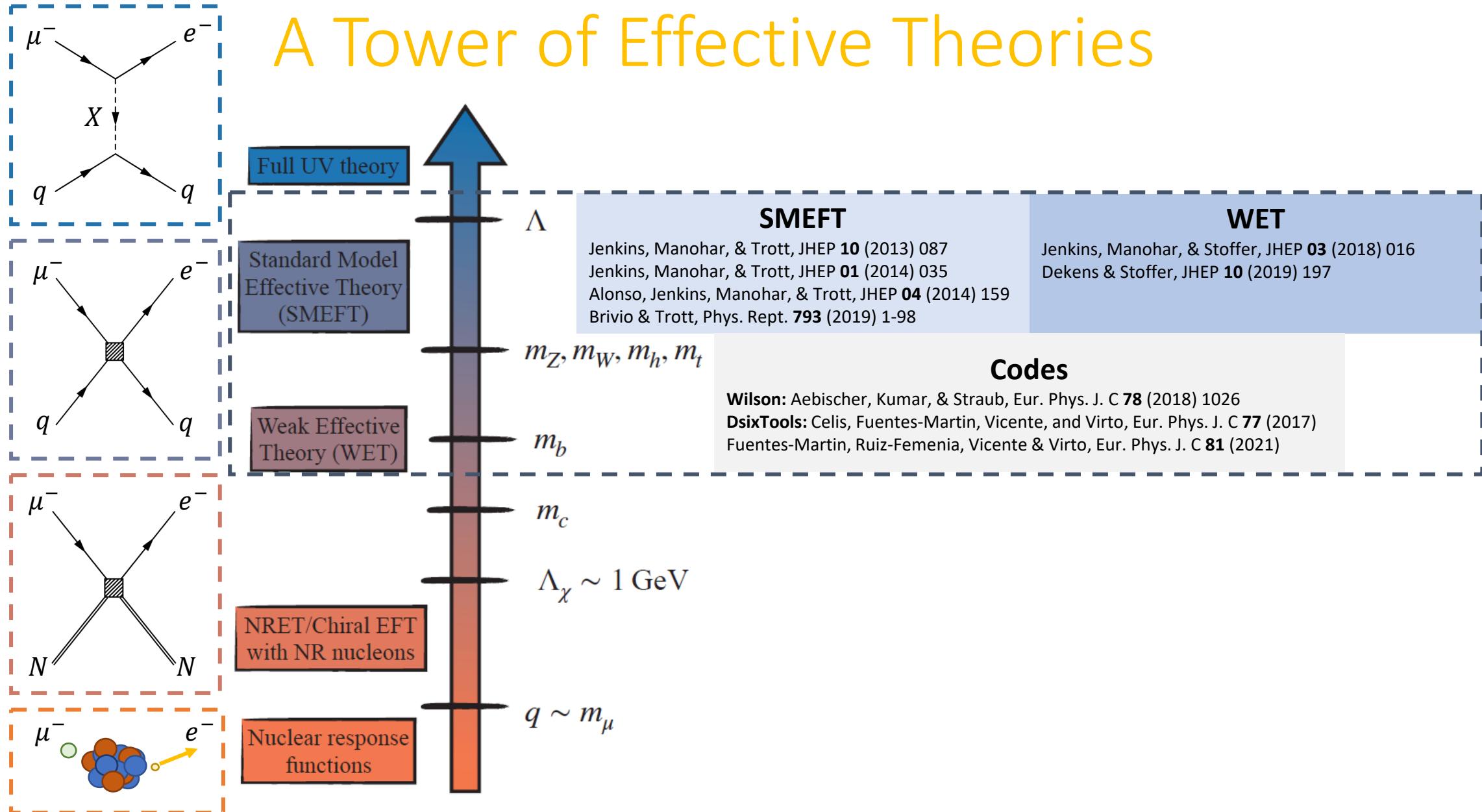
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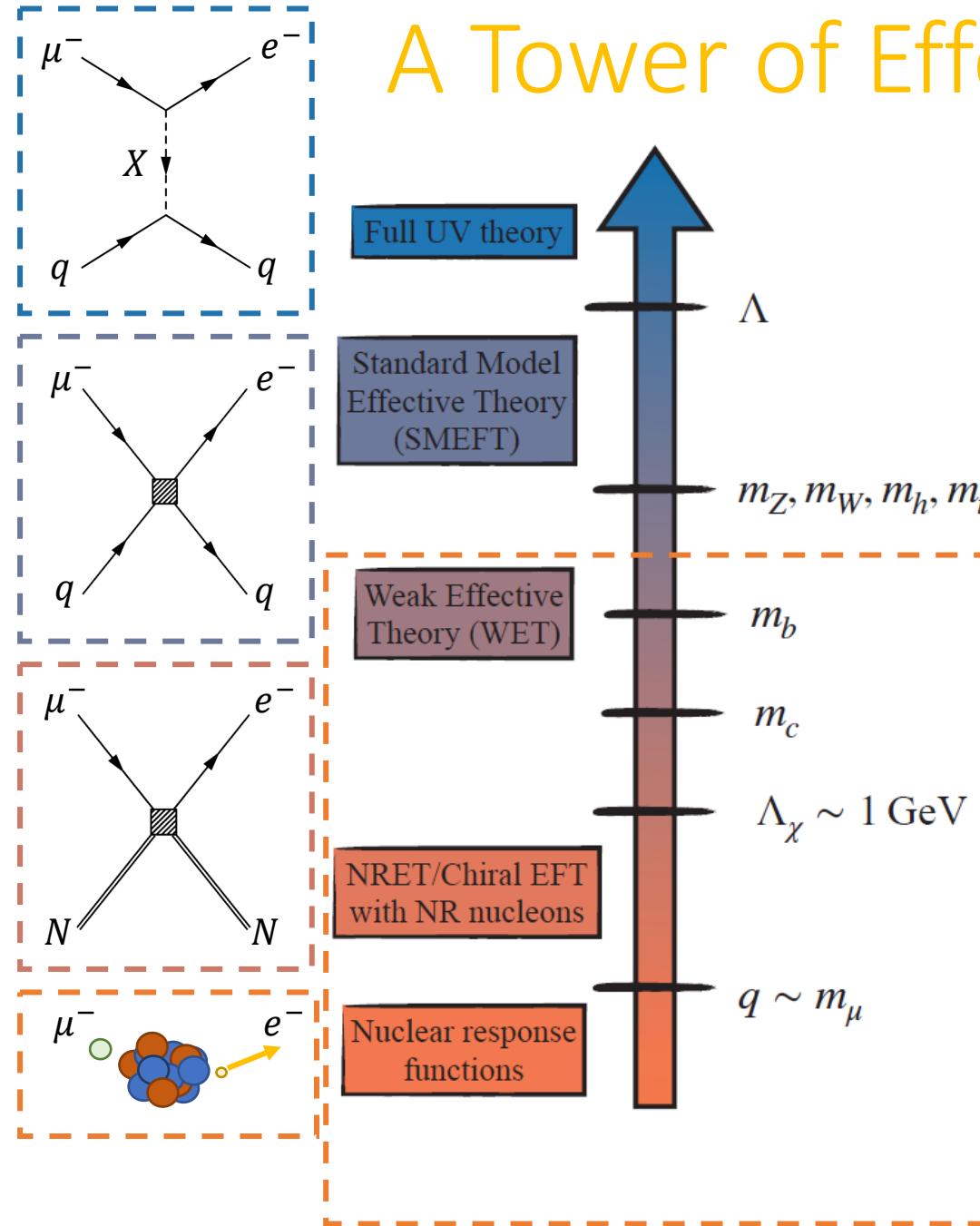
A Tower of Effective Theories



A Tower of Effective Theories



A Tower of Effective Theories



$\boxed{\text{ER, Haxton, & McElvain, PRL } \mathbf{130}, 131901 \text{ (2023)}}$
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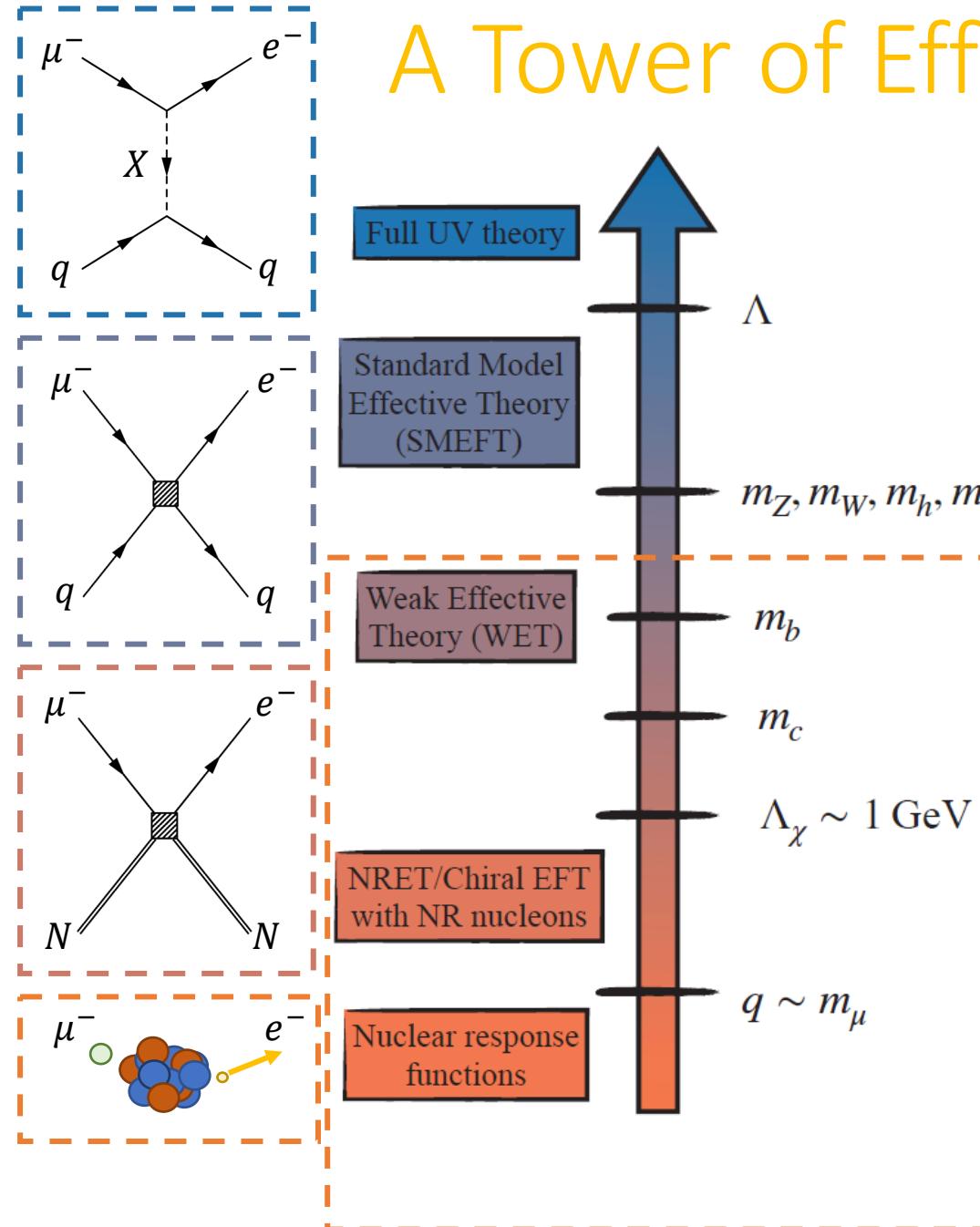
Our Focus

Quarks \rightarrow Nucleons \rightarrow Nuclei

Nuclear effective theory

- Interfaces directly with experiment
- Determines how much CLFV information is available

