Nuclear Physics and Cosmological Lithium Problem: results from the n_TOF facility at CERN on ^{7}Be saga

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2-CERN

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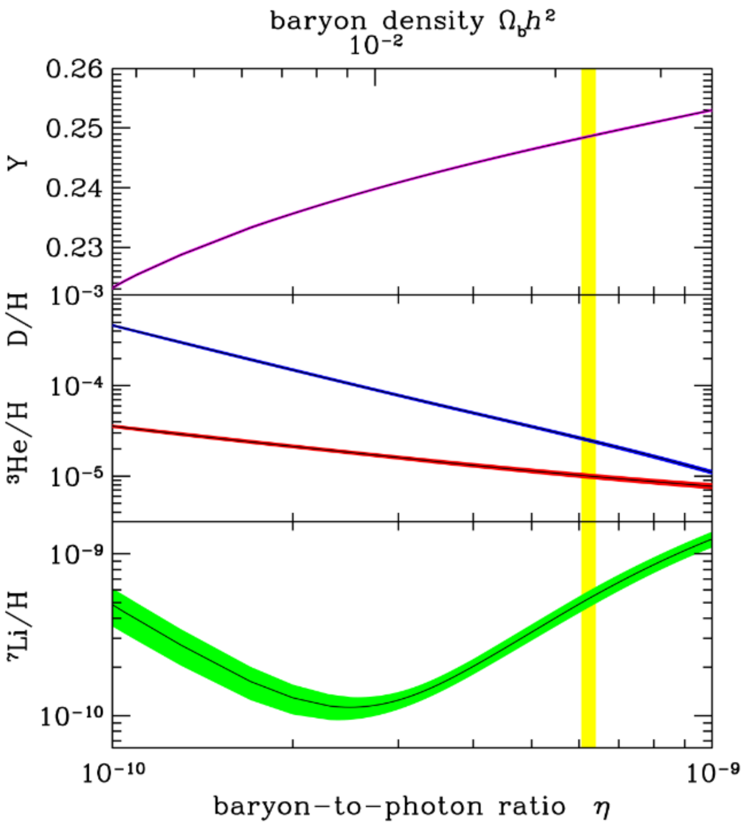
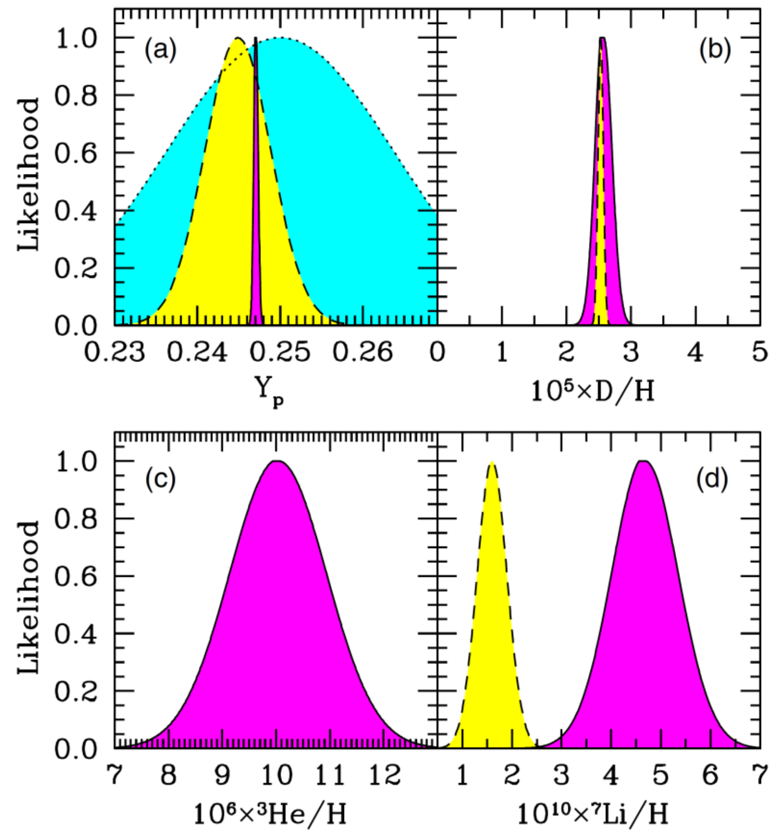
Summary

- The Cosmological Lithium Problem
- The ^{7}Be(n,α) and the ^{7}Be(n,p) cross section measurements
- Implications for Nuclear Astrophysics
- Conclusions and Perspectives

Cosmological Lithium Problem

BBN successfully predicts the abundancies of light elements, i.e. D and ^{4}He, but…



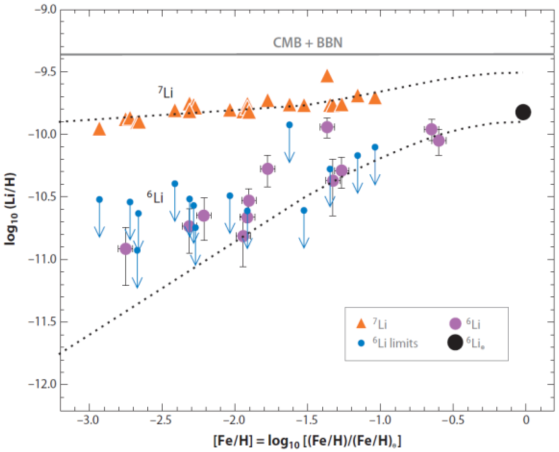


Serious discrepancy between the predicted abundance of **^{7}Li** and the value inferred by measurements (Spite et al.) → **Cosmological Lithium problem (CLiP)**

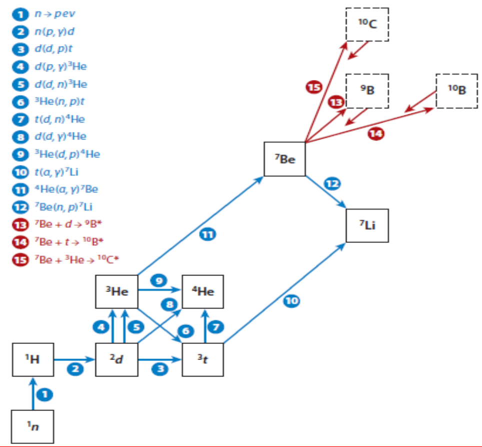
Solutions to CLiP

(At least) Three classes of solutions for this longstanding problem:

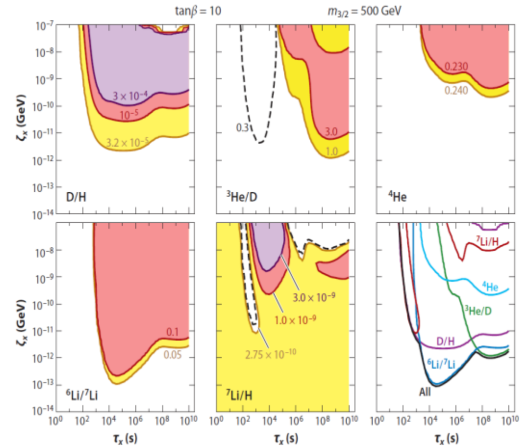
Astrophysical



Nuclear Physics



Non Standard Physics



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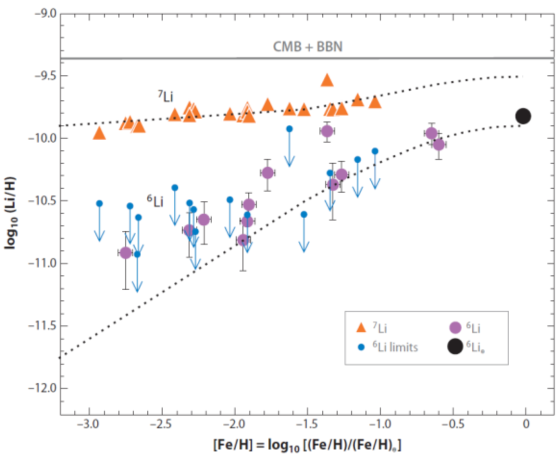

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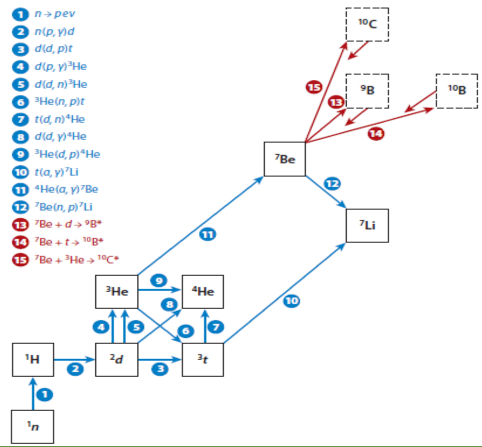

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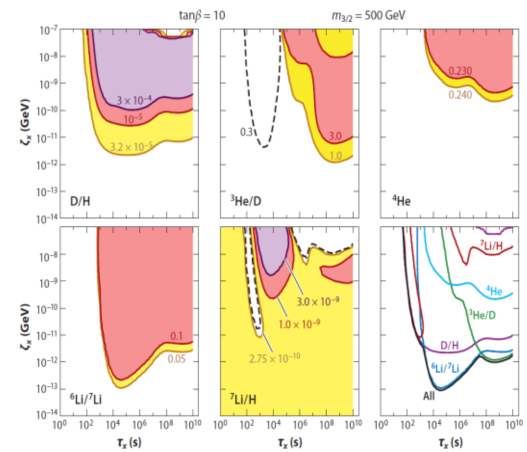
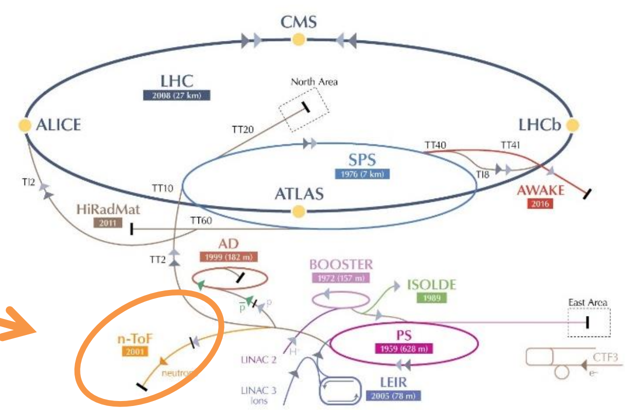


