The π^0 Lifetime: Experimental Probe of the QCD Axial Anomaly

Dustin E. McNulty
MIT/JLab
PrimEx Collaboration
mcnulty@jlab.org

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- Experimental Overview
- π^0 Analysis Details
- Preliminary $\Gamma_{\pi^0 \to \gamma\gamma}$ Result
- Summary and Outlook

PrimEx Collaboration

D. Abrahamyan[s], A. Afanasev[d], A. Ahmidouch[l], P. Ambrozewicz[l], K. Baker[d], L. Benton[l], A. Bernstein[j], E. Clinton[i], P. Cole[e], P. Collins[b], D. Dale[g], S. Danagoulian[l], R. Demirchyan[l], A. Deur[f], J. Feng[m], M. Gabrielyan[g], L. Gan[m], A. Gasparian[l], O. Glamazdin[h], J. Goity[d], V. Gyurjyan[f], R. Hakobyan[c], K. Hardy[l], M. Ito[f], M. Khandaker[k], P. Kingsberry[k], M. Konchatnyi[h], O. Korchin[h], S. Kowalski[j], M. Kubantsev[n], V. Kubarovsky[o], I. Larin[a], D. Lawrence[i], D. McNulty[j], R. Minehart[q], R. Miskimen[i], V. Mochalov[o], S. Mtingwa[l], I. Nakagawa[g], S. Overby[l], E. Pasyuk[b], M. Payen[l], R. Pedroni[l], Y. Prok[j], B. Ritchie[b], T. Rodrigues[p], C. Salgado[k], J. Santoro[r], A. Sitnikov[a], D. Sober[c], A. Teymurazyan[g], J. Underwood[l], A. Vasiliev[o], V. Vishnyakov[a], M. Wood[i]

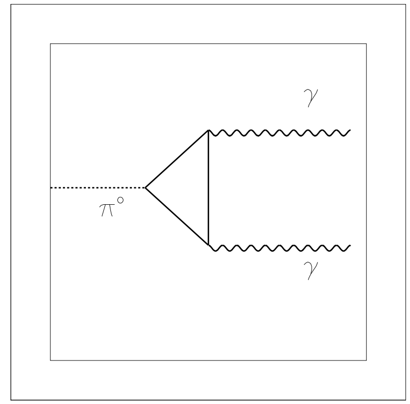
(a) Alikhanov Institute for Theoretical and Experimental Physics, (b) Arizona State University, (c) Catholic University, (d) Hampton University, (e) Idaho State University, (f) Jefferson Lab, (g) University of Kentucky, (h) Kharkov Institute of Physics and Technology, (i) University of Massachusetts, (j) Massachusetts Institute of Technology, (k) Norfolk State University, (l) North Carolina A&T, (m) University of North Carolina, Wilmington, (n) Northwestern University, (o) Institute for High Energy Physics, Protvino, (p) University of Sao Paulo, (q) University of Virginia, (r) Virginia Tech, (s) Yerevan Physics Institute

Physics Motivation

- π^0 decay rate is a fundamental prediction of QCD.

Chiral Anomaly

Presence of closed loop triangle diagram results in nonconserved axial vector current, even in the limit of vanishing quark masses.



→In the leading order (chiral limit), the anomaly leads to the decay width:

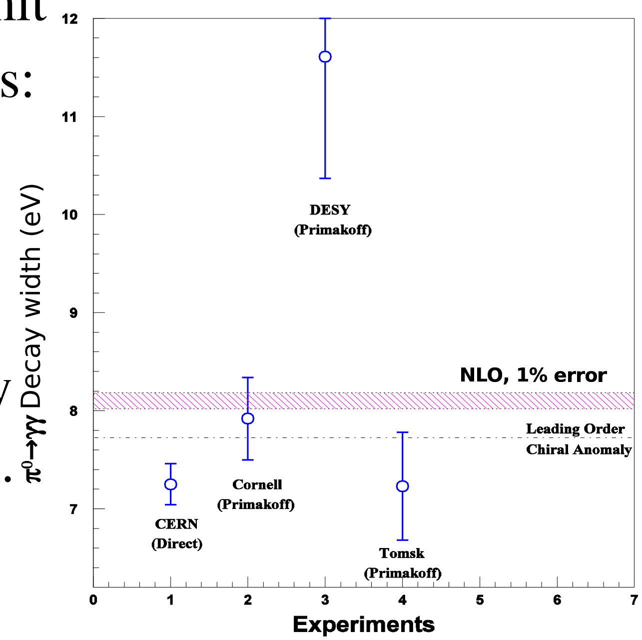
$$\Gamma_{\pi^0\to\gamma\gamma} = \frac{\alpha^2 m_\pi^3}{64\pi^3 F_\pi^2} = 7.725 \pm 0.044 \text{ eV} \quad (1)$$

where $F_\pi = 92.42 \pm 0.25$ MeV is the pion decay constant.

→ Current Particle Data Book value is 7.84 ± 0.56 eV

Physics Motivation

- LO prediction exact in Chiral limit
- For $m_q \nrightarrow 0$, there are corrections:
  - $\rightarrow$ Due to isospin sym-breaking ($m_u \neq m_d$), π^0, η and η' mixing induced.
  - $\rightarrow$ Further corrections induced by terms in the Chiral Lagrangian.



- NLO prediction for the decay width is $8.10 \text{ eV} \pm 1\%$
  - $\rightarrow$ Calc. using Chiral Perturbation Theory and $1/N_c$ expansion.

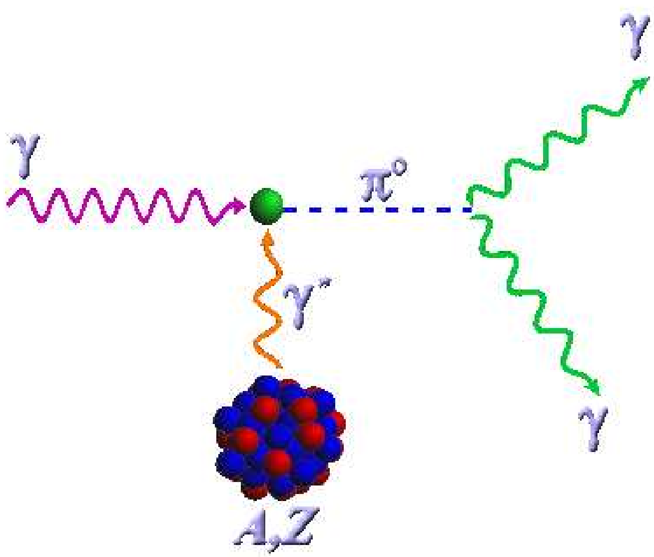
J.L.Goity et al, Phys. Rev. D66, 076014 (2002); B.Moussallam, Phys. Rev. D51, 4939 (1995)

  - $\rightarrow$ This is 4% higher than current experimental value!

∘ A precision measurement of the π^0 decay width is needed.

The Primakoff Effect

- π^0 photoproduction from Coulomb field of nucleus.
- Equivalent production ($\gamma\gamma^* \rightarrow \pi^0$) and decay ($\pi^0 \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$) mechanism implies Primakoff cross section proportional to π^0 lifetime.
- Primakoff π^0 produced at very forward angles.