A Tower of Effective Theories



- ER, Haxton, & McElvain, *PRL* **130**, 131901 (2023)
- Haxton, ER, McElvain, & Ramsey-Musolf, *PRC* **107**, 035504 (2023)
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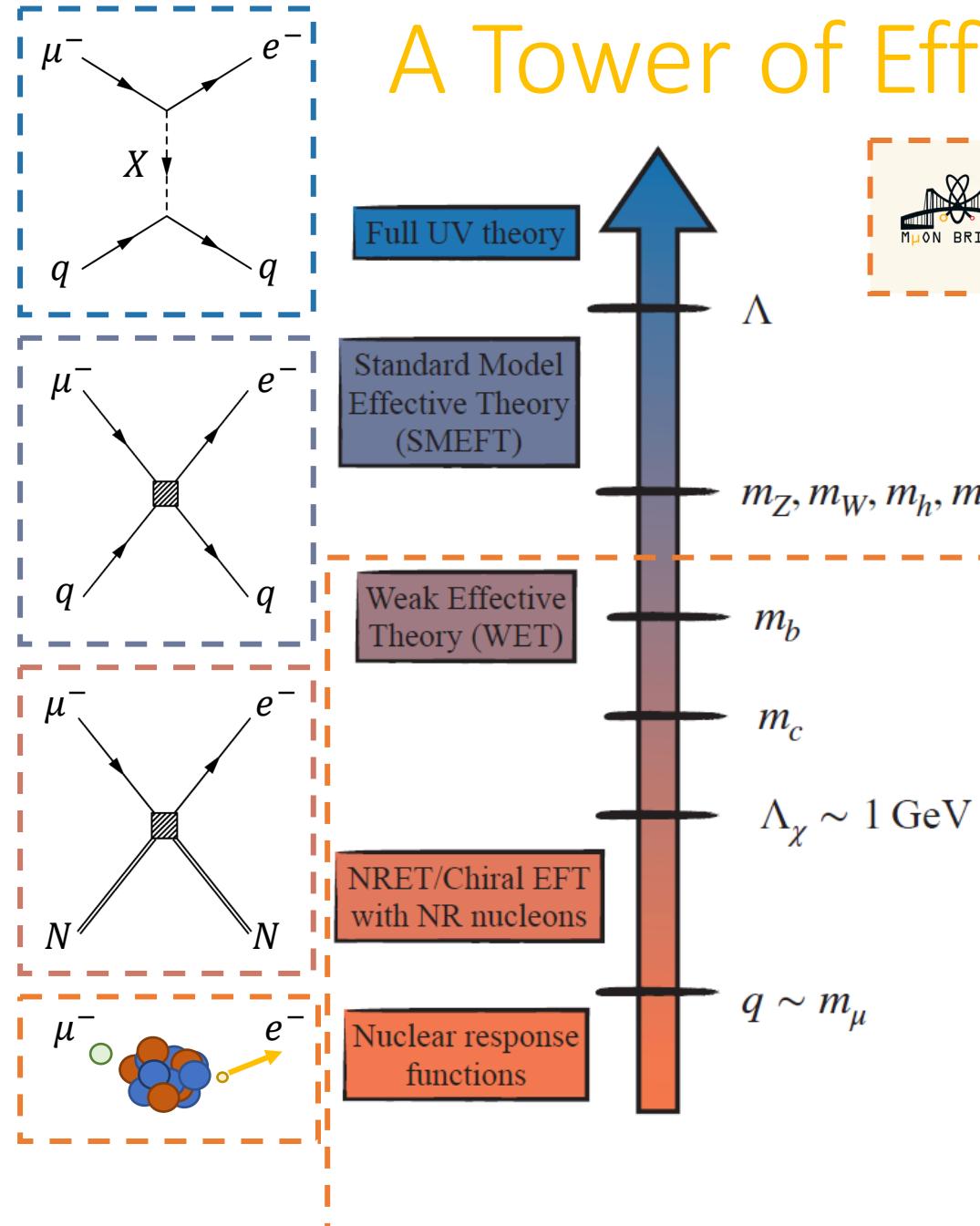
Nuclear: Target-dependent

$$\Gamma_{\mu \rightarrow e} = \Gamma_0 \sum_i R_i \times W_i$$

CLFV: Target-independent

12 independent
(R_i, W_i)

A Tower of Effective Theories



Publicly available analysis code [MuonBridge](#)

- ER, Haxton, & McElvain, *PRL* **130**, 131901 (2023)
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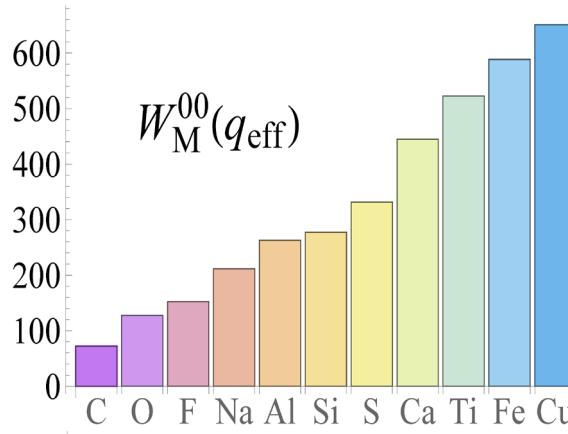
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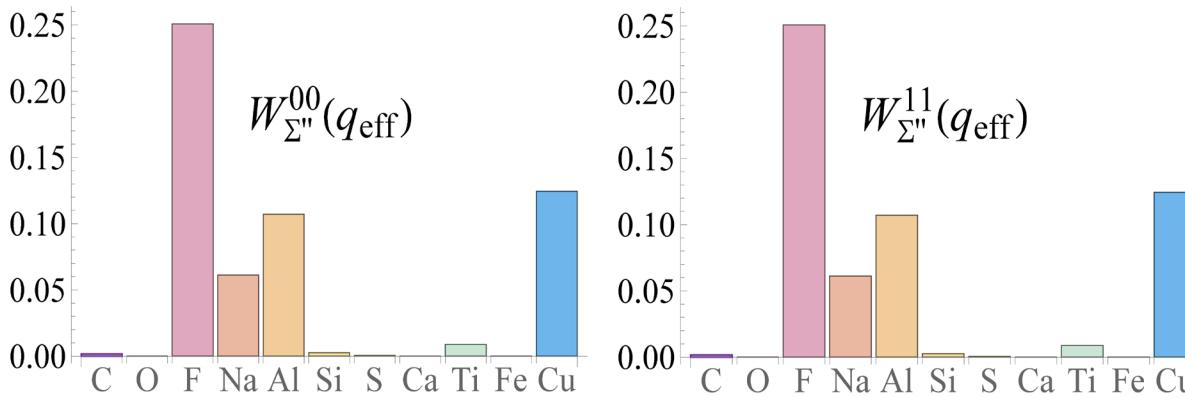
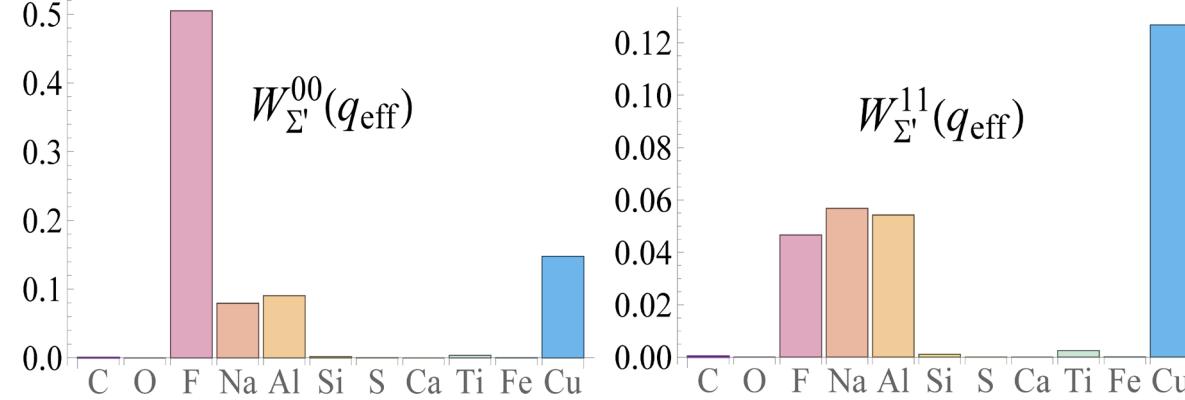
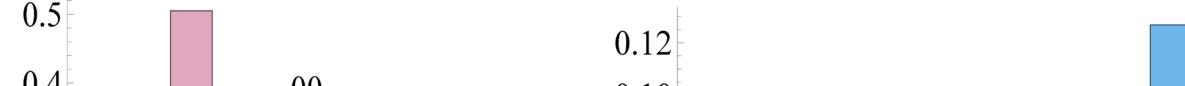
12 independent
(R_i, W_i)

Velocity-independent

Isoscalar

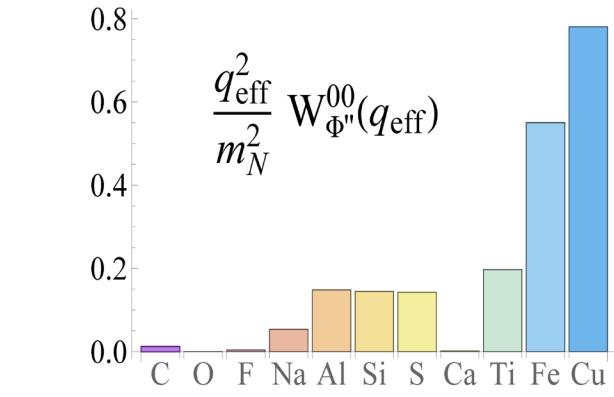
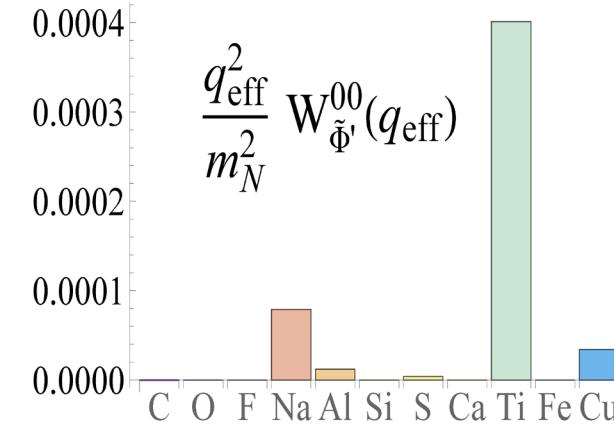
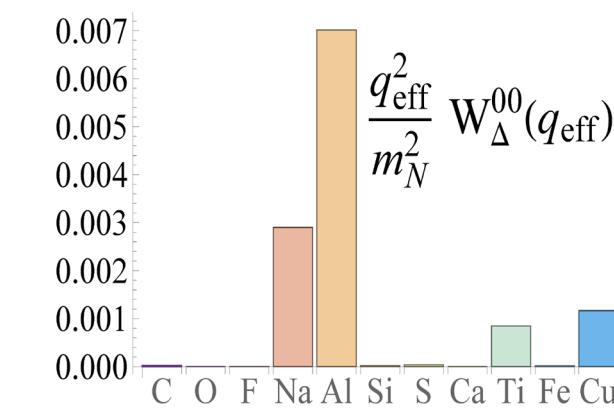


Isovector

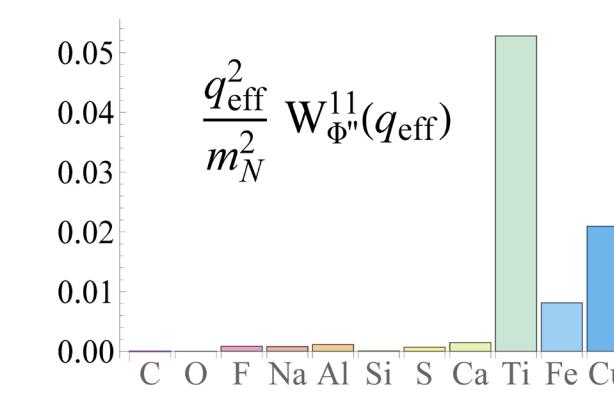
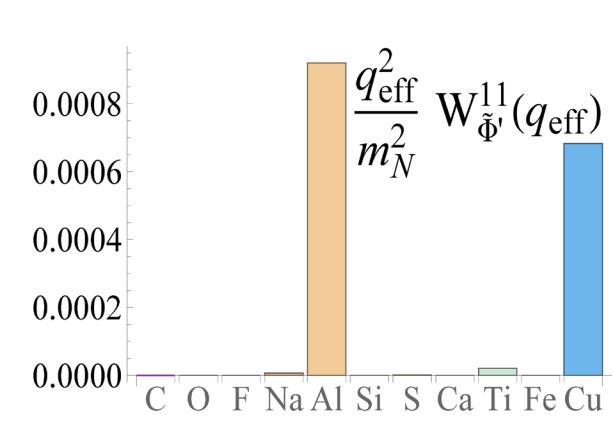
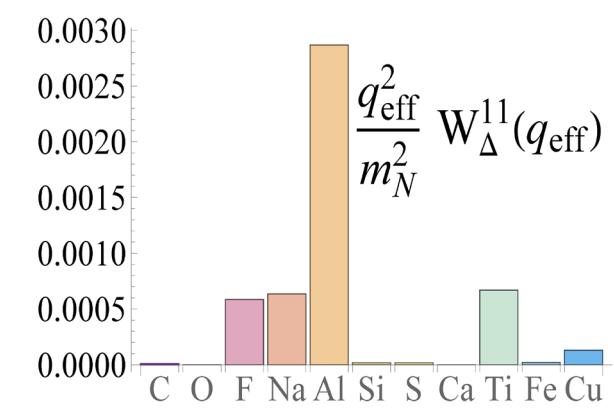