Neutron Time Of Flight facility: **n_TOF**

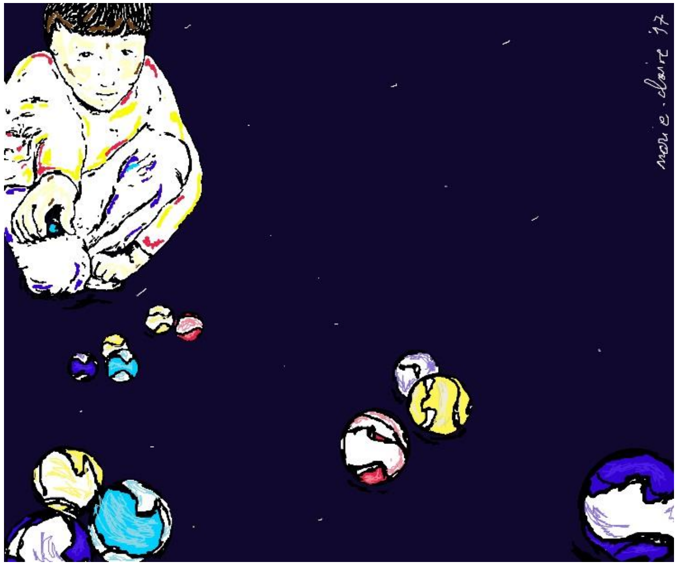


Cosmological Lithium Problem and ^{7}Be

Approximately 95% of primordial **^{7}Li** is produced from the **electron capture decay** of **^{7}Be** (**$T_{1/2}$=53.2 d**).

Nuclear Physics solution to CLiP

- ^{7}Be decay rate in plasma(?)
- ^{7}Be production channels have been widely investigated and they are known with good accuracy.
- ^{7}Be is destroyed via **(n,p)** and (p,x), (d,x), (^{3}He,x), … reactions. Small contribution of the **(n,α)** reactions according to **estimated** cross section.



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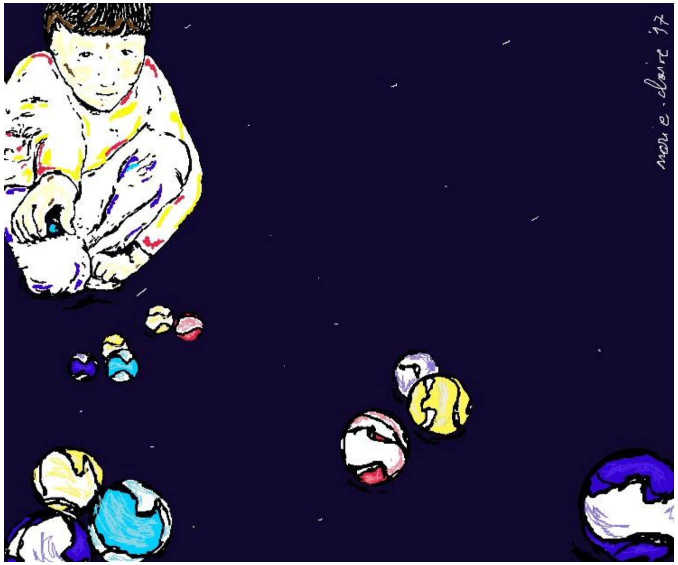
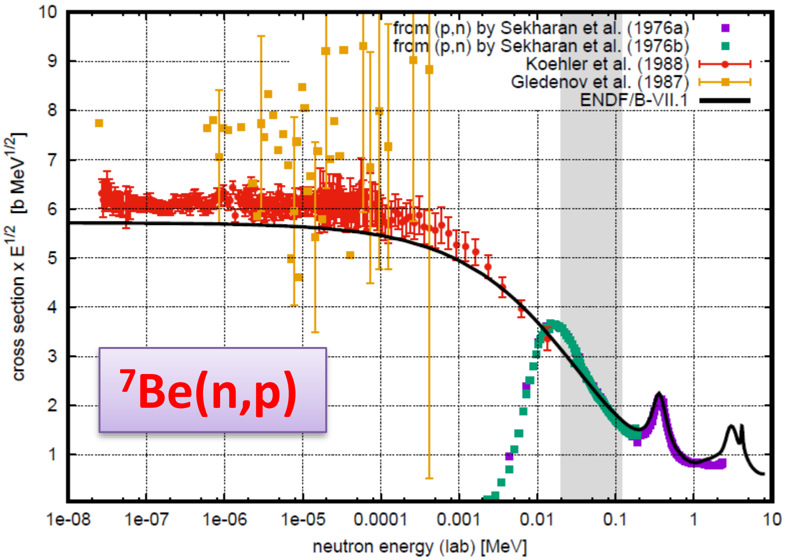
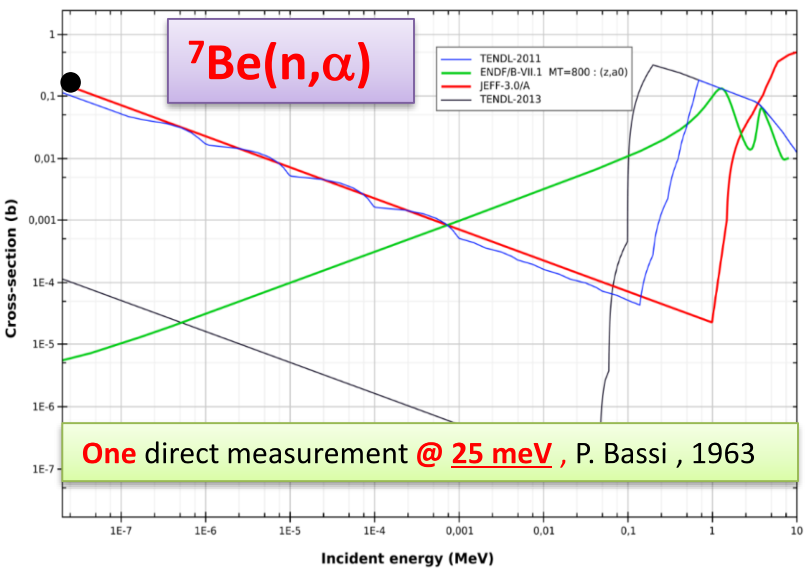
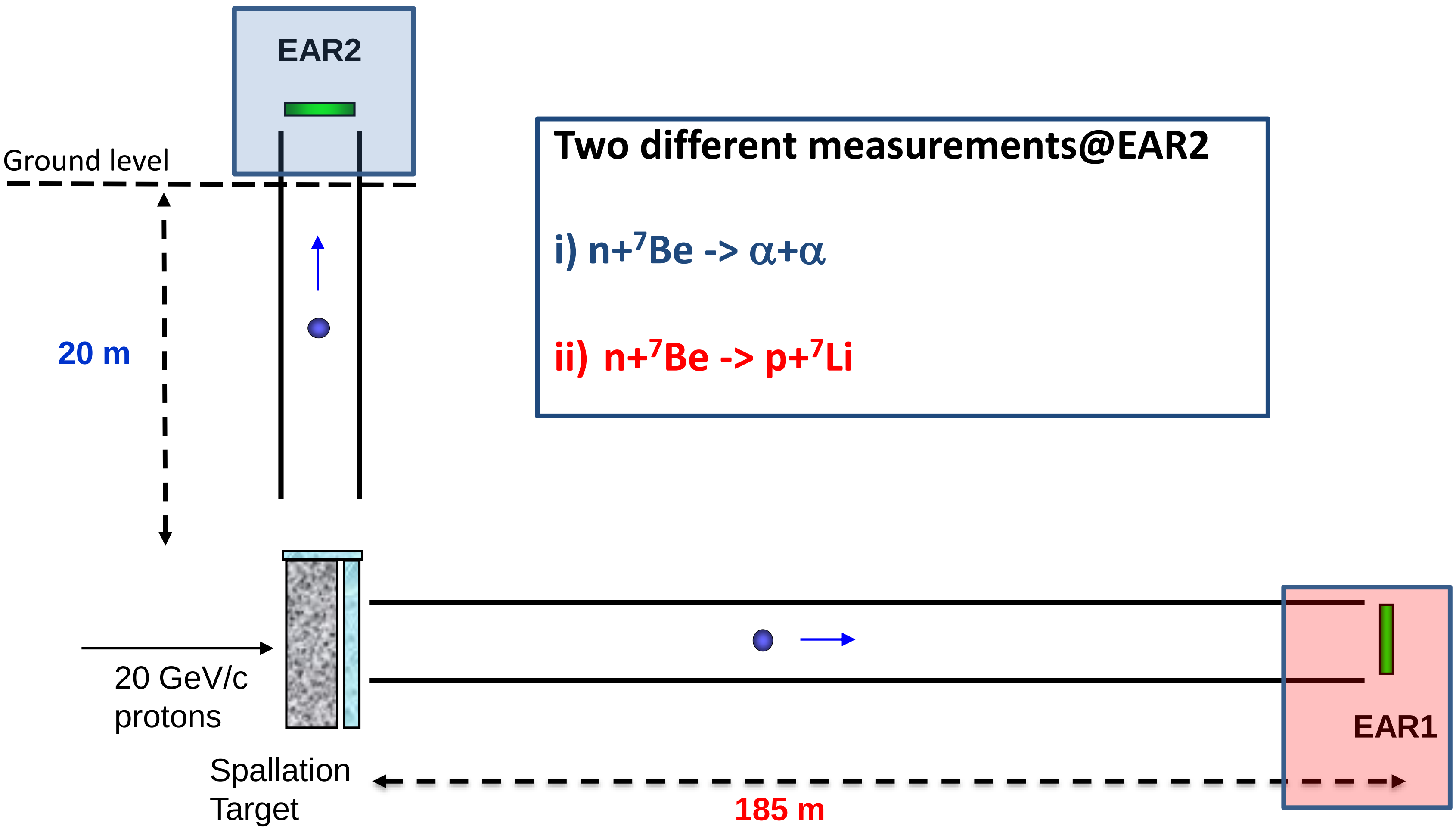






