New results from the GERDA neutrinoless double-beta decay search

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Searching for 0νββ

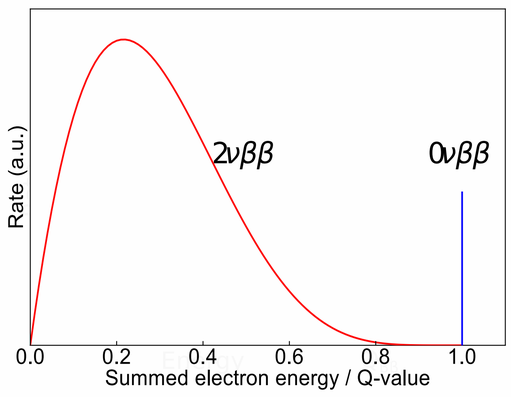
Neutrinoless double-beta decay (0νββ): hypothetical lepton-number violating process, e.g. $^{76}Ge \rightarrow {}^{76}Se + 2e^-$

Process probes nature of neutrino (Dirac/Majorana) and absolute mass scale

Very rare process $T^{0\nu}_{1/2} > 10^{25}$ yr [1] requires utmost background suppression

Signature in calorimeters looks like peak at $Q_{\beta\beta}$ above continuum of 2νββ

Signature of decay



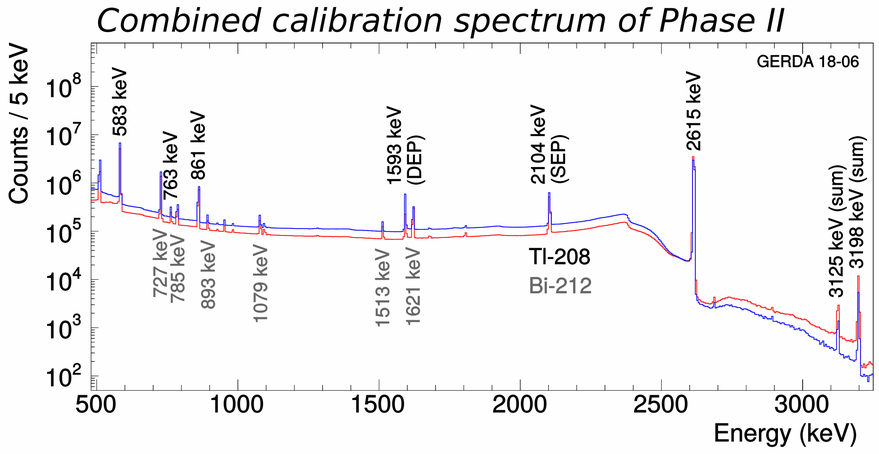
Sensitivity to half-life of decay in "background-free" regime: $T^{0\nu}_{1/2} \propto \epsilon M t$
where ϵ: efficiency; Mt: exposure

Energy scale and resolution

Energy scale calibrated by exposure to low-neutron ^{228}Th sources each 7-10 days

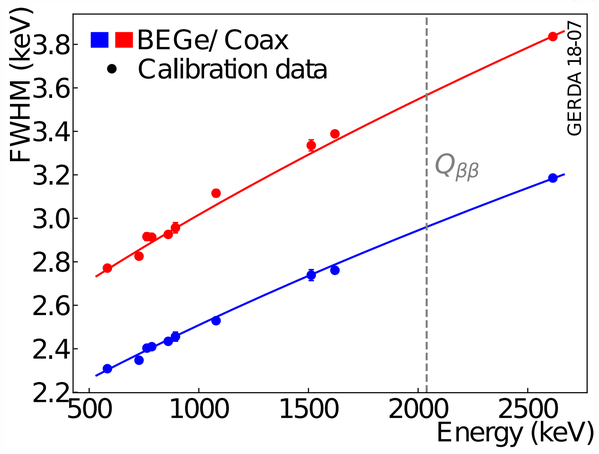
Stability monitored via 2.6 MeV ^{208}Tl line between calibrations

Combined calibration spectrum of Phase II



Resolution determined per detector type by combining resolution of individual detectors

Resolution curves for each detector type



Resulting resolution at $Q_{\beta\beta}$ (FWHM):