Velocity-dependent

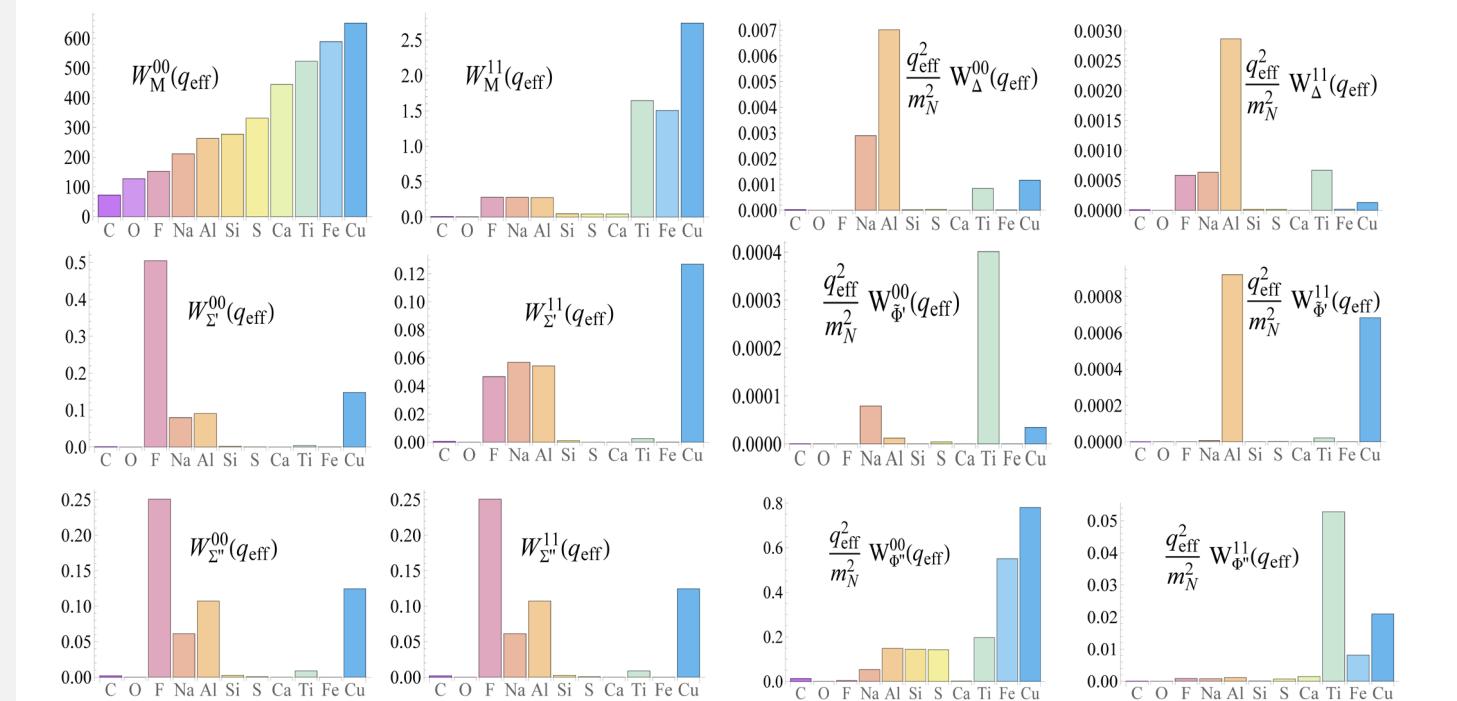
Isoscalar



Isovector



Many possible CLFV mechanisms can mediate $\mu \rightarrow e$ conversion



Requires multiple experimental programs with different target nuclei

Can we learn more from a single nuclear target?

What about *inelastic* $\mu \rightarrow e$ conversion?
(Nucleus transitions to excited state)

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(Nucleus transitions to excited state)

Large energy transfer
 $\Delta E \approx m_\mu \approx 100 \text{ MeV}$

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(Nucleus transitions to excited state)

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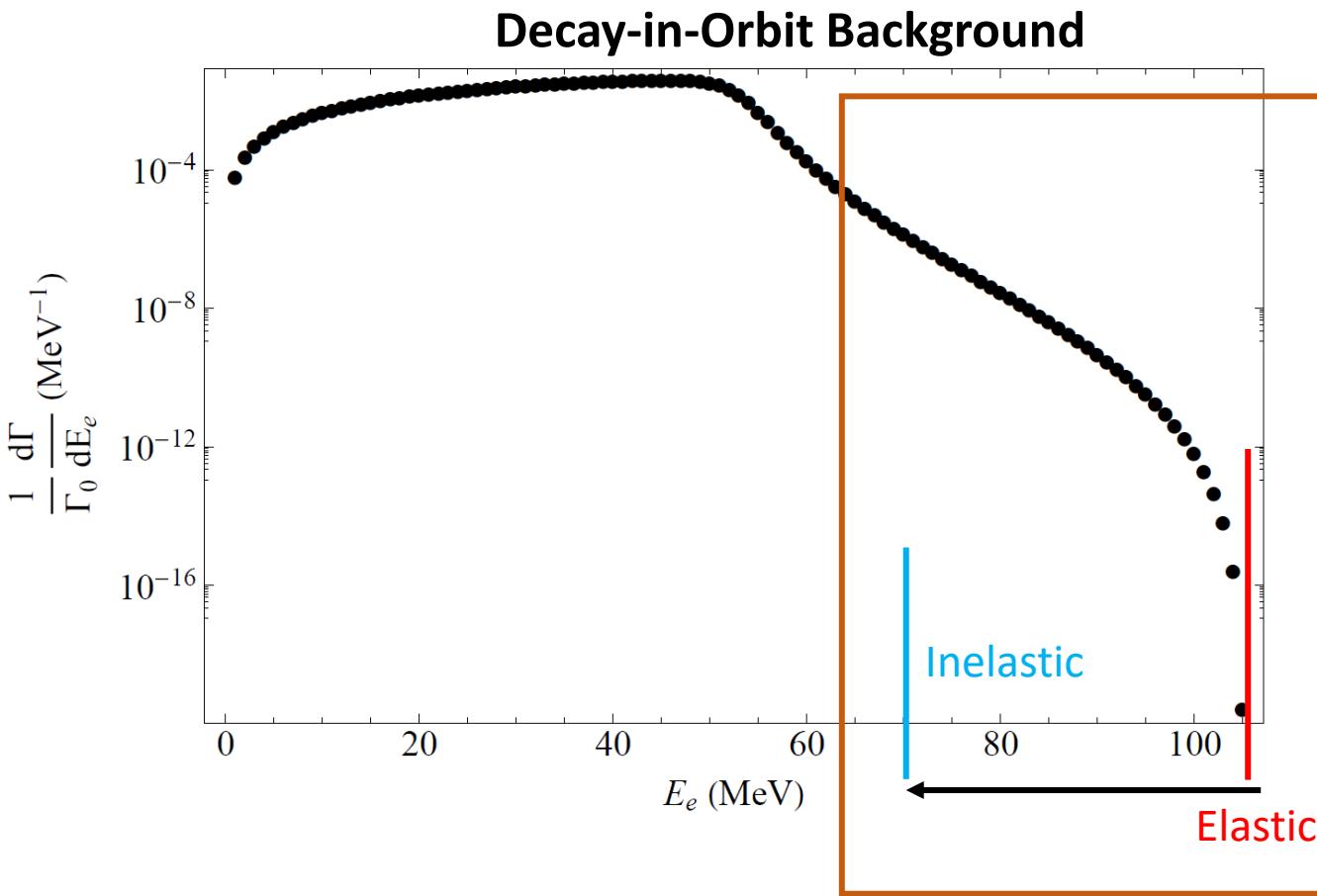
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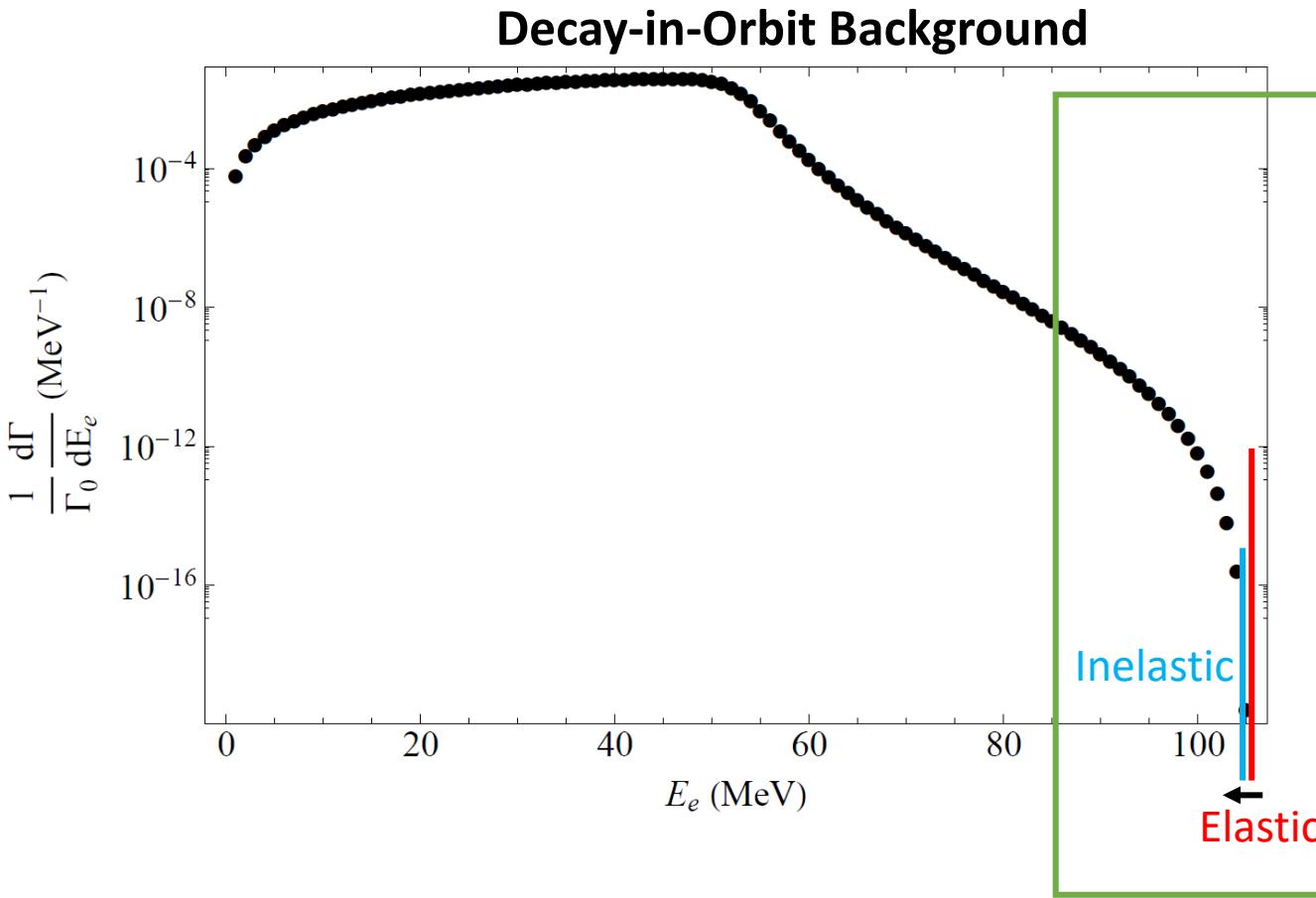
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Contributions from high-lying excited states lost in $\mu \rightarrow e + 2\nu$ background