n_TOF program on CLiP

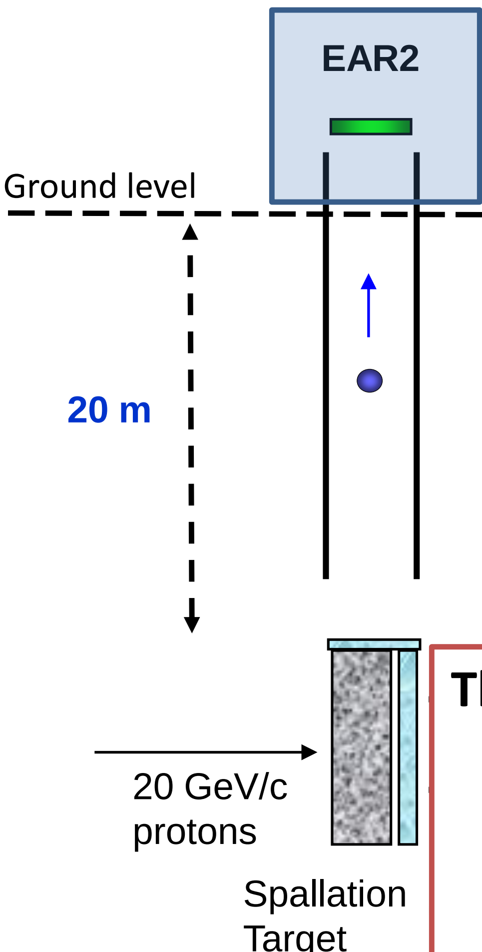


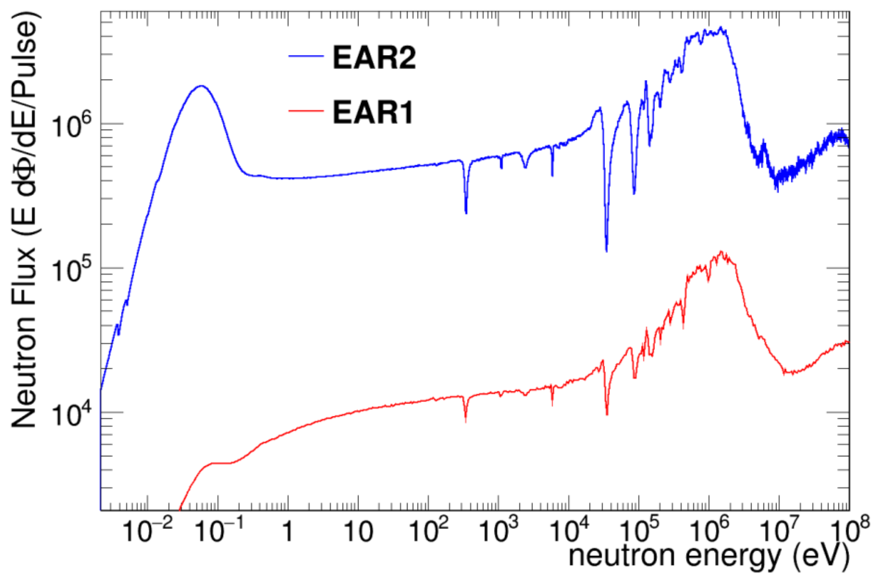
Two different measurements@EAR2

i) n+^{7}Be -> α+α

ii) n+^{7}Be -> p+^{7}Li

n_TOF program on CLiP





The much higher flux in EAR2 allows to:

- measure samples of **very small mass (<<1 mg)**
- measure **short-lived radioisotopes** (i.e. **53.2 d!**)
- collect data on a much **shorter time**
- **measure (n,charged particle)** reactions with **thin samples**

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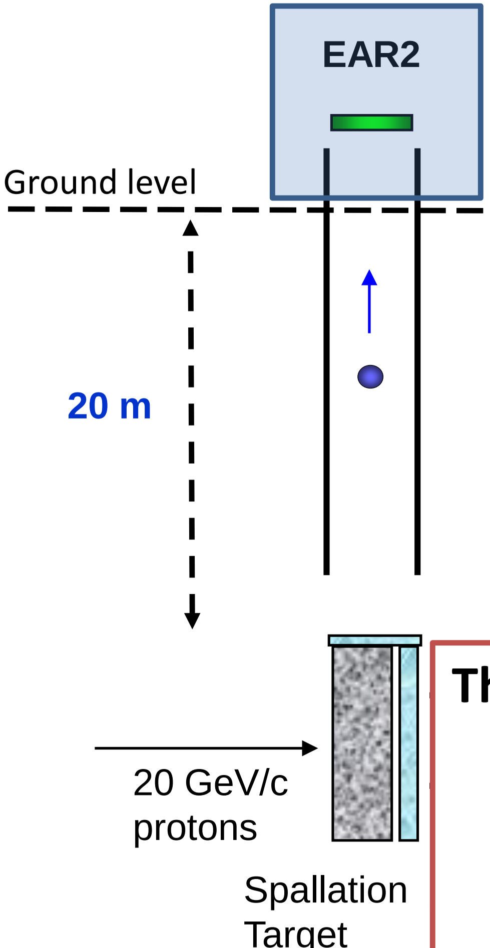

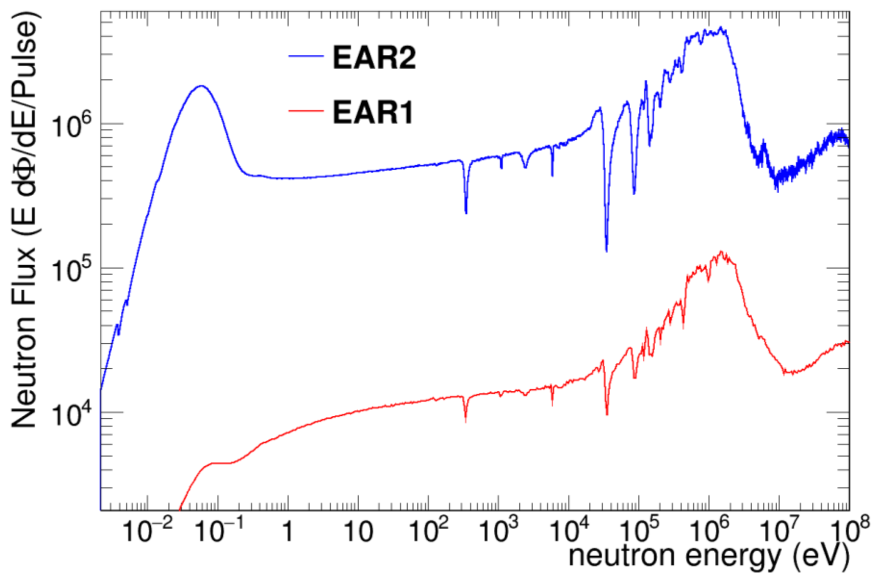

Be-7

13 GBq/μg !!!

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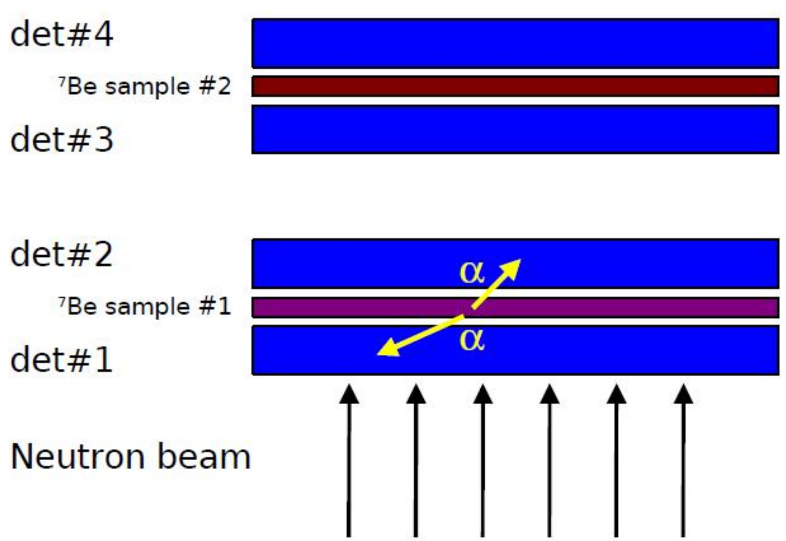
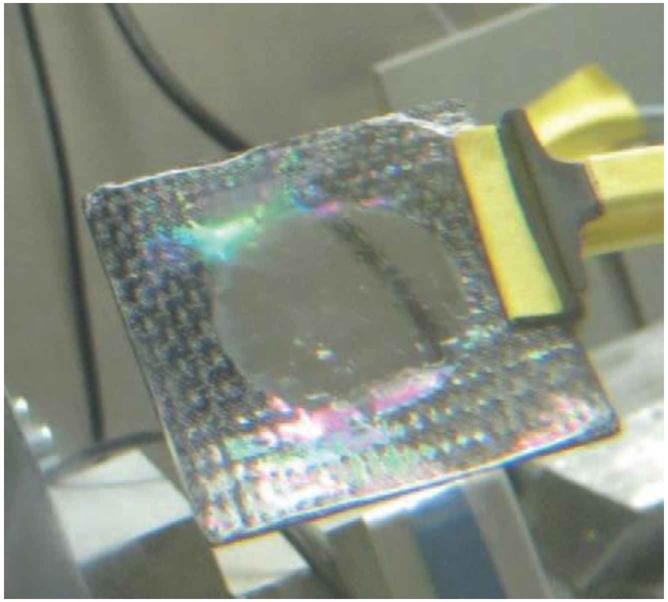
$^7Be(n,\gamma\alpha)^4He$ measurement: the making of

n + ^{7}Be ----> ^{8}Be* ----> $\alpha + \alpha\ (+\gamma)$ Q ~ 19 MeV

- Silicon detectors directly inserted in the beam
- Two different samples, 40 GBq total activity (prepared with different and independent techniques)