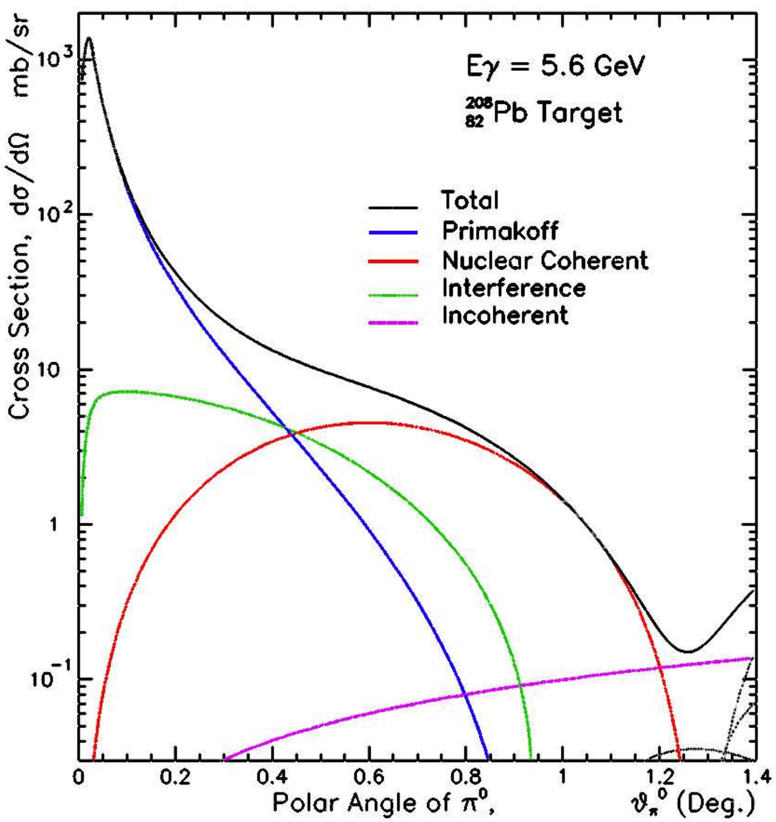


$$\frac{d\sigma_P}{d\Omega} = \Gamma_{(\pi^0 \rightarrow \gamma\gamma)} \frac{8\alpha_{em} Z^2}{m^3} \frac{\beta^3 E^4}{Q^4} |\tilde{F}_{em}(Q)|^2 sin^2\theta_\pi \qquad (2)$$

Full Cross Section Components

$$\frac{d\sigma_{\pi^0}}{d\Omega} = \frac{d\sigma_P}{d\Omega} + \frac{d\sigma_C}{d\Omega} + \frac{d\sigma_I}{d\Omega} + 2\cdot\sqrt{\frac{d\sigma_P}{d\Omega}\cdot\frac{d\sigma_C}{d\Omega}}cos(\phi) \quad (3)$$

Primakoff Nucl.Coherent Incoherent Interference



Primakoff:

Proportional to Z^2,

peaked at $\theta_{\pi^0} = m^2_{\pi^0}/2E^2_\gamma$

Nuclear Coherent:

$$\frac{d\sigma_C}{d\Omega} = C\cdot A^2|F_N(Q)|^2 sin^2\theta_\pi \quad (4)$$

Nuclear Incoherent:

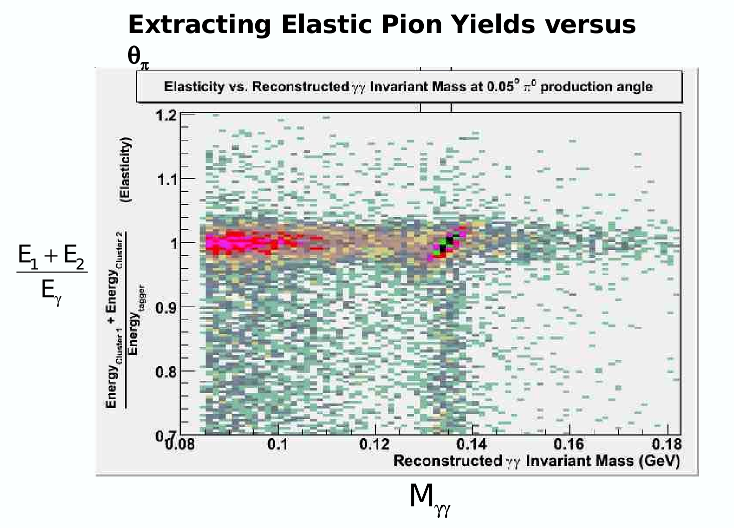
$$\frac{d\sigma_I}{d\Omega} = \xi A(1-G(Q))\frac{d\sigma_H}{d\Omega} \quad (5)$$