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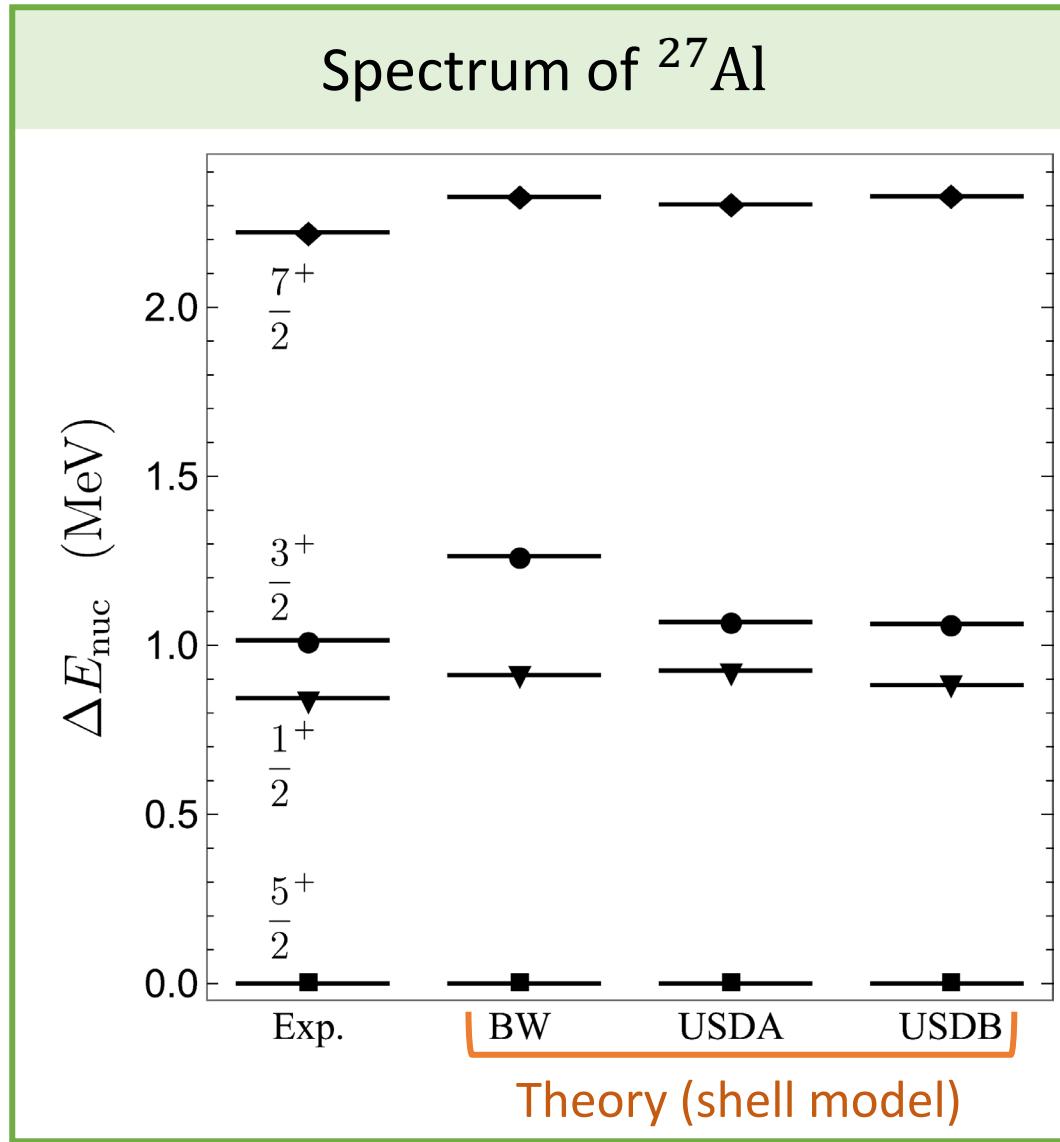
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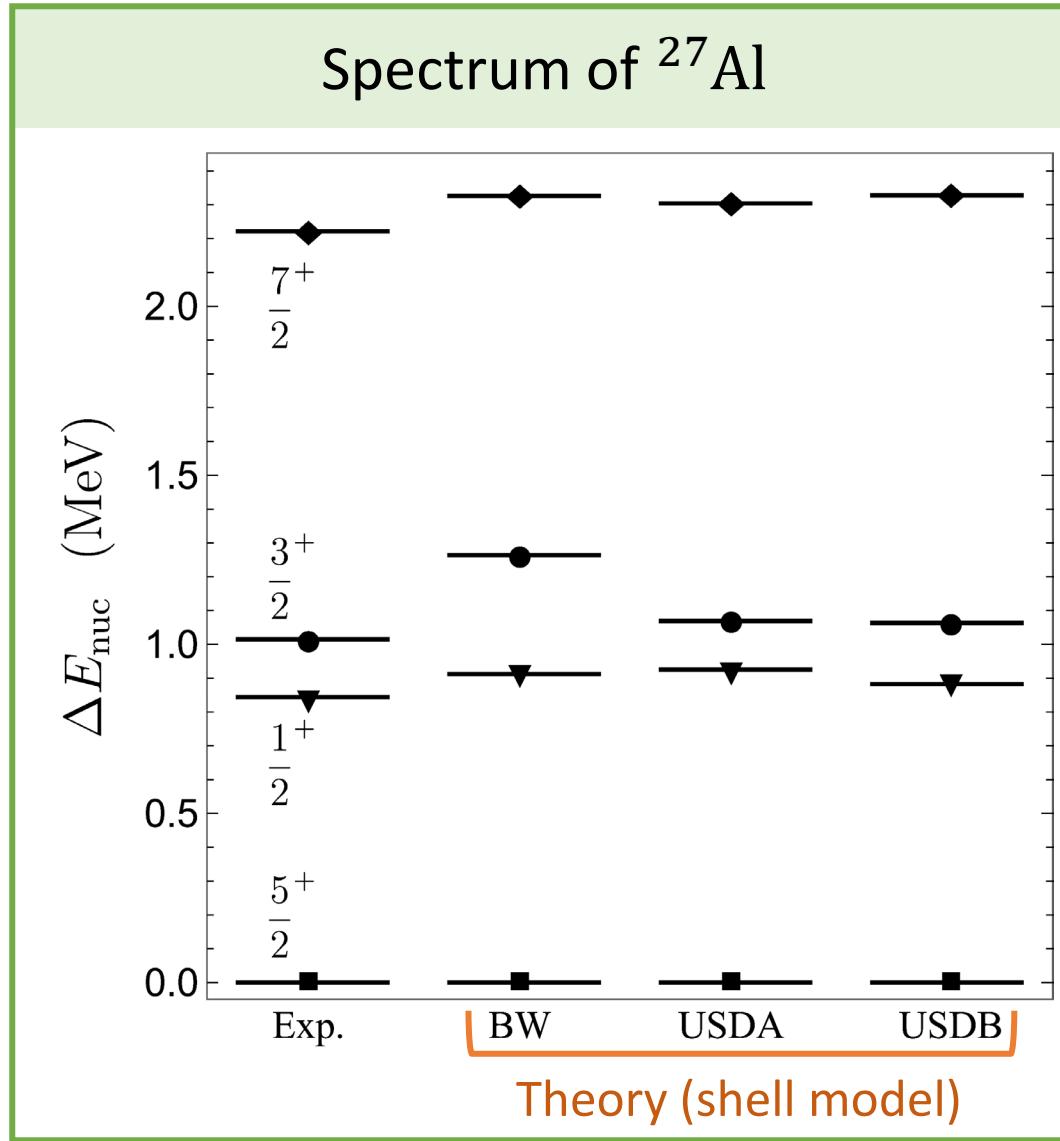
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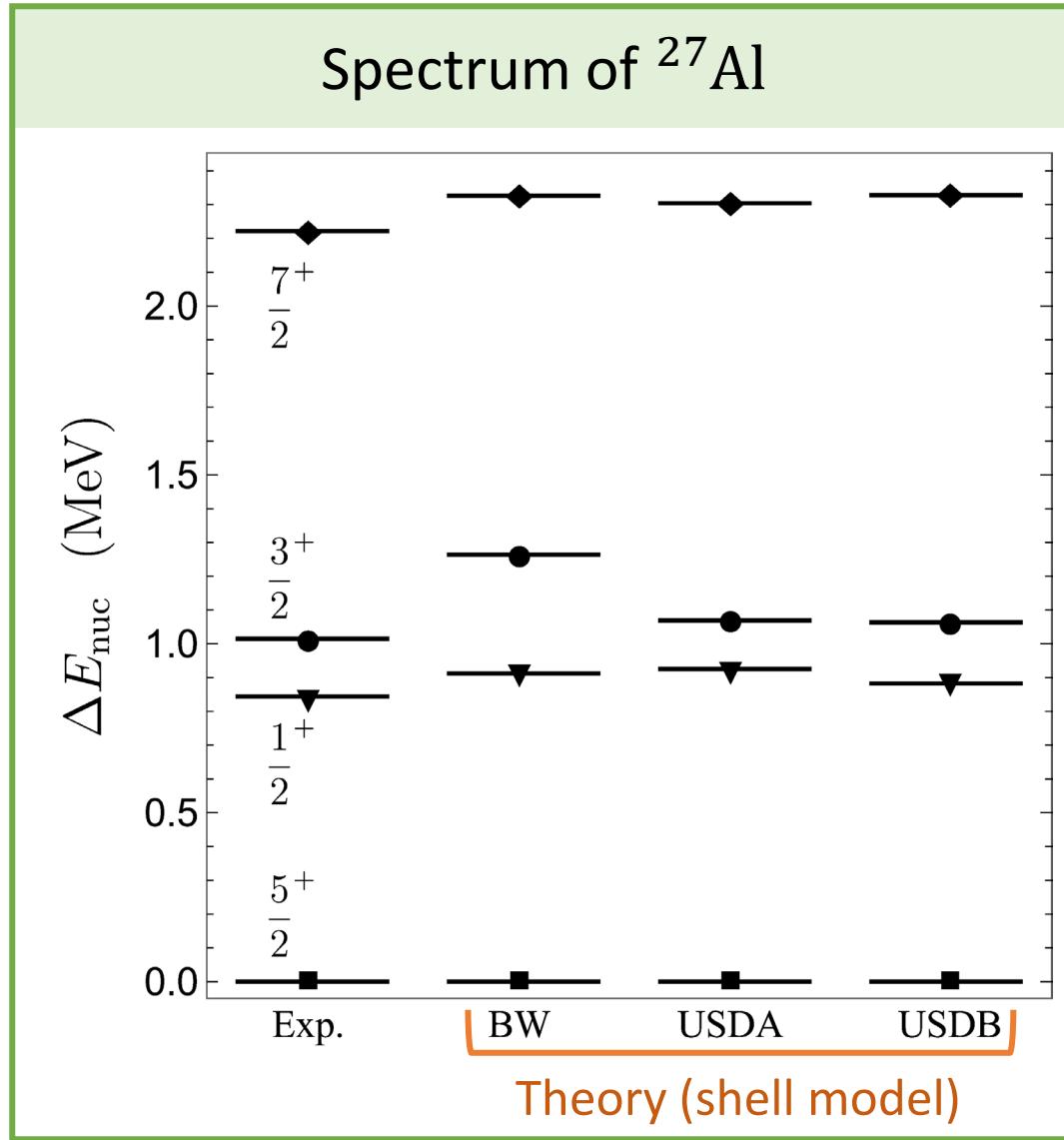
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YES...

but it depends on the CLFV physics



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New experimental information!

Expected Mu2e signal

**Monte Carlo simulation of
Mu2e experimental pipeline**
Including all backgrounds and cuts

1. Protons on production target
2. Pions decay to muons
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4. Electrons detected by calorimeter