L. Cosentino et al. (n_TOF Coll.), NIM A 830 (2016) 197-205

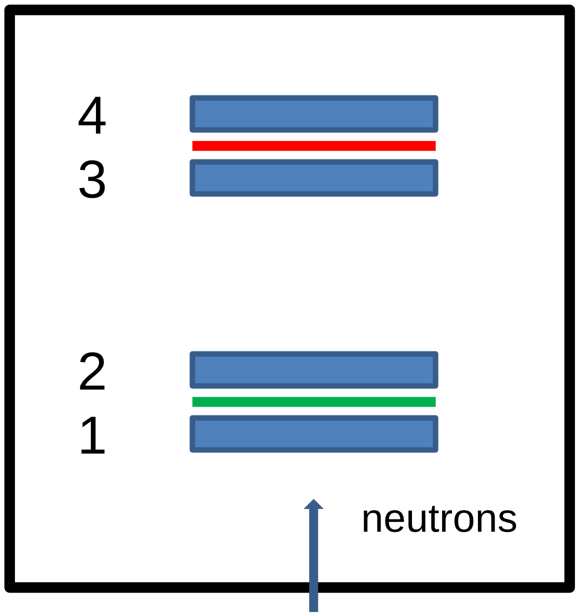


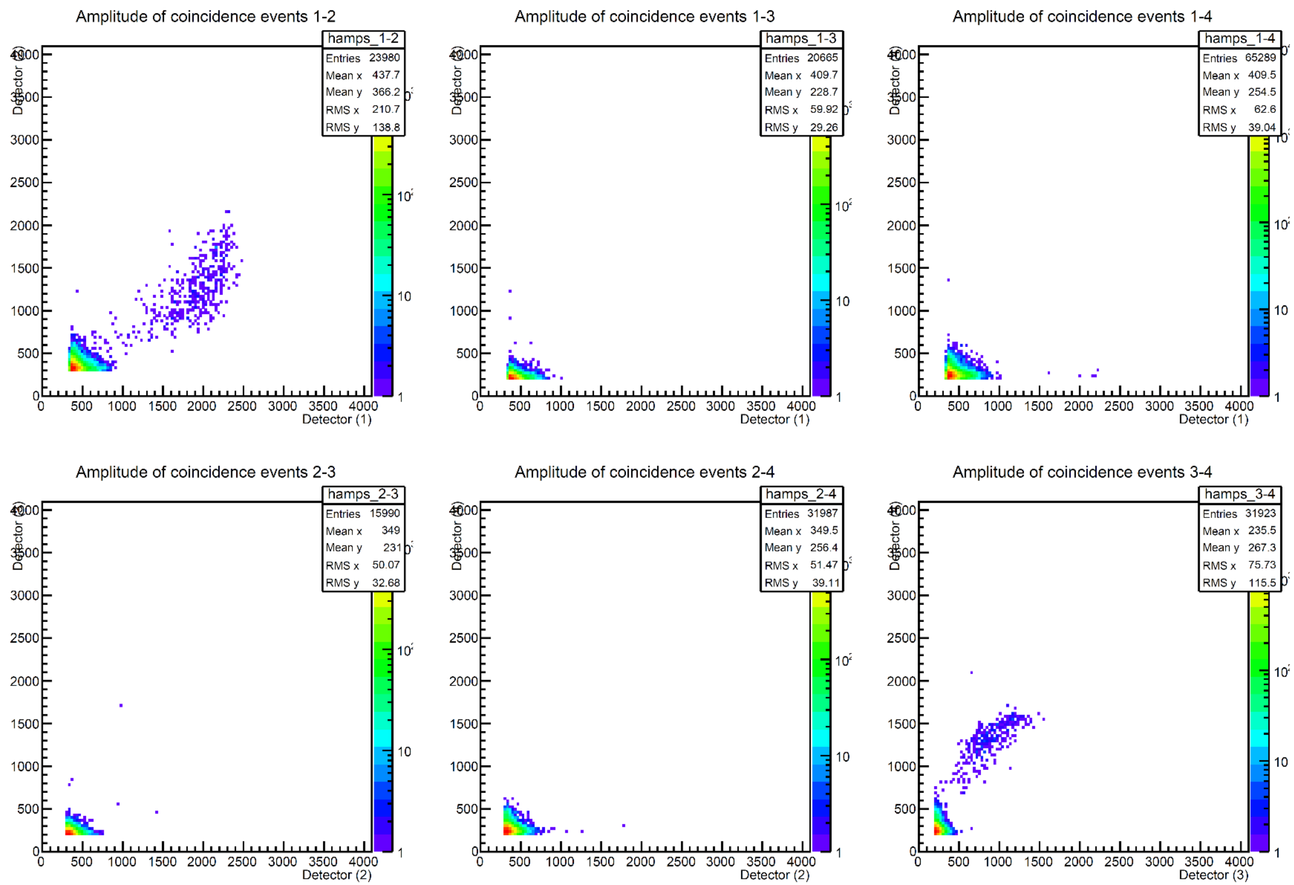
E. Maugeri et al. (n_TOF Coll.), Journ. of Instr., 12, P02016, (2017)

Such a setup offered, among other features, redundancy, allowing to reduce systematic uncertainties.

$^7Be(n,\gamma\alpha)$ cross-section measurement

Two different sandwiches of silicon detectors.





Possible to evaluate random coincidences comparing uncorrelated couples of detectors.

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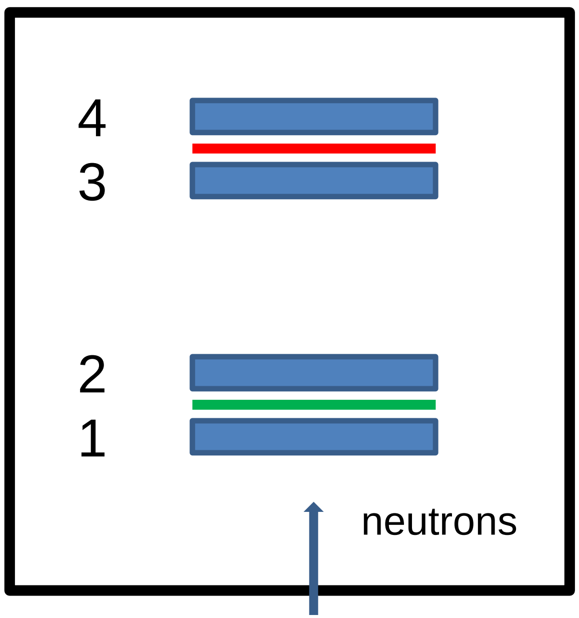