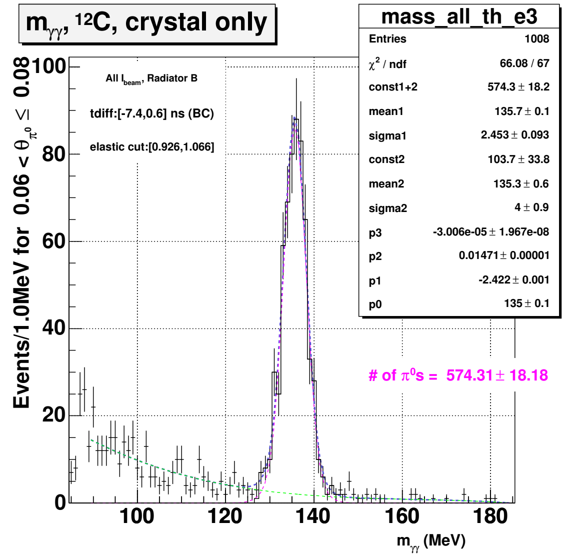
Interference:

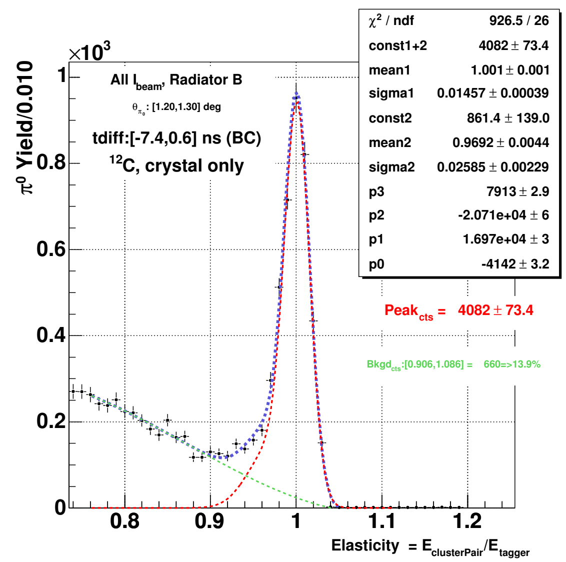
Experiment Overview

- Conducted at Jefferson Lab, Fall 2004
- Used 5.75 GeV continuous e^- beam and Hall B γ-tagging facility
- Tagged photons incident on $5\%X_0$ targets: ^{12}C and ^{208}Pb
- New PrimEx/Hall B calorimeter (HyCal), upstream of CLAS, designed to detect π^0 decay γ's
- Measured 3 physical processes (absolute cross sections): Primary - π^0 production, Secondary - Compton and e^+e^- pair production
- Improvements over previous experiments: Precision tagged γ flux and incident γ energy info, enhanced π^0 angular and mass resolution, and identification and subtraction of background event contamination