Coaxial: $3.6(1)\,\mathrm{keV}$ **BEGe:** $3.0(1)\,\mathrm{keV}$

The GERDA experiment

GERDA (GERmanium Detector Array) searches for 0νββ decay of Ge^{76} [2] at LNGS

35 kg germanium diodes isotopically enriched in ^{76}Ge act as both source and detector of 0νββ

Multiple layers of active and passive shielding reduce background

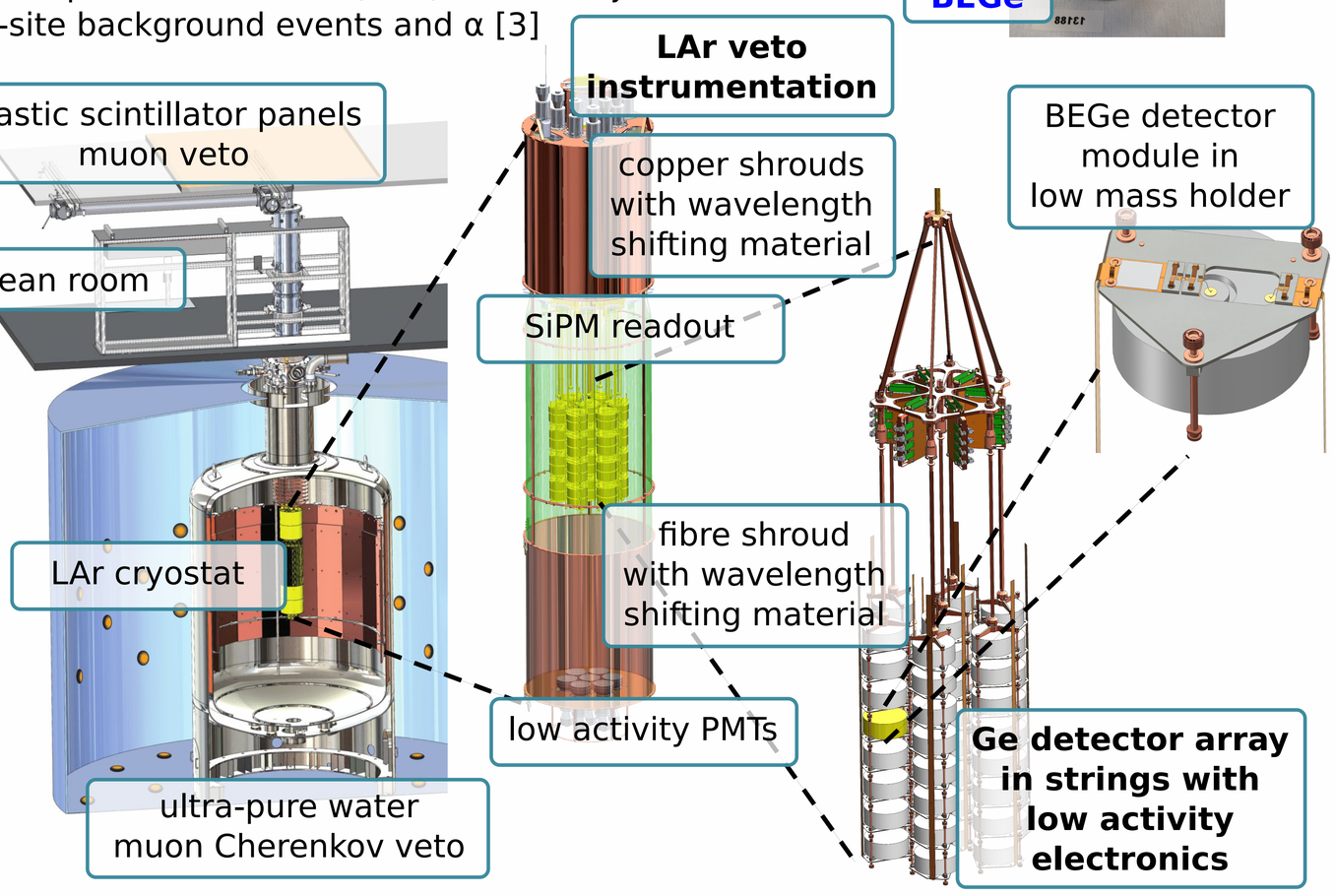
Detectors are operated bare in liquid argon (LAr)

LAr veto is intrumented for light-readout to veto background events that cause scintillation