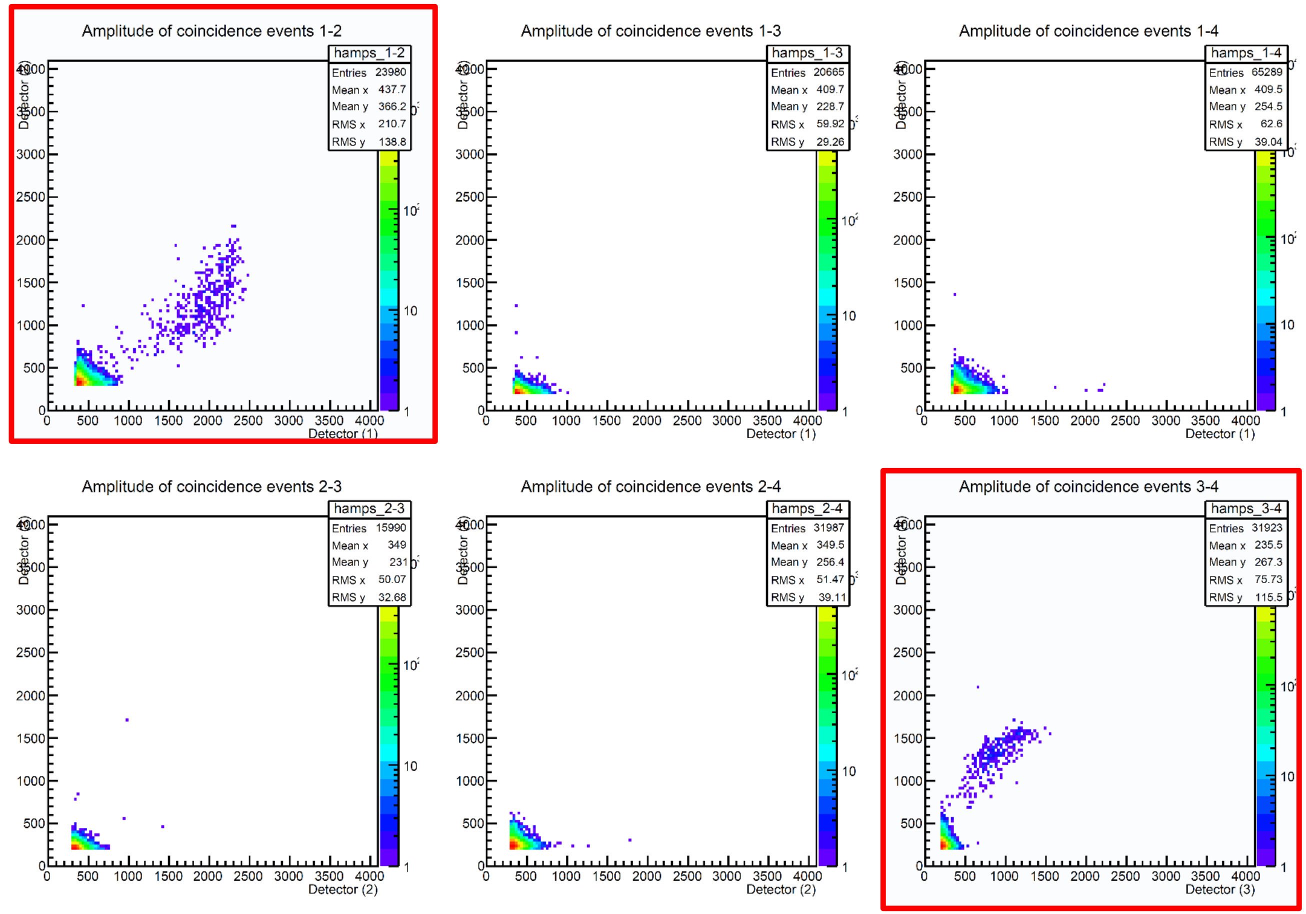

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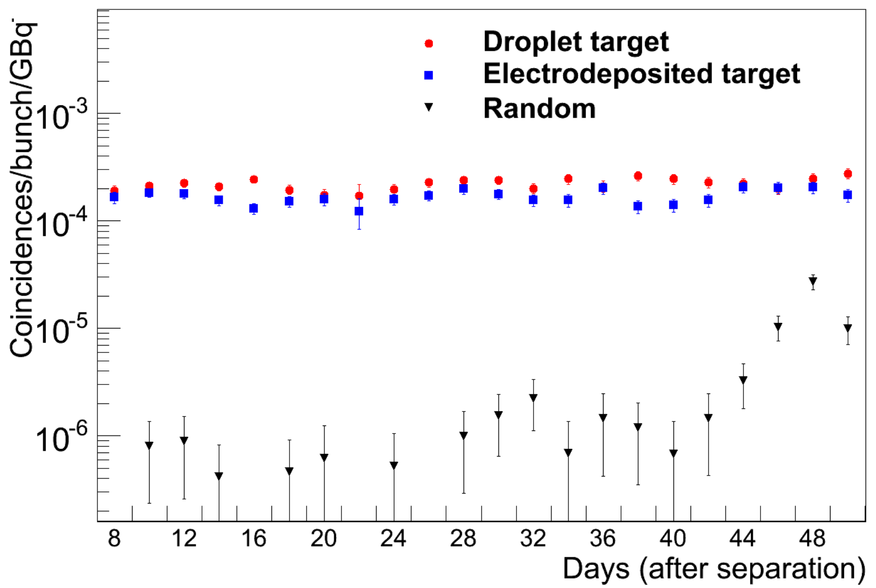
$^{7}Be(n,\gamma\alpha)^{4}He$ measurement: background rejection

Strong rejection of background: coincidence signals, low duty cycle beam, Time-of-Flight.

- Protons from $^{7}Be(n,p)$ reactions
- γ from ^{7}Be decay
- $n+^{7}Li \longrightarrow ^{8}Li \xrightarrow{\beta\text{-decay}} ^{8}Be^{*}$ (800 ms) $\longrightarrow \alpha+\alpha$
- $^{9}Be(n,2n)$, $^{7}Li(p,\gamma)$, $^{7}Be(p,\gamma)$

E_{dep}> 2 MeV



$^7Be(n,\gamma\alpha)^4He$ measurement: background rejection

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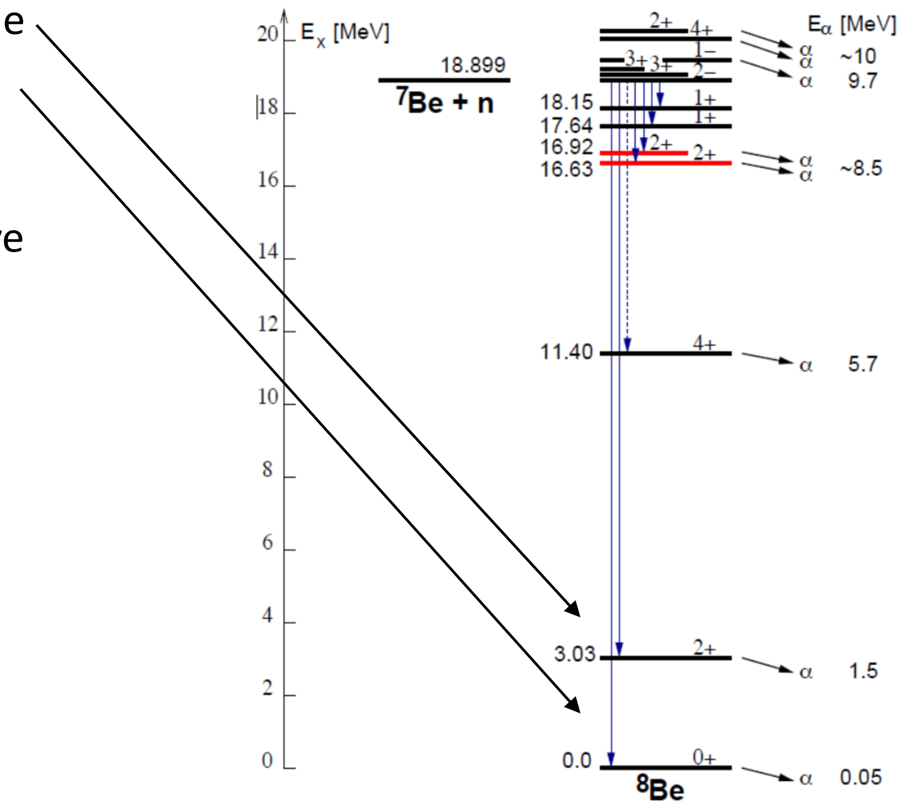
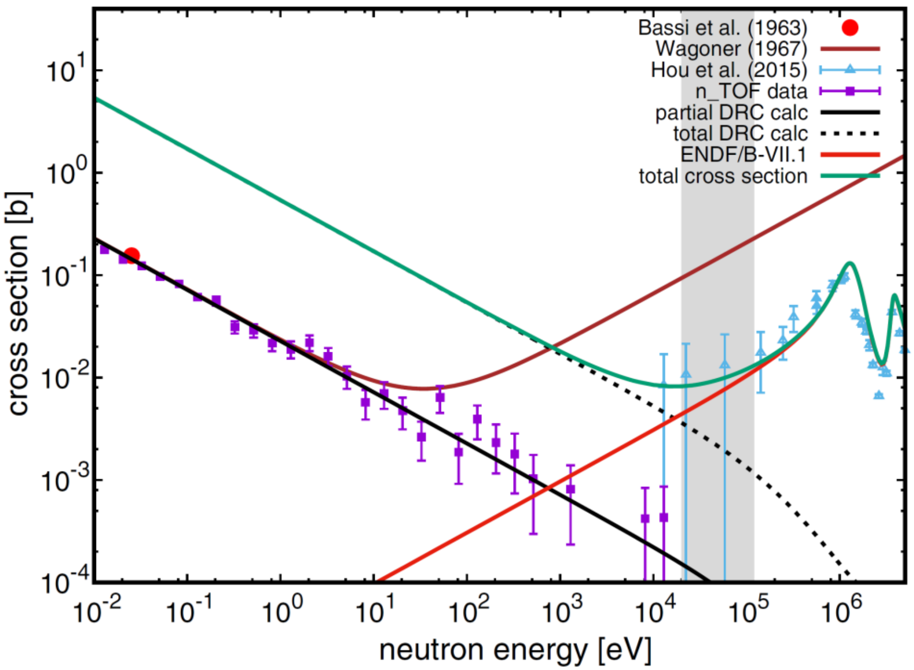
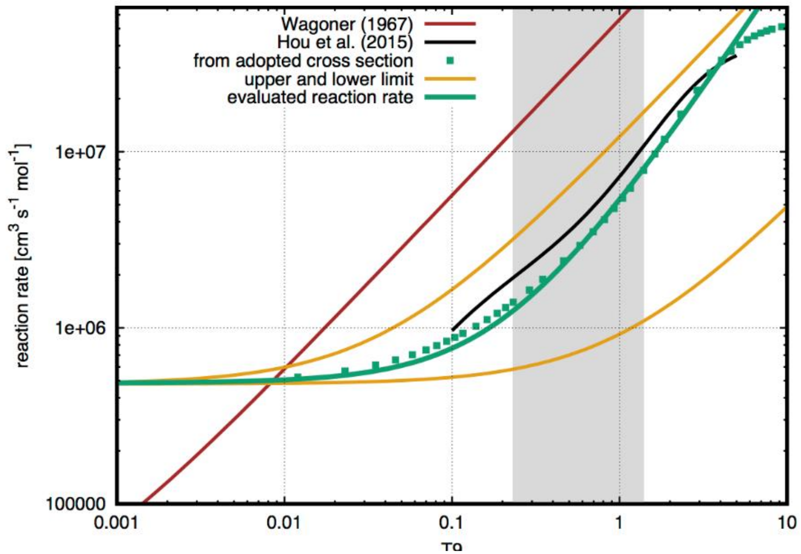
Two low energy states of ^8Be not accessible experimentally.

Missing states fractional contributions have been calculated.



$^{7}Be(n,\alpha)^{4}He$ n_TOF results and CLiP





$$N_A\langle\sigma v\rangle = 4.81\times10^5 + 1.84\times10^6 T_9 + 3.03\times10^6 T_9^{3/2}$$

M. Barbagallo et al. (n_TOF Coll.), Phys. Rev. Lett. 117, 152701, 2016

- http://home.cern/about/updates/2016/10/ntof-plays-hide-and-seek-cosmological-lithium
- http://home.infn.it/it/comunicazione/news/1999-il-mistero-nascosto-nei-primi-tre-minuti-di-vita-dell-universo

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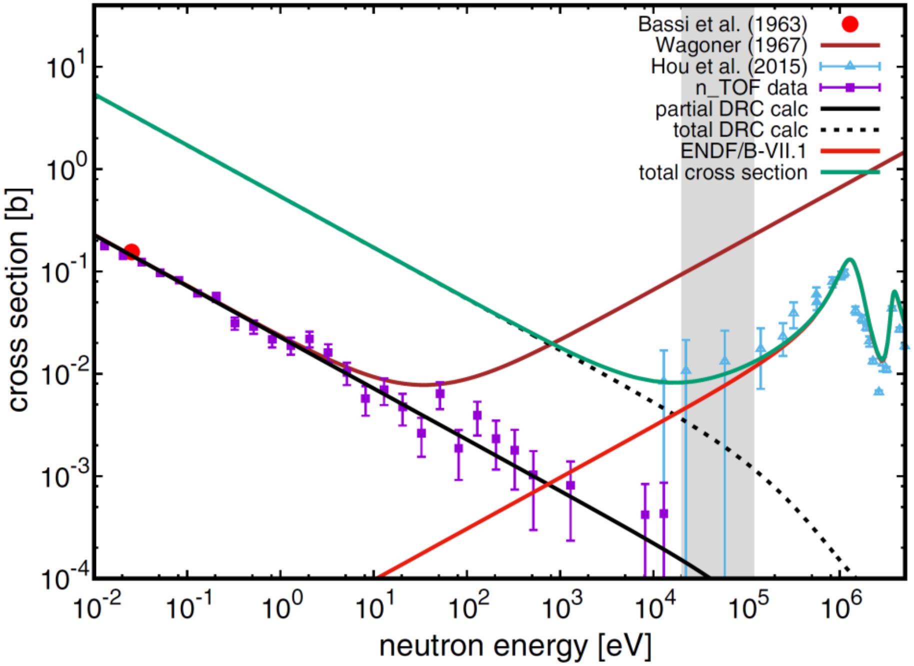