Analysis Details: π^0 Yield Extraction

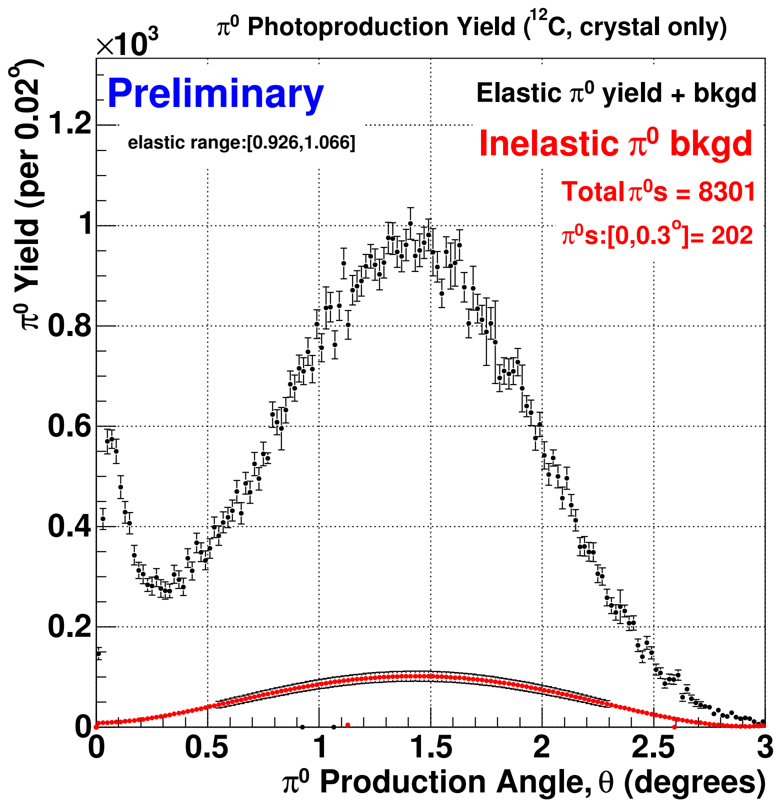


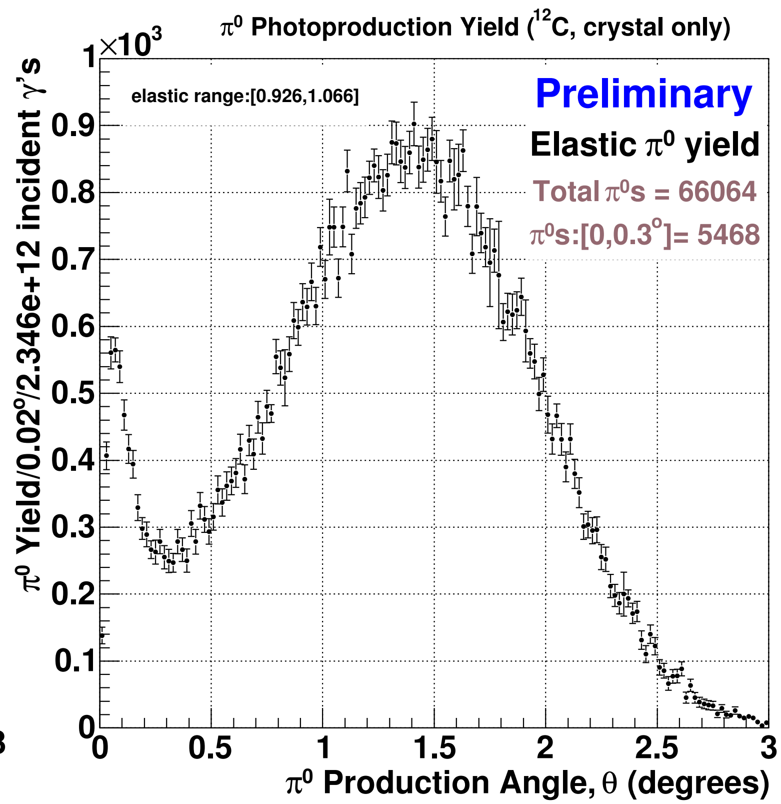




- For each θ_{π^0} bin, apply elastic cut and form $m_{\gamma\gamma}$ distributions; perform fit and extract peak counts = uncorrected yield.
- Correct for inelastic bkgd by evaluating π^0 elasticity distribution explicitly for each θ_{π^0}; evaluate inelastic bkgd under the elastic peak using fit and subtract from yield.

Analysis Details: π^0 Yield Result from ^{12}C Target





Analysis Details: $\Gamma_{\pi^0 \to \gamma\gamma}$ Determination

- Convert Yield to Cross Section.

$$\frac{d\sigma_{exp}}{d\theta_{\pi^0}} = \frac{N_{\pi^0}^{yield}(\theta_{\pi^0})}{N_\gamma \times N_t \times \varepsilon_{\pi^0}(\theta_{\pi^0}) \times \Delta\theta_{\pi^0}} \tag{6}$$

→ where $N_\gamma \equiv$ # of γ's on target (uncertainty $\sim 1.1\%$).

→ where $N_t \equiv$ target atoms/cm^2 (thickness mapped to $\sim 0.05\%$).