Pulse shape discrimination (PSD) used to reject multi-site background events and α [3]

Two detector types: **BEGe** and **Coaxial**

BEGe detectors offer improved energy resolution and pulse shape discrimination power compared to Coaxials



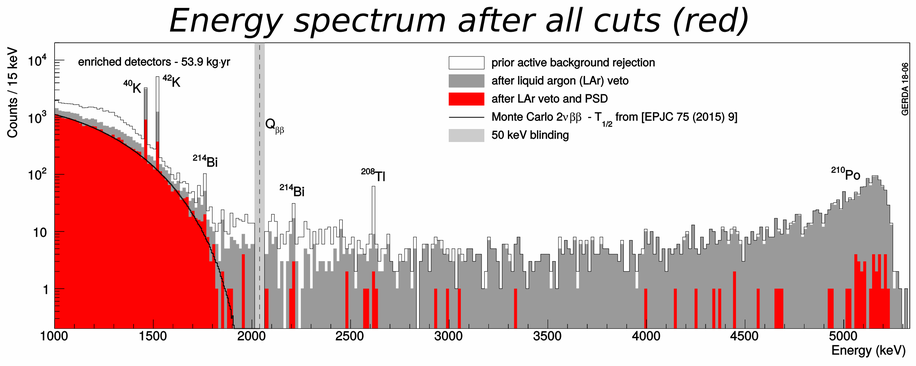
Energy spectrum

Backgrounds suppressed:
- PSD suppresses multi-site γs, surface events from β, degraded α events
- LAr veto suppresses γ, β

Remaining features: 2νββ, ^{40}K, ^{42}K, ^{208}Tl and ^{214}Bi γs, α

Background at $Q_{\beta\beta}$ even contributions of: α, ^{42}K β^-, γ from ^{232}Th and ^{238}U chains

Energy spectrum after all cuts (red)



Resulting background index at $Q_{\beta\beta}$:

Coaxial: $5.7^{+4.1}_{-2.6} \cdot 10^{-4}\,\mathrm{cts/(keV \cdot kg \cdot yr)}$

BEGe: $5.6^{+3.4}_{-2.4} \cdot 10^{-4}\,\mathrm{cts/(keV \cdot kg \cdot yr)}$

Results of 0νββ search

Events in 50 keV region around $Q_{\beta\beta}$ are unblinded after analysis fixed

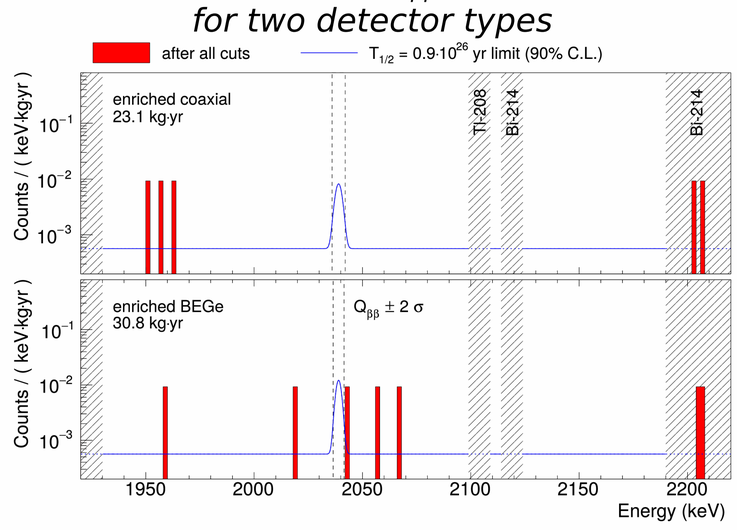
Latest unblinding made in May 2018, with exposure of 58.9 kg yr (35.7 kg yr new)

One new event is seen at 2042 keV, 2.4σ from $Q_{\beta\beta}$

Statistical analysis shows spectrum is best fitted by no signal

New frequentist limit on half-life of 0νββ decay of ^{76}Ge (preliminary):
$T^{0\nu}_{1/2} > 0.9 \cdot 10^{26}$ yr (90% C.L.)

Spectrum around $Q_{\beta\beta}$ after all cuts for two detector types



[1] Phys. Rev. Lett. 120 (2018) 132503
[2] Phys. J. C 78 (2018) 388
[3] The European Physical Journal C 73.10 (2013): 2583

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