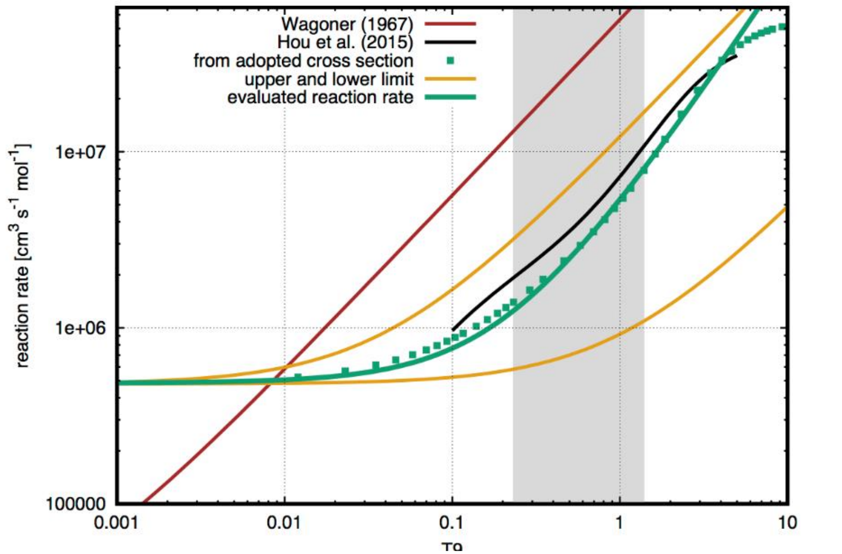

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As for (n,α) measurement, the Cosmological Lithium Problem gets worse!

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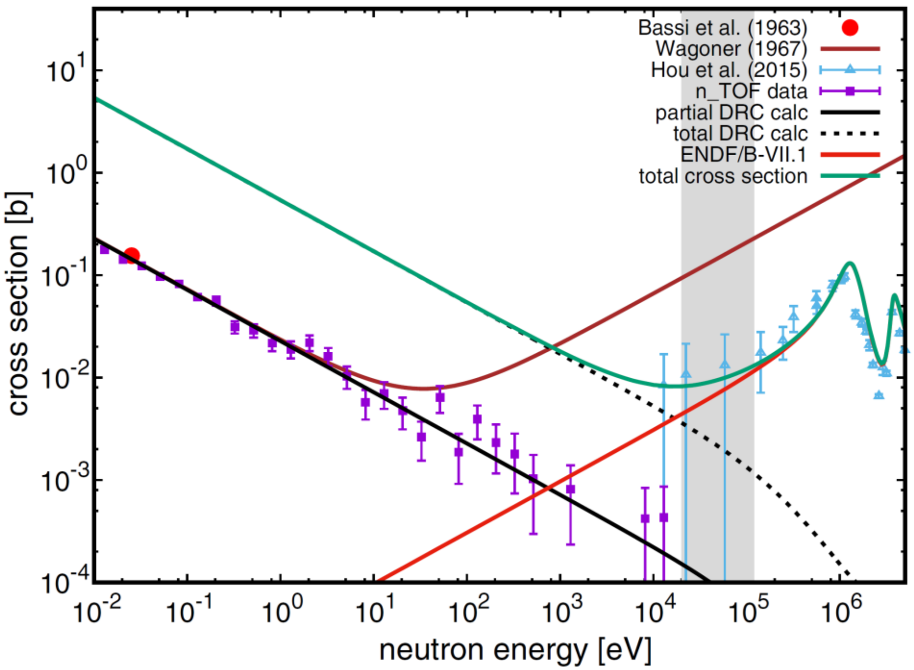

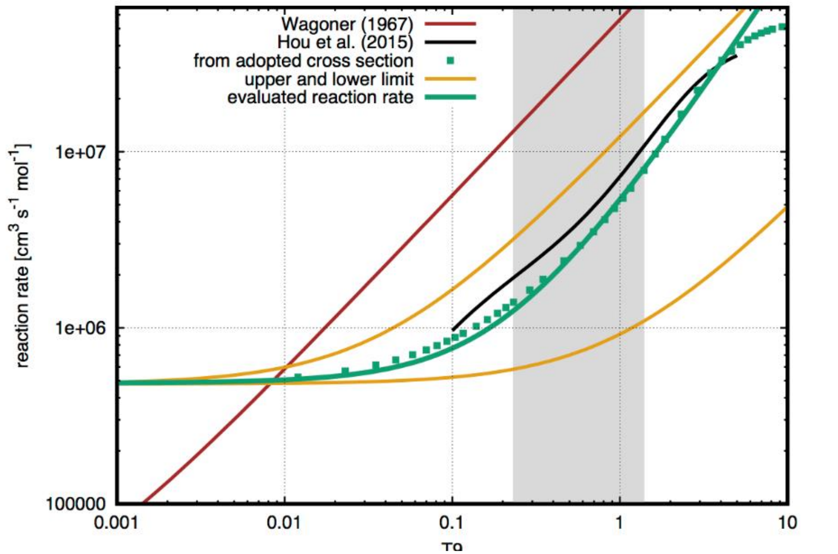

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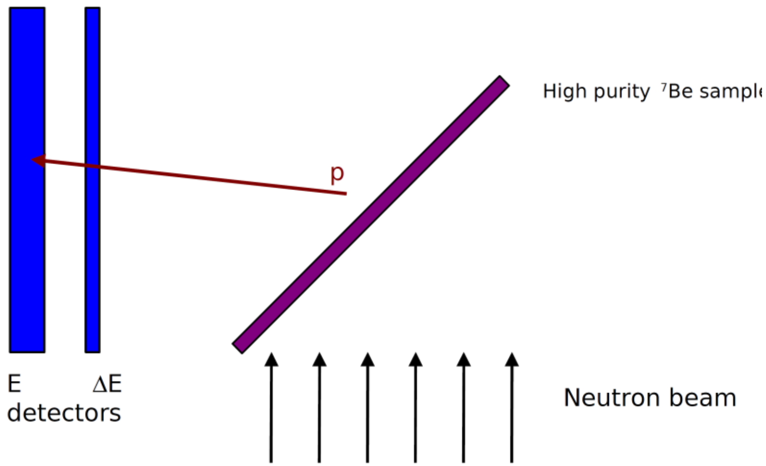
T. Kawabata et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 118, 052701, 2017

$^{7}Be(n,p)^{7}Li$ measurement

$n + {}^{7}Be \longrightarrow {}^{8}Be^{*} \longrightarrow p + {}^{7}Li \quad Q \sim 1.64$ MeV

Detection and identification of protons of 1.4 MeV and 1 MeV

Silicon telescope @n_TOF-EAR2.



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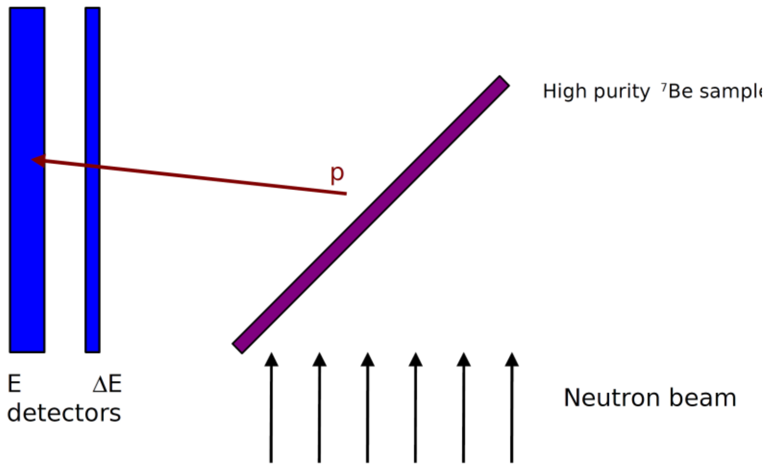

1 GBq <u>high purity sample needed</u>

(Chemical separation not sufficient)

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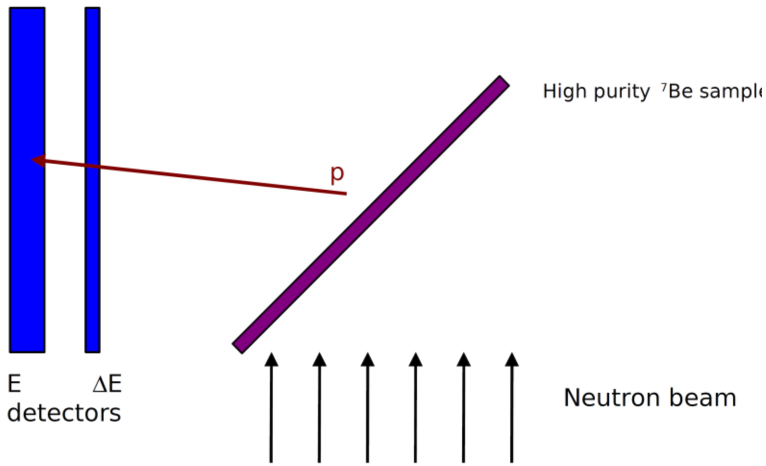

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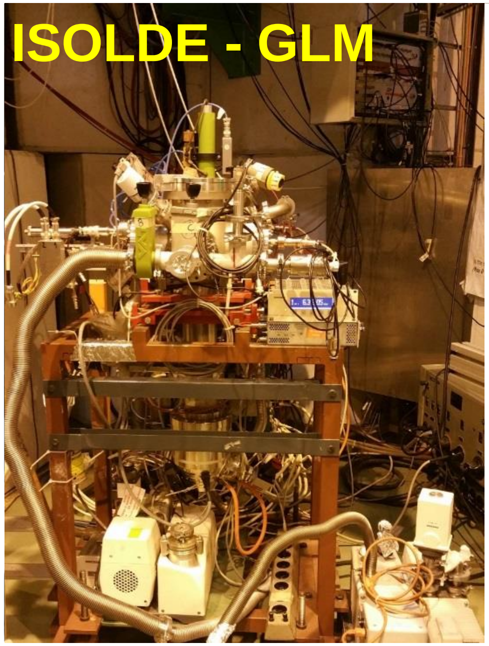
- **First joint n_TOF-ISOLDE experiment**
- **First time ever measurement of a neutron induced reaction cross-section using a target produced with a radioactive beam.**

$^{7}Be(n,p)^{7}Li$ measurement

A three steps experiment:

- Extraction of 200 GBq from water cooling of SINQ spallation source at PSI.
- Implantation of 30 keV (~45 nA) ^{7}Be beam on suited backing using ISOLDE-GPS separator and RILIS.
- Measurement at n_TOF-EAR2 using a silicon telescope (20 and 300 μm, 5x5 cm^2 strip device).