→ where $\varepsilon_{\pi^0} \equiv$ experimental acceptance (uncertainty $\sim 0.6\%$).

- Fit experimental data with parameterization:

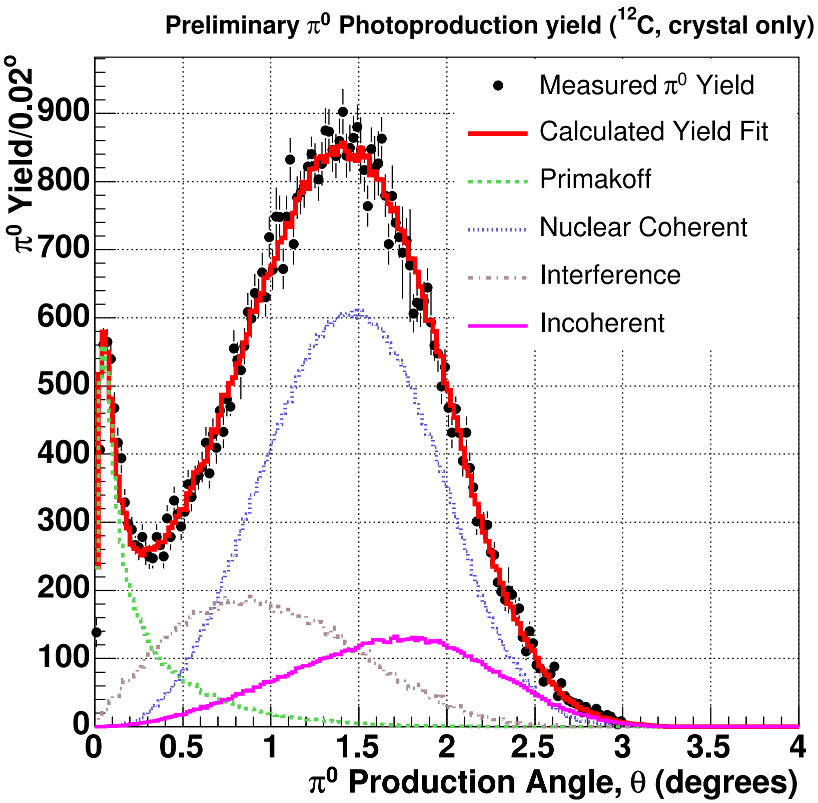
$$\frac{d\sigma_{exp}}{d\theta_{\pi^0}} = b_p \frac{d\sigma_P}{d\Omega} + b_c \frac{d\sigma_N}{d\Omega} + b_i \frac{d\sigma_I}{d\Omega} + 2cos\phi \sqrt{b_p b_c \frac{d\sigma_P}{d\Omega} \frac{d\sigma_C}{d\Omega}} \tag{7}$$

→ where the parameter $b_p = \Gamma_{\gamma\gamma}$

∘ Vary the four parameters (b_p, b_c, b_i, and ϕ) and minimize χ^2.