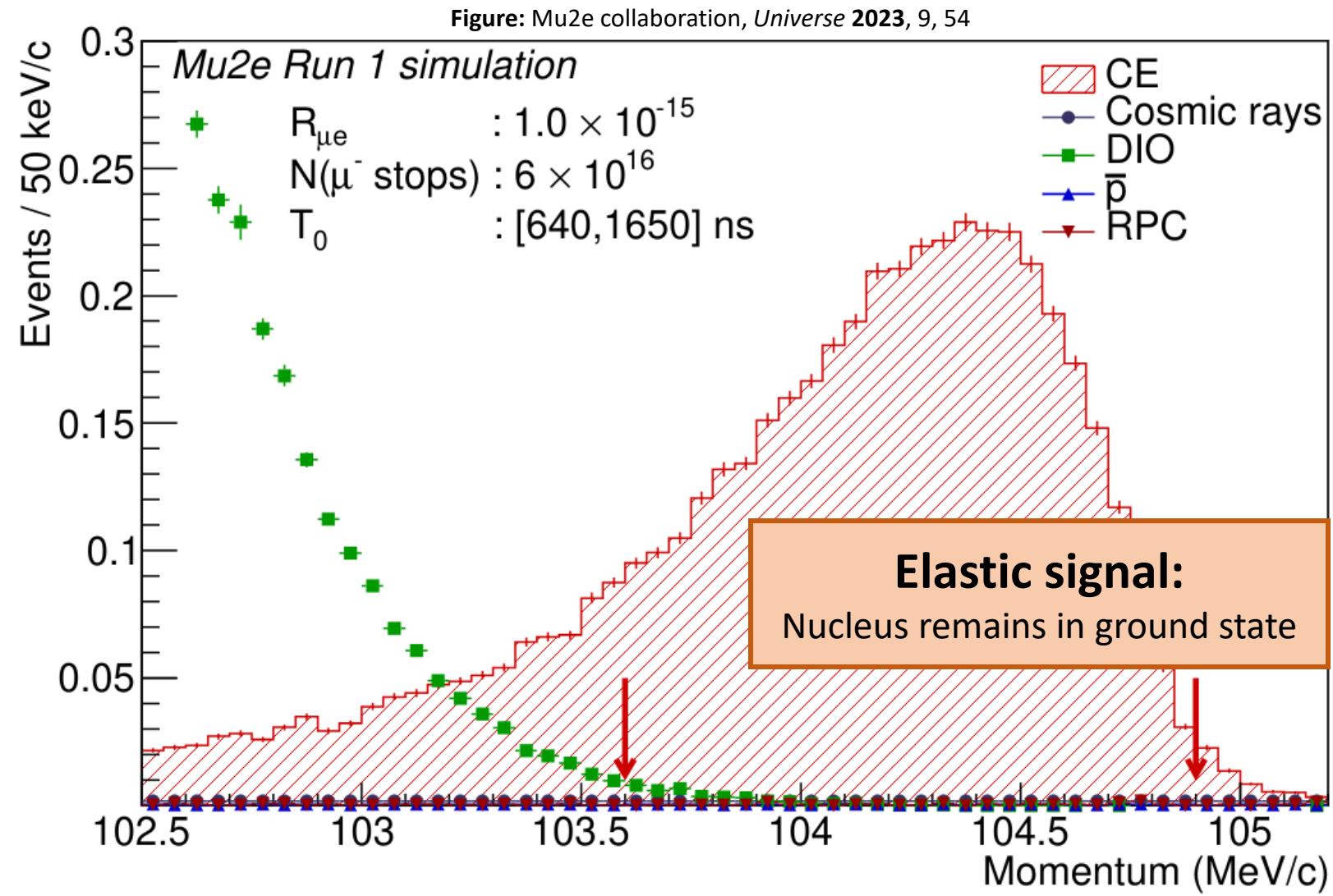
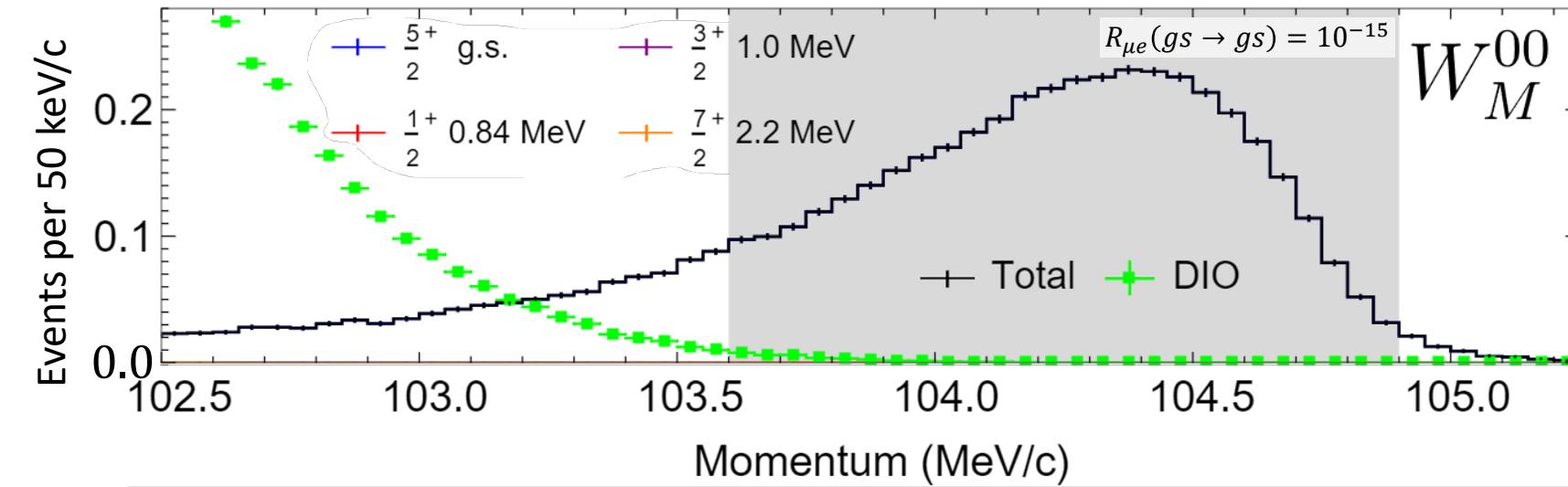
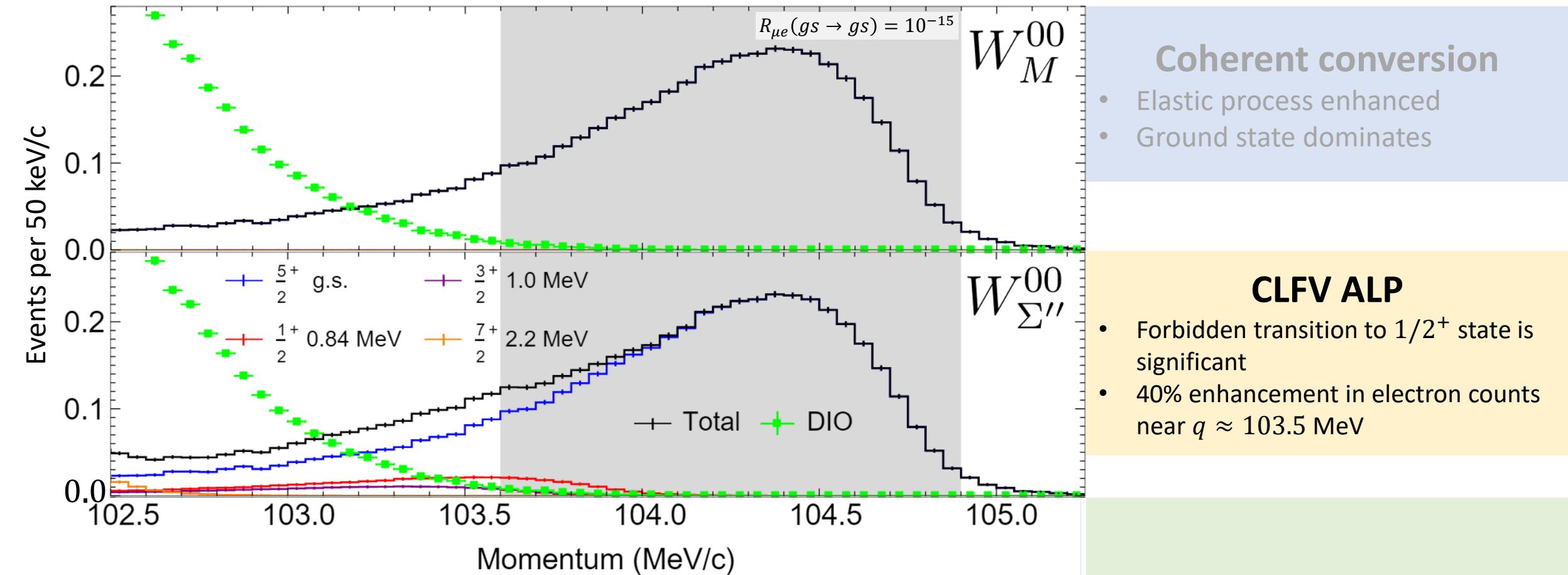


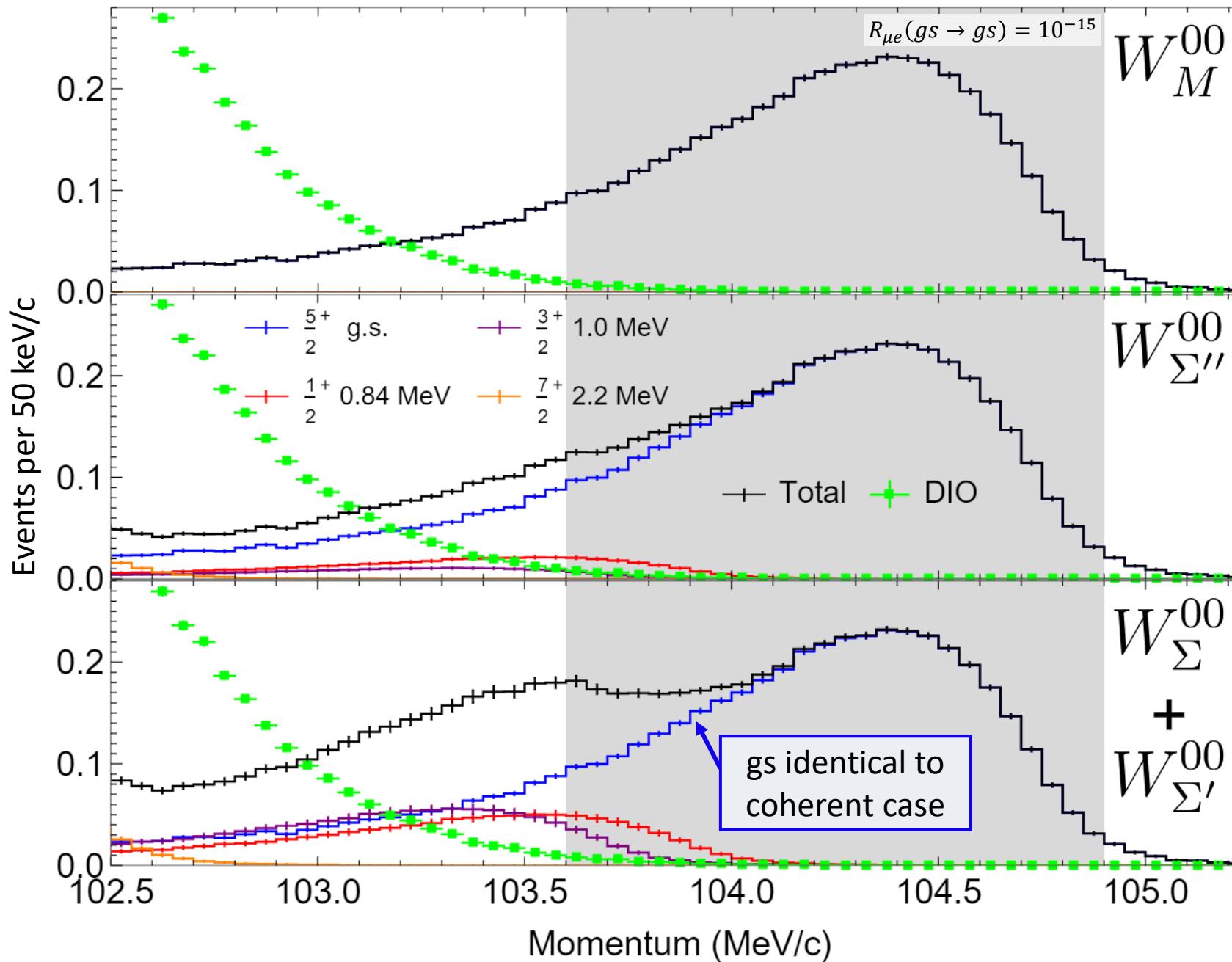
Figure: Haxton & ER, PRL 133, 261801 (2024)



Coherent conversion

- Elastic process enhanced
- Ground state dominates





Coherent conversion

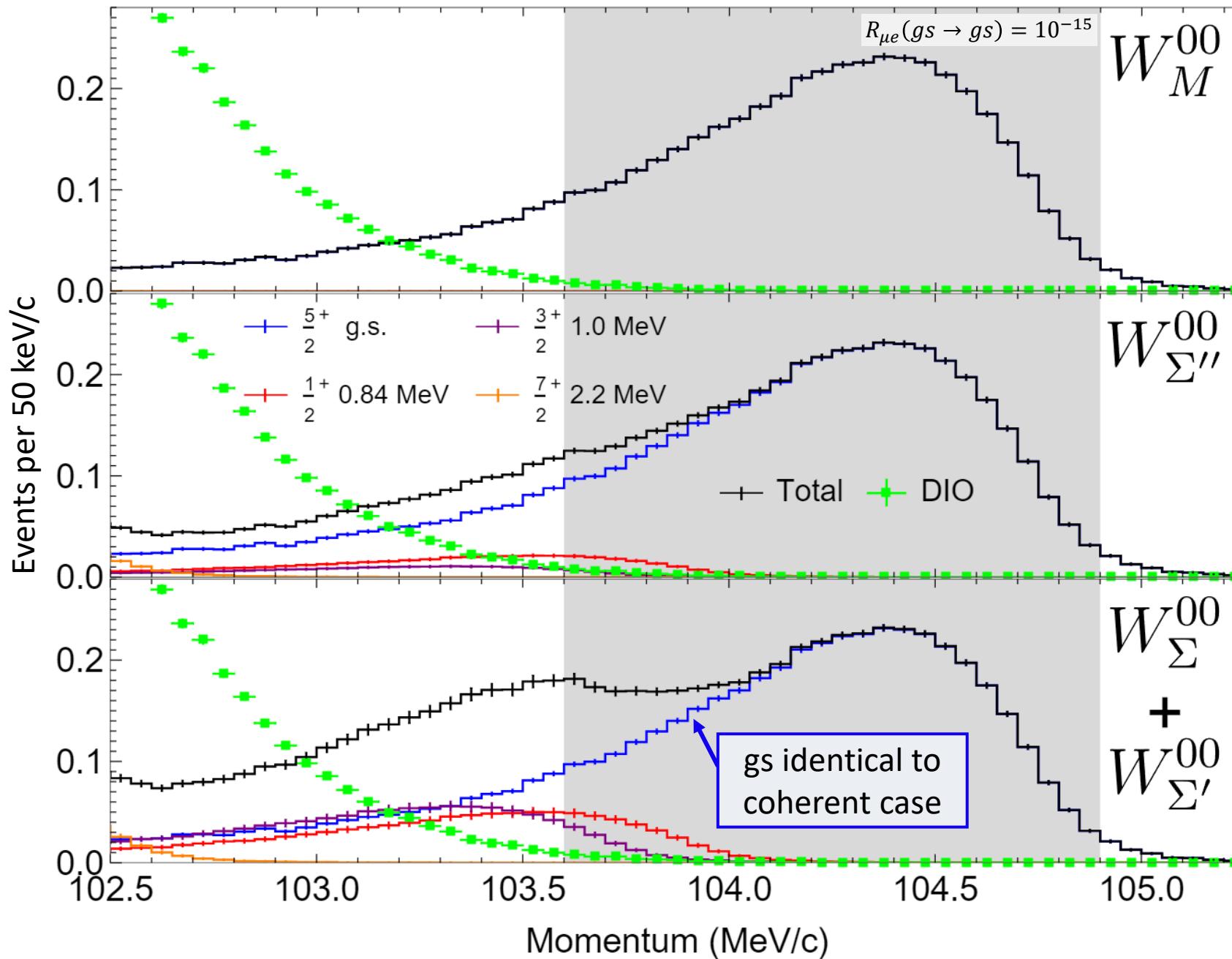
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CLFV ALP

- Forbidden transition to 1/2⁺ state is significant
- 40% enhancement in electron counts near $q \approx 103.5$ MeV

Transverse spin-dependent

- Distinct 2nd peak near $q \approx 103.5$ MeV



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Mu2e Run I: 6×10^{16} muons

Mu2e lifetime: 10^{18} muons

Mu2e-II: 10^{19} muons

Summary

Berkeley
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

N³AS
Network for Neutrinos,
Nuclear Astrophysics,
and Symmetries
PHYSICS FRONTIER CENTER