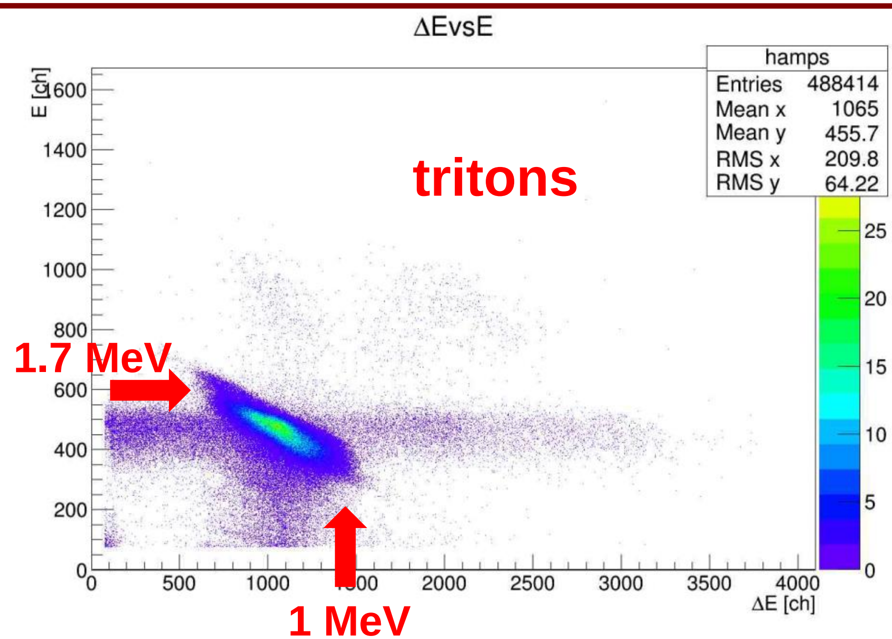
E. Maugeri et al., Nucl. Instr. and Meth., in press.
M. Barbagallo et al., Nucl. Instr. and Meth. A 887 (2018) 27-3

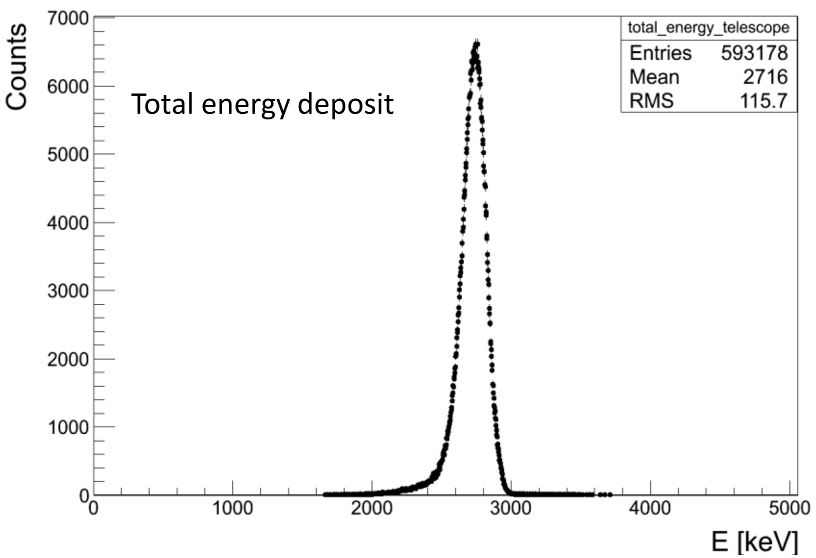
$^{7}Be(n,p)^{7}Li$ measurement

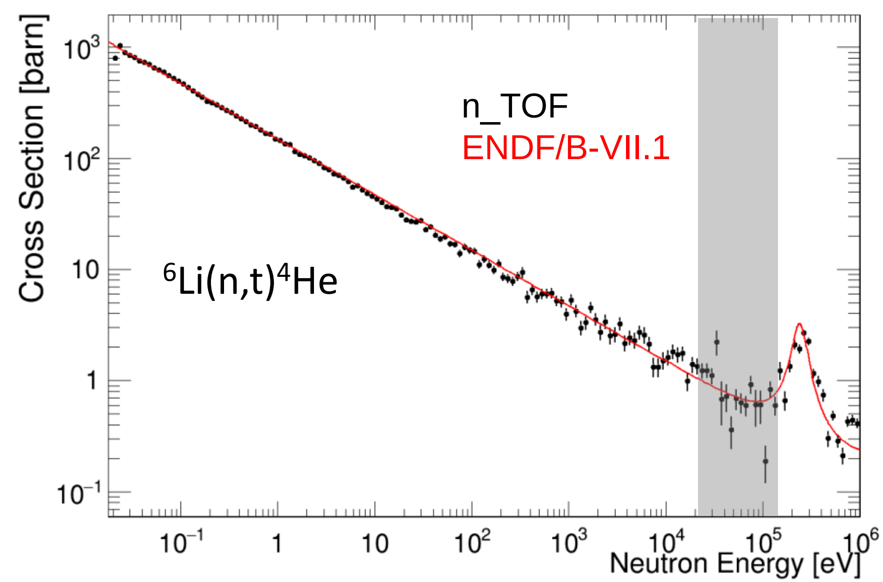
The detection system was characterized using α-source and the well-known $^{6}Li(n,t)^{4}He$ reaction.