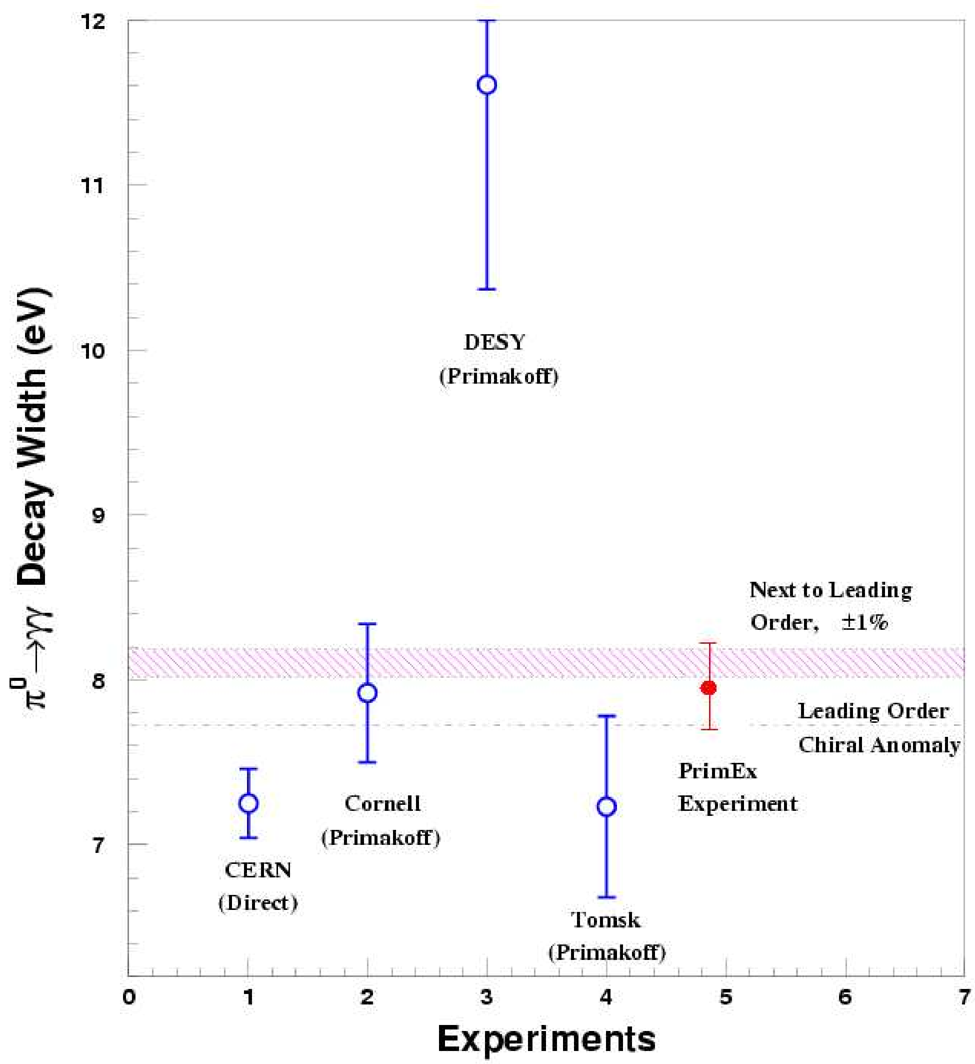
Yield Fit Result and Systematic Error Table

$m_{\gamma\gamma}$ fits + inelast bkgd corr.	± 1.0
inelastic bkgd shape uncert.	± 0.75
Photon flux	± 1.1
Incoherent XS shape uncert.	± 1.3
Nuclear coh. XS energy dep.	± 0.04
Detection/Recon efficiency	± 0.5
Fiducial Acceptance	± 0.3
Event Selection	± 1.0
Target thick. + branch ratio	± 0.06
Tagged Photon Energy	± 0.1
Total Systematic	$\pm 2.4\%$



Prelim. Result: $\Gamma_{\pi^0 \to \gamma\gamma} = 7.93\text{eV} \pm 1.6\%(\text{stat}) \pm 2.4\%(\text{syst})$

$\Gamma_{\pi^0 \to \gamma\gamma}$ Preliminary Result



Summary and Outlook

- High Quality precision π^0 photoproduction data on ^{12}C and ^{208}Pb targets using $4.9 \leq E_\gamma^{tagged} \leq 5.5$ GeV has been collected and analyzed by the PrimEx Collaboration.
- Preliminary cross section results from studied calibration reactions e^+e^- production and Compton scattering are both in excellent agreement with theory (at the $3-4\%$ level).
- All three ∼independent π^0 analysis groups have achieved very consistent results.
- The preliminary π^0 partial width result from this analysis: $\Gamma_{\pi^0\rightarrow\gamma\gamma} = 7.93\text{eV} \pm 1.6\%(\text{stat}) \pm 2.4\%(\text{syst})$.
- Above value is consistent with both the LO prediction and the NLO ChPT prediction.
- Continued work on reducing systematic error and finalizing Lead target results.