Los Alamos
NATIONAL LABORATORY

$\mu \rightarrow e$ conversion in nuclei

Collaborators: Vincenzo Cirigliano, Kaori Fuyuto, Wick Haxton, Ken McElvain, Tony Menzo, Michael Ramsey-Musolf, Jure Zupan

Mu2e and COMET will probe CLFV at energies $\lesssim 10,000$ TeV

Complete effective theory: Experiment to UV

Inelastic conversion: new signal + new information

See also:

Ab initio overlap integrals for $\mu \rightarrow e$ conversion in nuclei

Matthias Heinz



13:30 - 13:55

Multicultural Greek

Searching for Lepton Flavor Violation

Kaori Fuyuto



13:55 - 14:20

Multicultural Greek

Mu2e at Fermilab : Charged Lepton Flavor Violation Experiment

Mamta Jangra



14:20 - 14:45

Multicultural Greek

A new method to calibrate the momentum scale of the Mu2e experiment

Pavel Murat



14:45 - 15:10

Multicultural Greek

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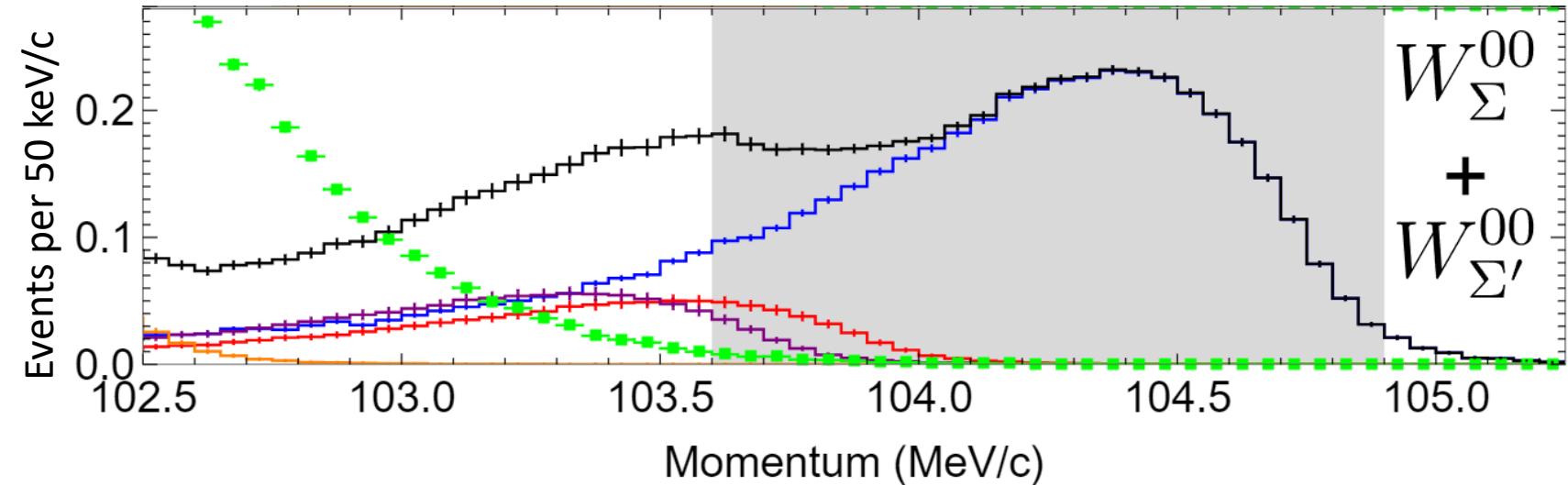
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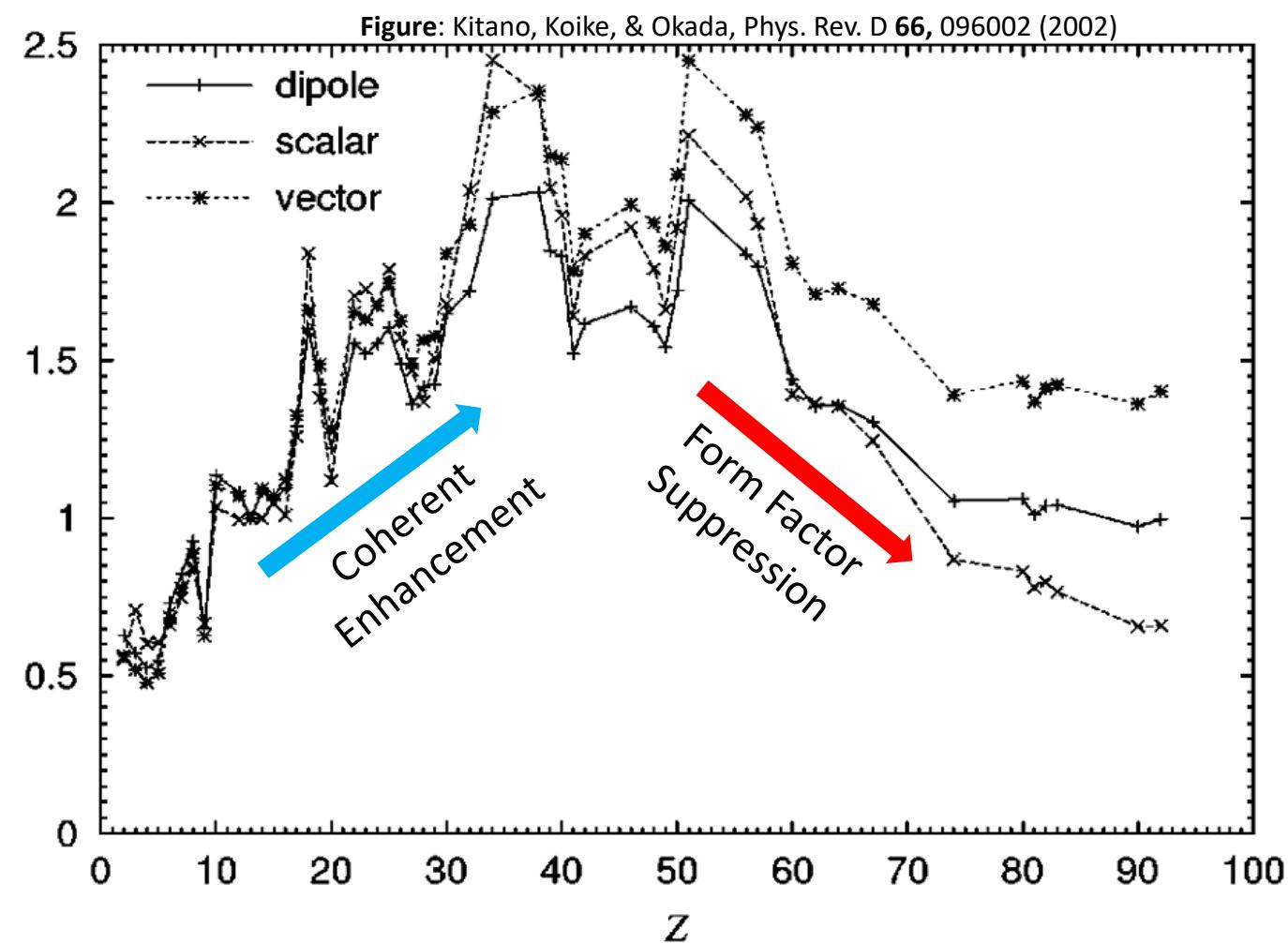
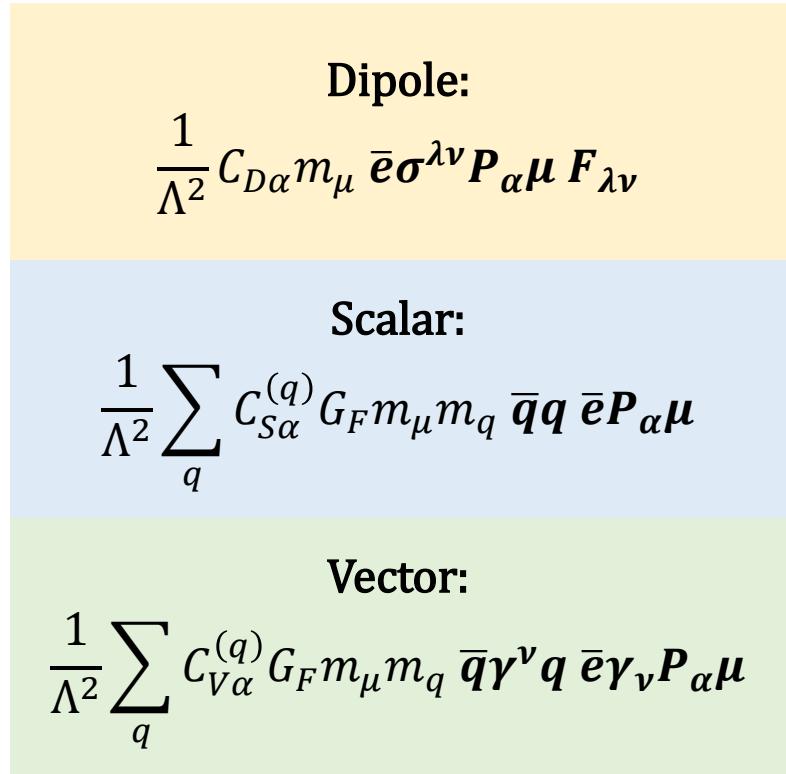
Inelastic conversion: new signal + new information

Publicly available codes
EFT: [MuonBridge](#)
Inelastic: [Mu2e](#) [Inelastic](#)