$n + {}^{6}Li \text{ ----> } {}^{7}Li^{*} \text{ ----> } t + {}^{4}He$

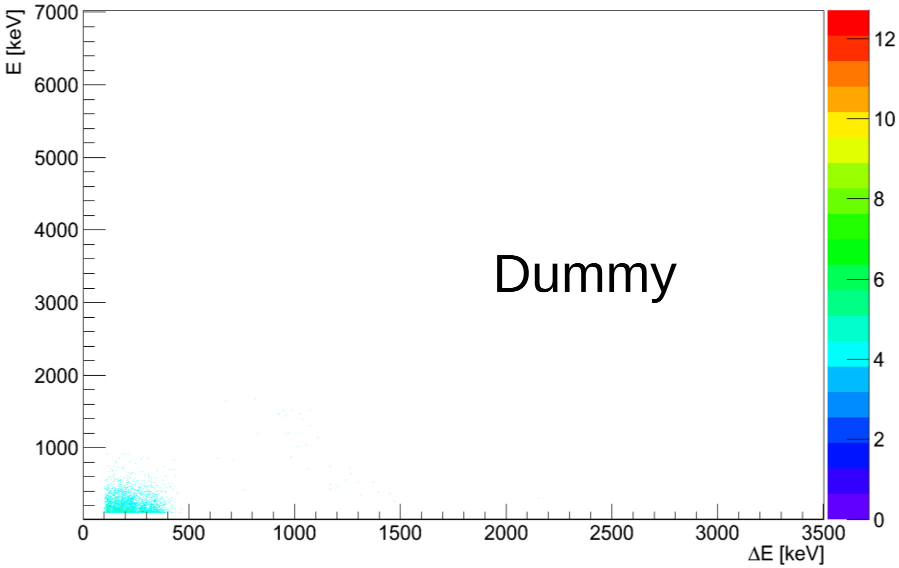
Q = 4.78 MeV

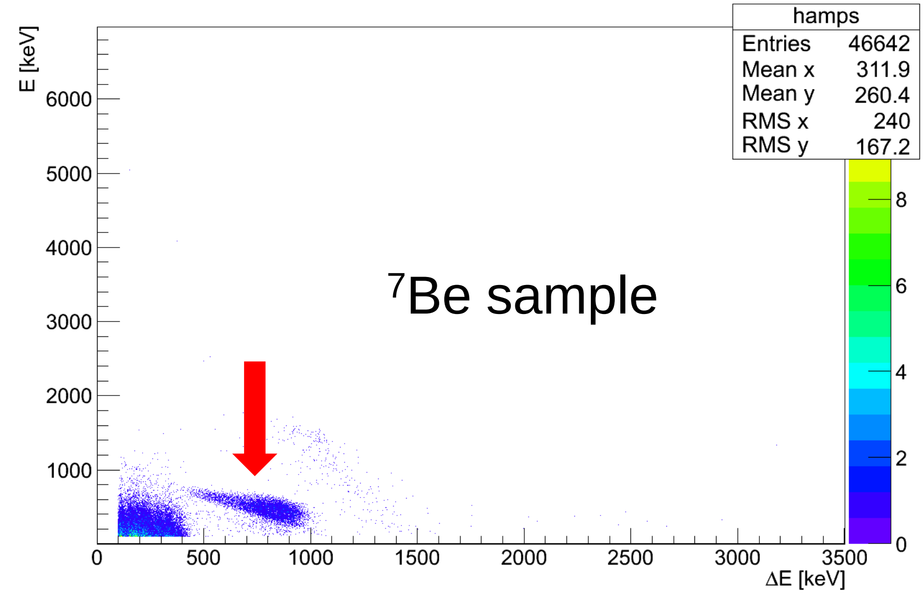


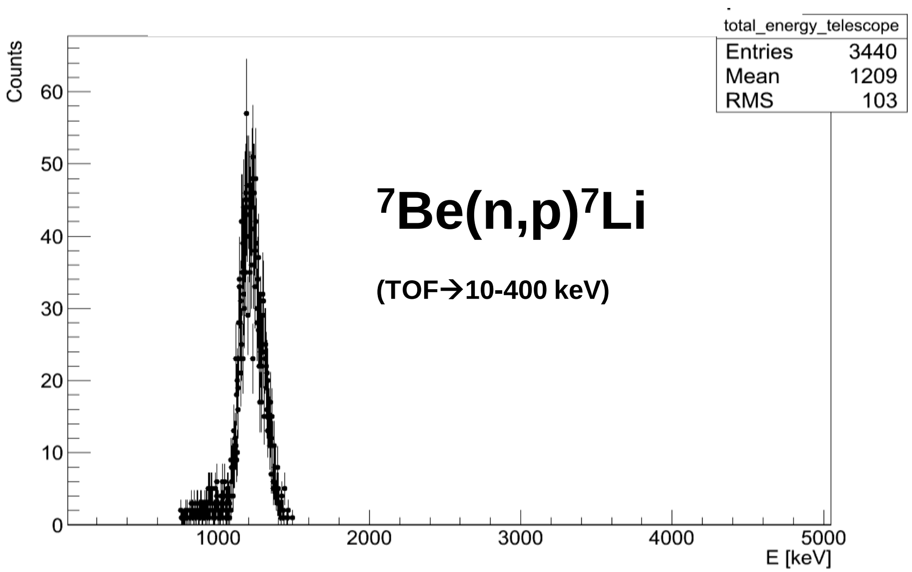




$^7Be(n,p)^7Li$ measurement results







First time ever direct measurement of ^{7}Be(n,p) reaction in the range of interest for Big Bang Nucleosynthesis.

Stay tuned…

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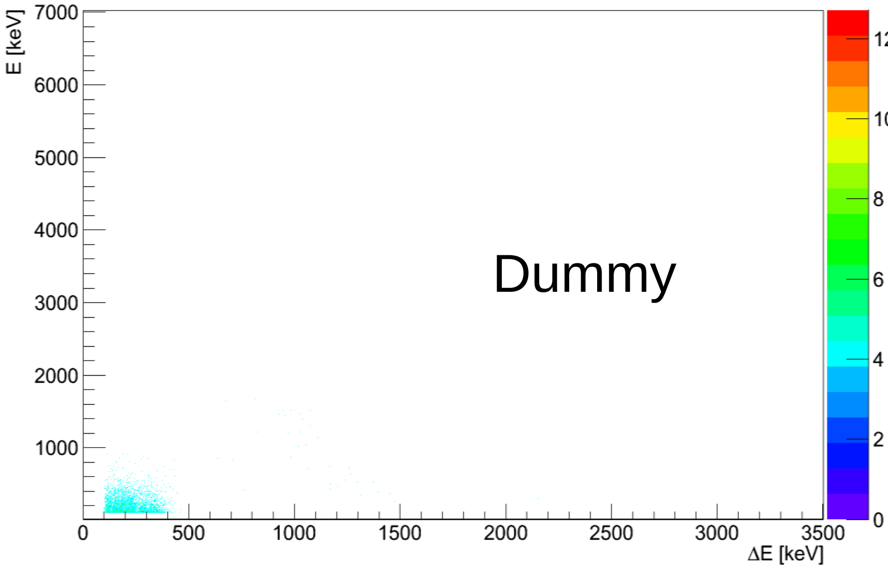

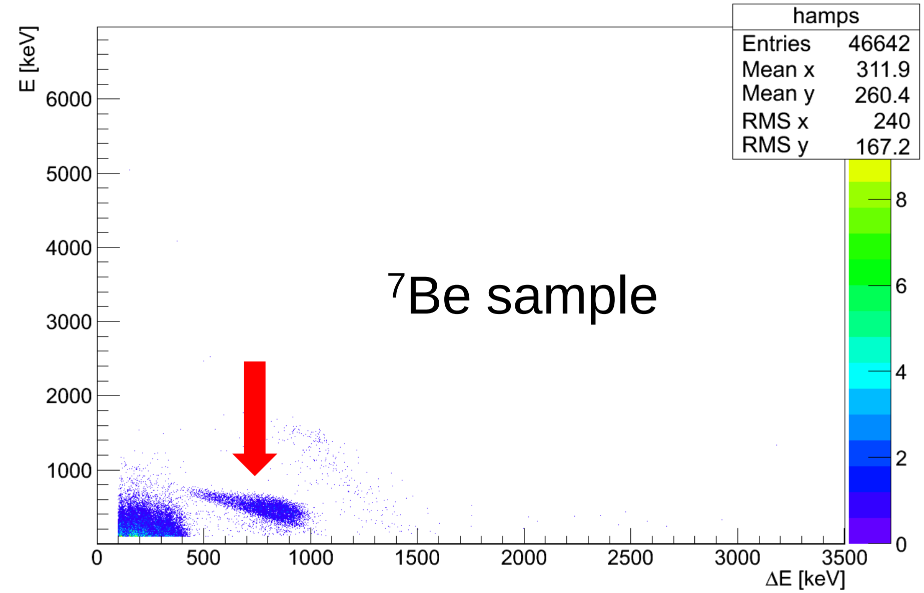

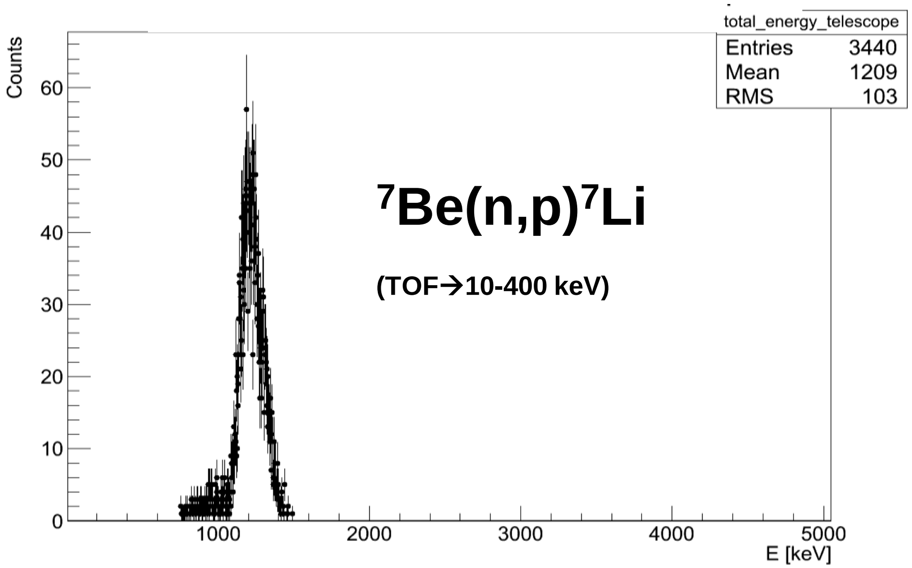

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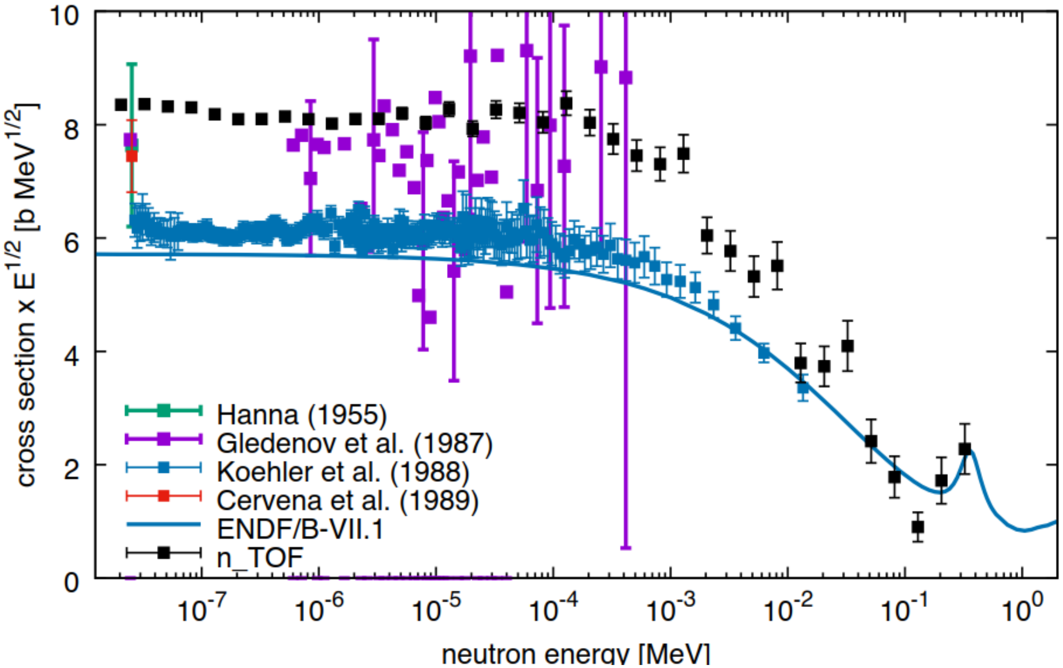

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~~**Stay tuned...**~~

Conclusions

• Uncertainties in nuclear data strongly affect the Big Bang Nucleosynthesis calculations for the abundance of ^{7}Li and could possibly explain (at least shade new light on) the **C**osmological **Li**thium **P**roblem.

• **^{7}Be(n,α)^{4}He cross-section has been measured for the first time in a wide energy range**, using **n_TOF-EAR2** neutron beam and two samples prepared at **PSI**.

• The **^{7}Be(n,p)^{7}Li** cross-section measurement has been performed at **n_TOF-EAR2**, using a **1.1 GBq** pure sample implanted at **ISOLDE** from 0.02 eV to 500 keV **(first time at BBN energy window).**

•The new estimate of the ^{7}Be destruction rate **based on the new n_TOF results** yields a decrease of the predicted cosmological Lithium abundance **insufficient to provide a viable solution to the Cosmological Lithium Problem.**

• **Solution to CLiP is somewhere else!**

• *The new data can be used for more accurate calculation of the reaction yield and neutron spectrum in the near-threshold ^{7}Li(p,n)^{7}Be reaction, important for neutron sources and Nuclear Astrophysics.*