Backup Slides

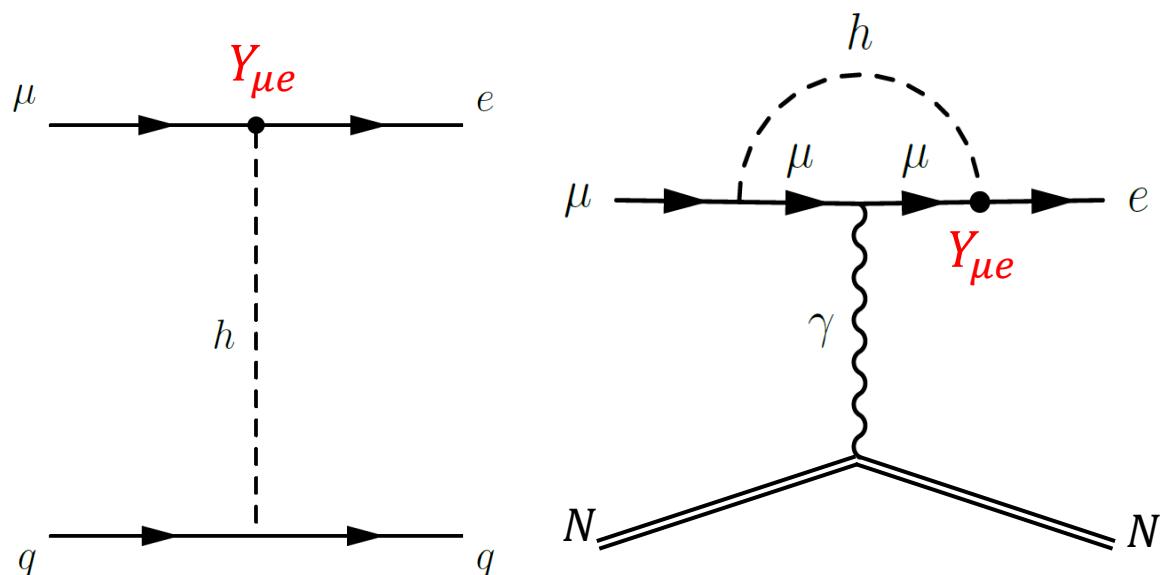
Coherent Conversion



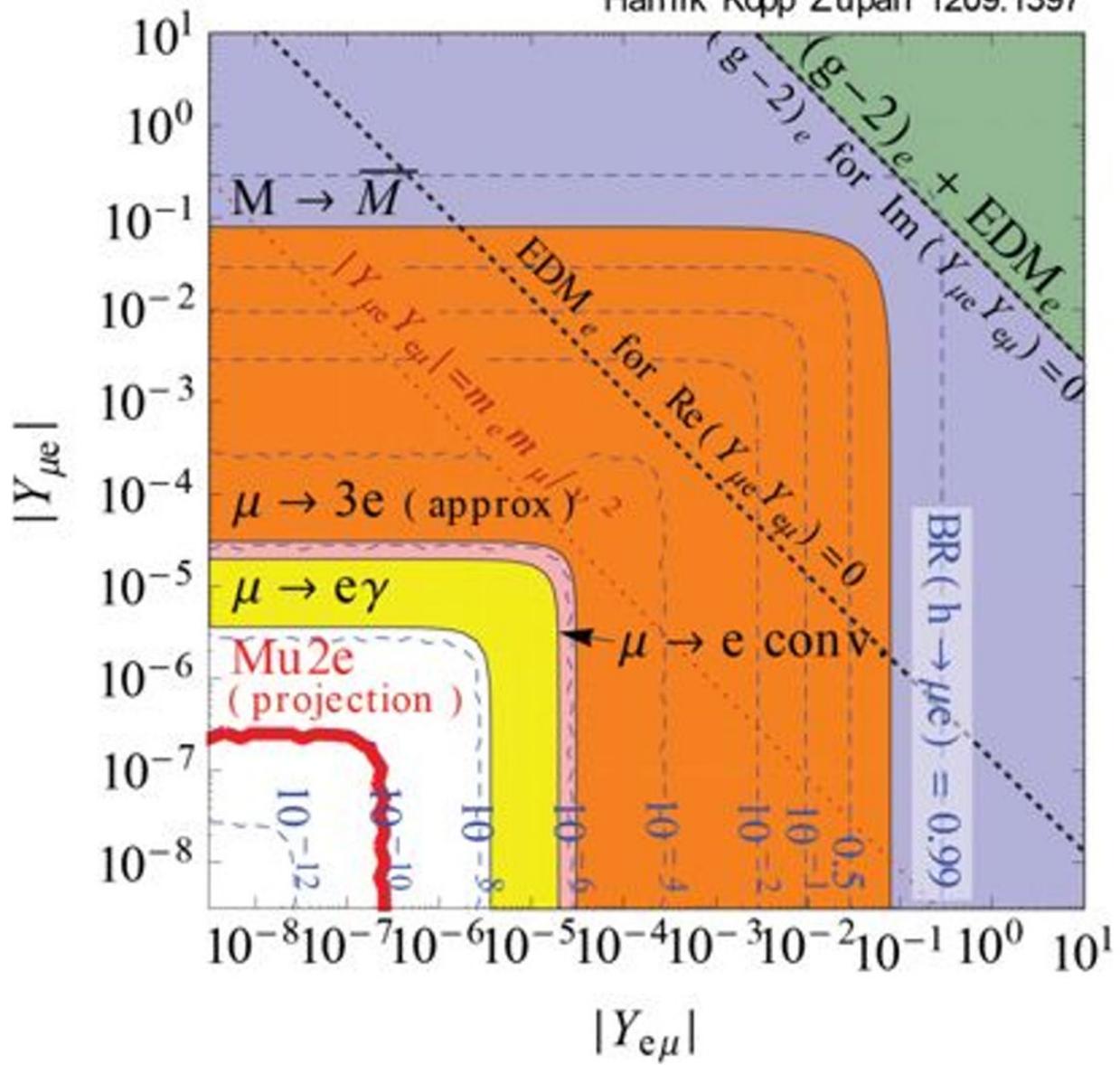
Nuclear operator: isoscalar charge monopole $M_0(q)$

- Rate enhanced by A^2
- Nuclear matrix elements constrained by electron scattering, πN scattering, pionic atoms,...

Process	BR Limit	CL	Experiment
$h \rightarrow e\mu$	6.1×10^{-5}	95%	ATLAS
$\mu^- + \text{Al} \rightarrow e^- + \text{Al}$	8×10^{-17}	90%	Mu2e



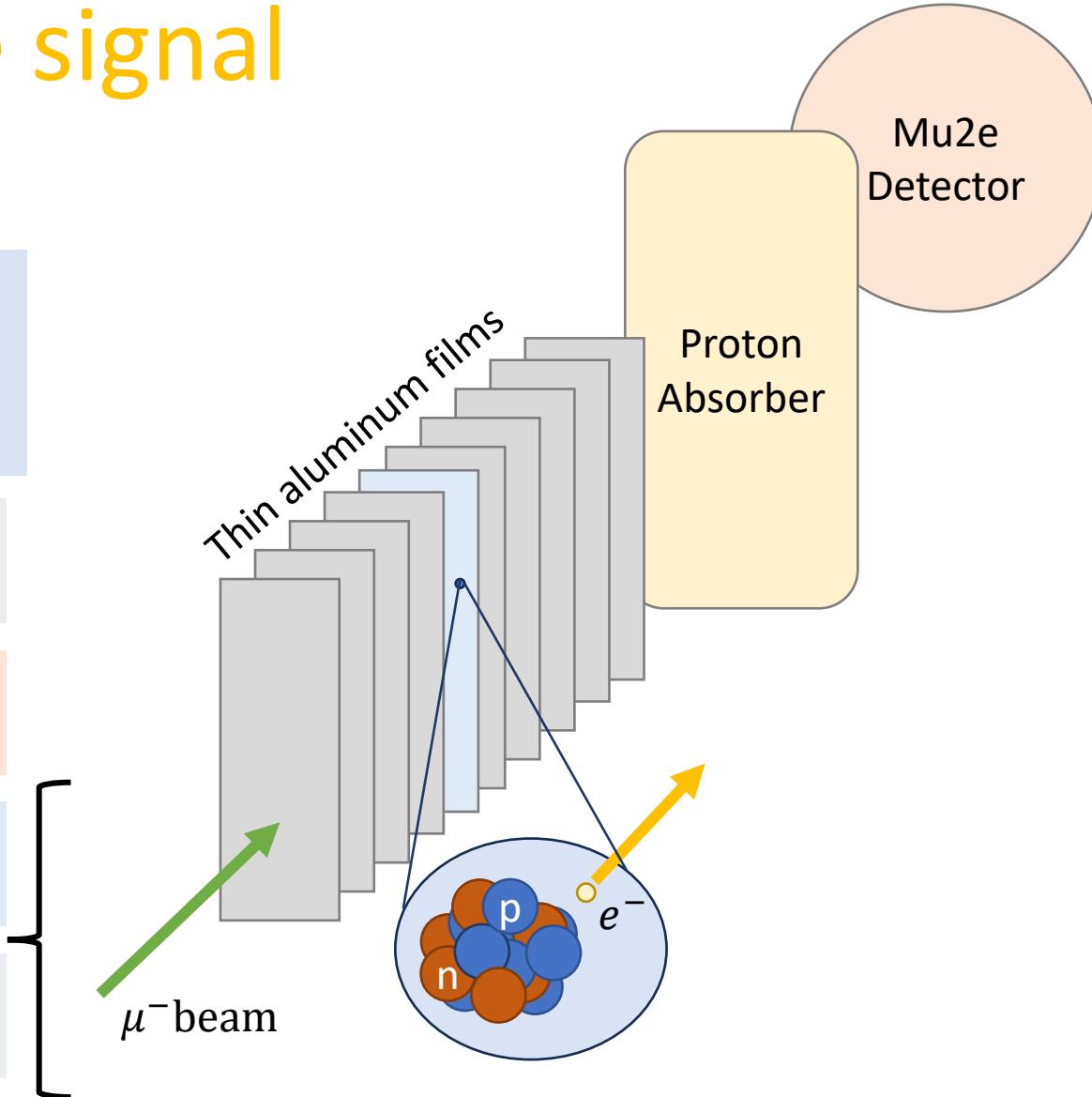
$\mu \rightarrow e$ provides better constraint
than $h \rightarrow e\mu, \mu \rightarrow e\gamma, \mu \rightarrow 3e$



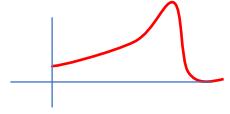
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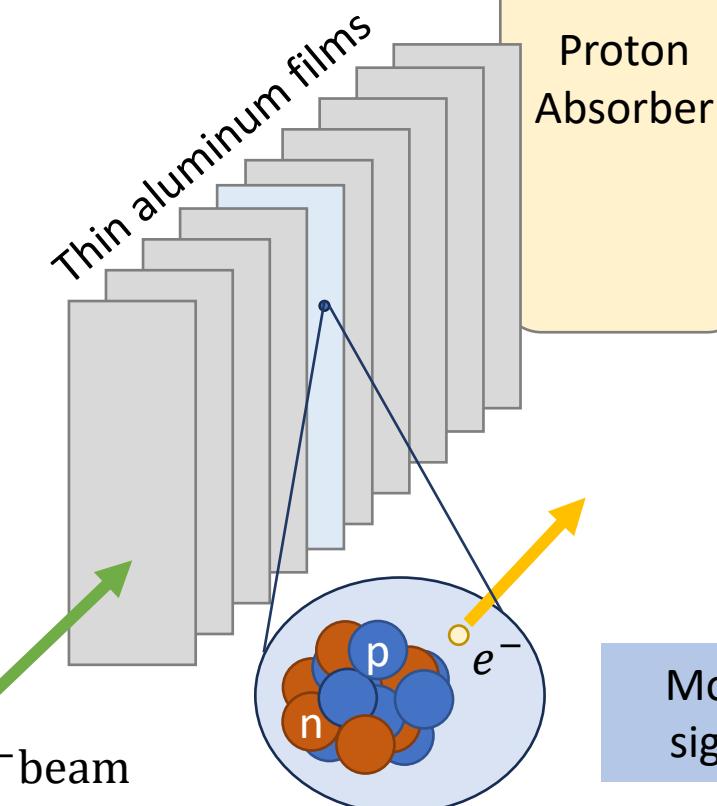
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Energy losses in materials

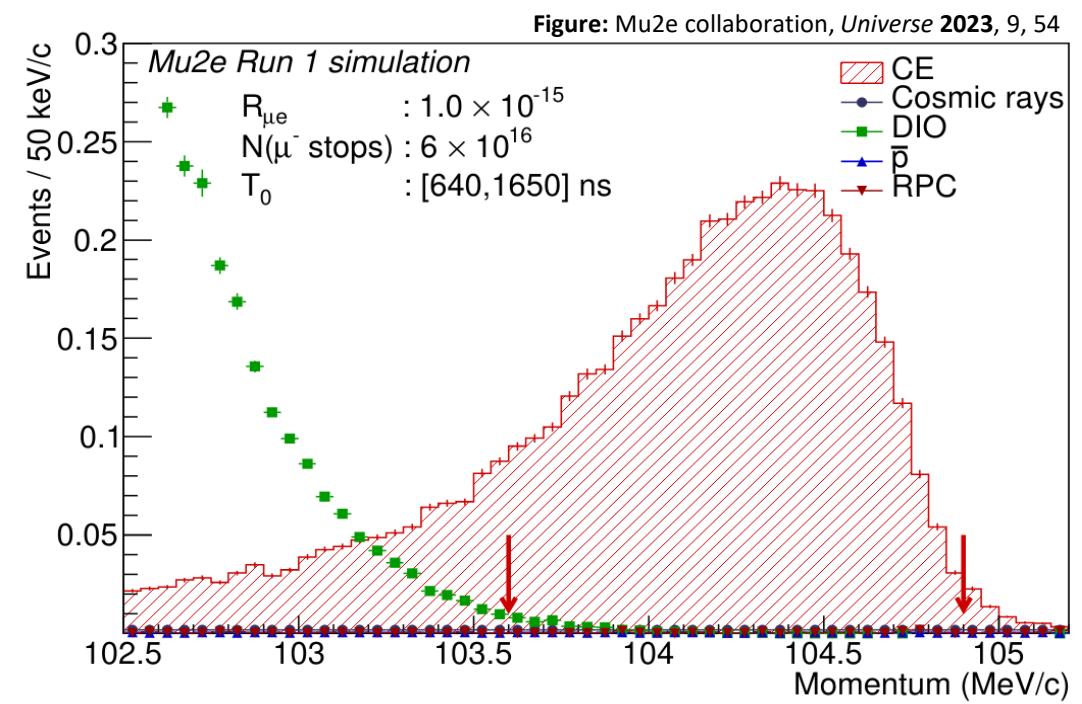
Monochromatic
signal electrons

Smeared spectrum

Combined elastic + inelastic electron spectrum

Individual spectral shapes

Fixed by e^- interactions
before hitting detector

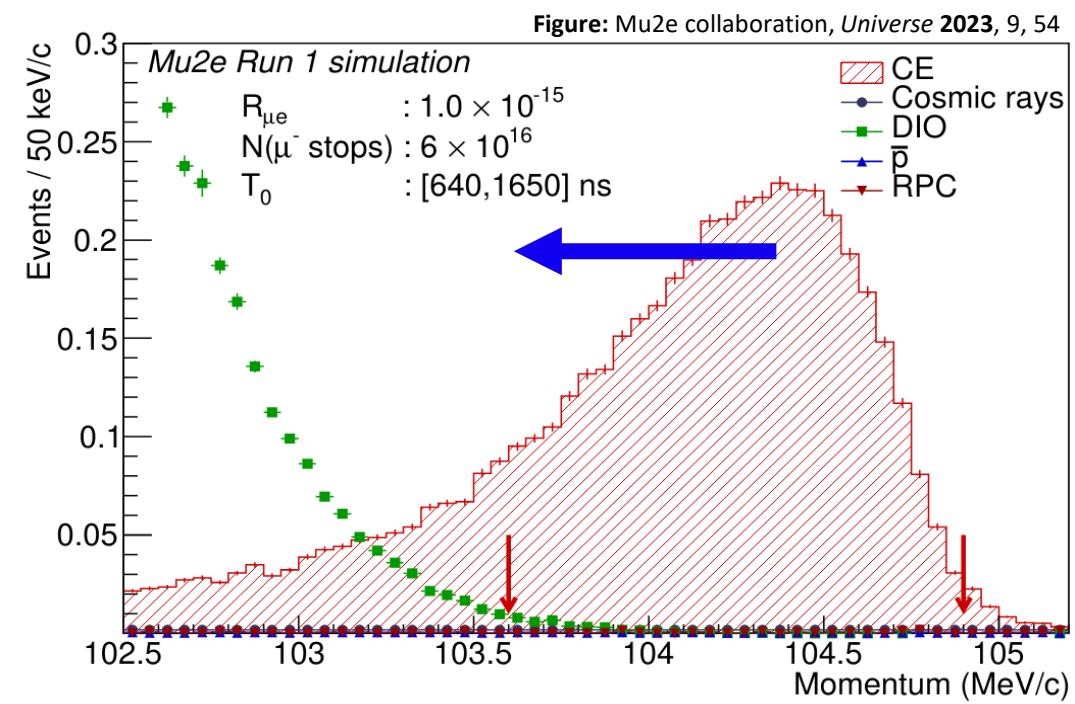


Combined elastic + inelastic electron spectrum

Individual spectral shapes

Momentum of peak

Shifts by excitation energy:
 $E_e \approx m_\mu - \Delta E_{\text{nuc}}$



Combined elastic + inelastic electron spectrum

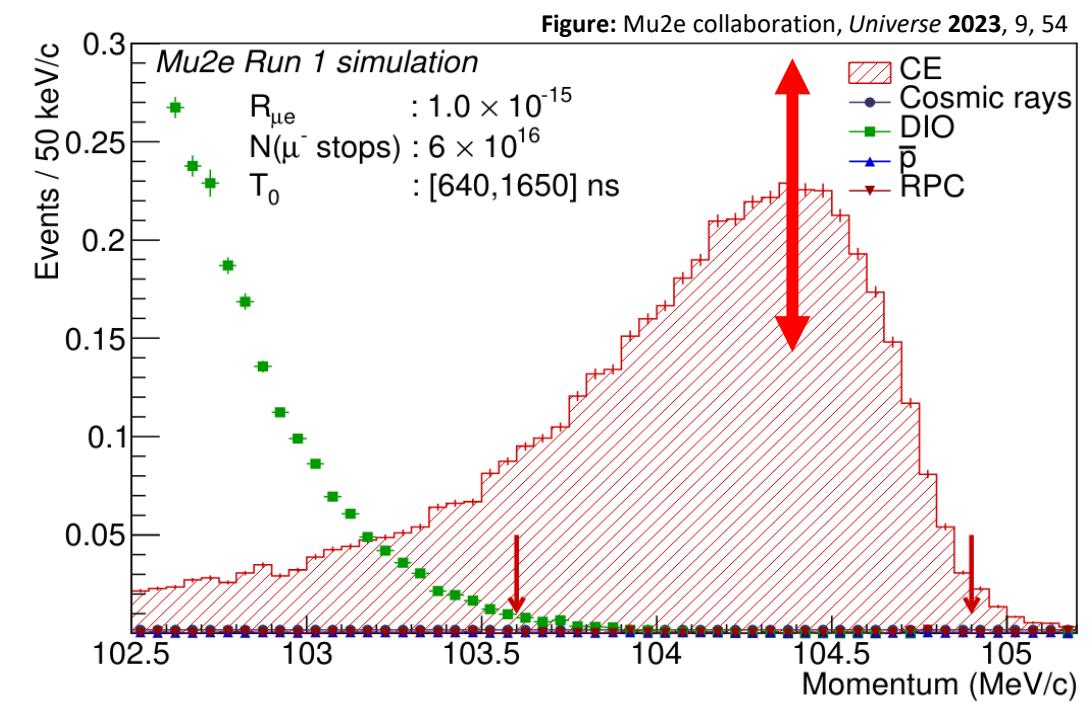
Individual spectral shapes

Momentum of peak

Amplitude relative to elastic signal

Scaled by relative branching ratio:

$$\frac{R_{\mu \rightarrow e}(gs \rightarrow f)}{R_{\mu \rightarrow e}(gs \rightarrow gs)} = \frac{\Gamma_{\mu \rightarrow e}(gs \rightarrow f)}{\Gamma_{\mu \rightarrow e}(gs \rightarrow gs)}$$



Combined elastic + inelastic electron spectrum

Individual spectral shapes

Fixed by e^- interactions
before hitting detector

Depend on nuclear target

Momentum of peak

Shifts by excitation energy:
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Amplitude relative to elastic signal

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$$\frac{R_{\mu \rightarrow e}(gs \rightarrow f)}{R_{\mu \rightarrow e}(gs \rightarrow gs)}$$

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Amplitude relative to elastic signal

Depends on nuclear target
and CLFV physics

Scaled by relative branching ratio:

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Spin-dependent $\mu \rightarrow e$ Conversion

Flavor-violating ALPs

Fuyuto & Mereghetti, arXiv:2307:13076

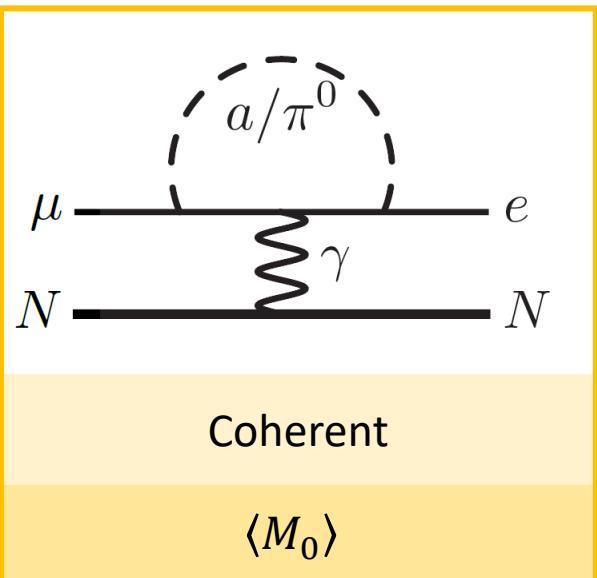
$$\mathcal{L}^a \supset -2i \frac{a}{f_a} m_\mu \textcolor{red}{a_{\mu\mu}} \bar{\mu} \gamma_5 \mu - i \frac{a}{f_a} m_\mu \bar{e} (\textcolor{red}{v_{e\mu}} + \textcolor{red}{a_{e\mu}} \gamma_5) \mu$$

Spin-dependent $\mu \rightarrow e$ Conversion

Flavor-violating ALPs

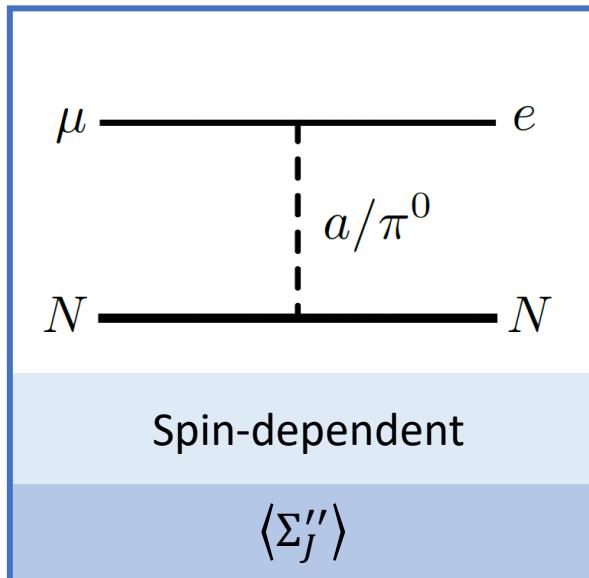
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Coherent

$\langle M_0 \rangle$



Spin-dependent

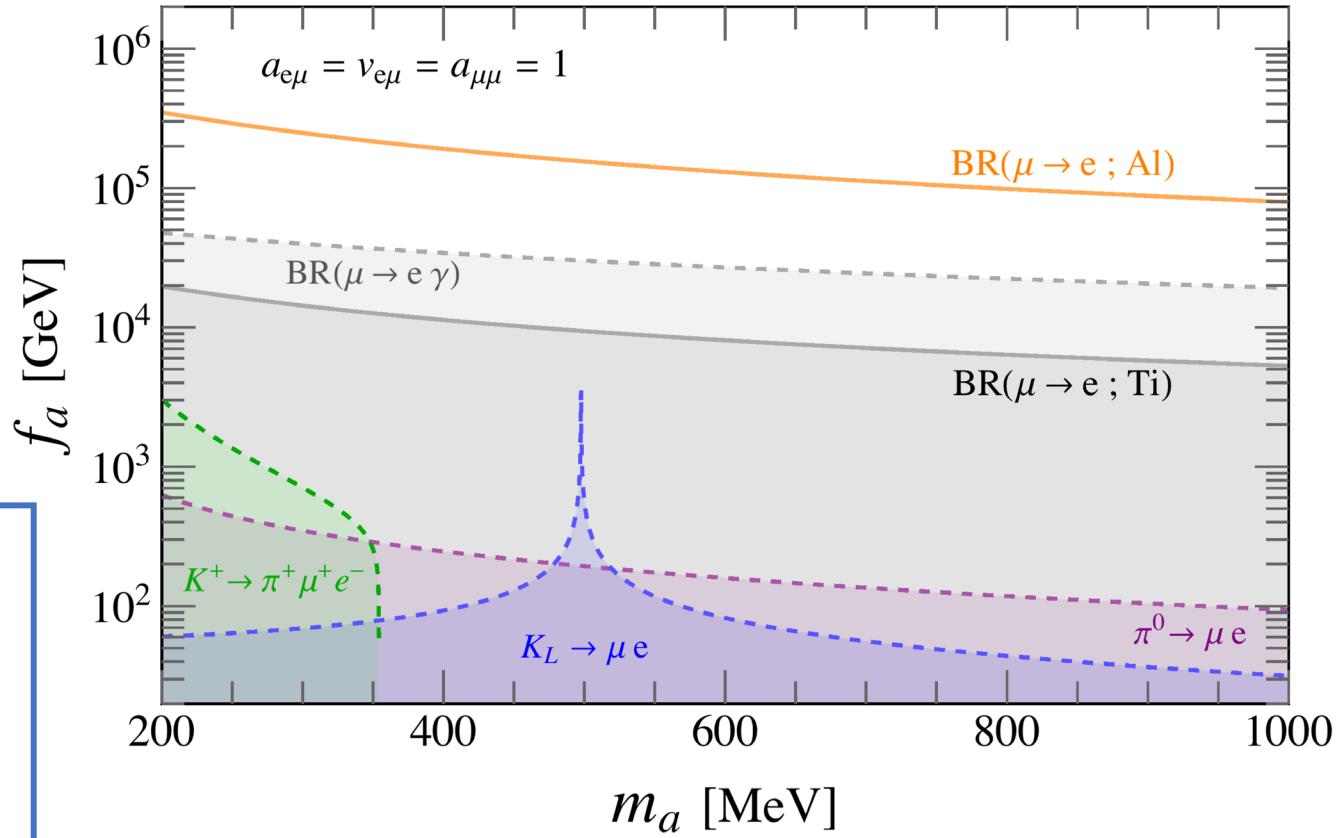
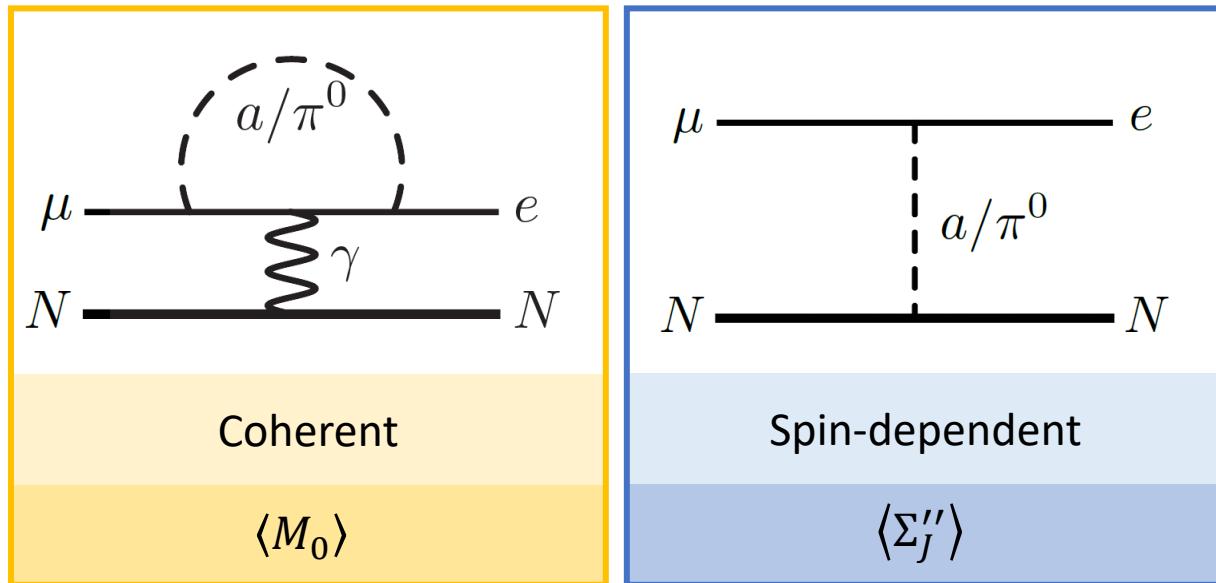
$\langle \Sigma_J'' \rangle$

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Fuyuto & Mereghetti, arXiv:2307:13076

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- Coherent dipole is suppressed by $\approx \left(\frac{\alpha_{EM}}{4\pi} \right)^2$
 - Spin-dependent process dominates