

Light meson decays at BESIII

康晓琳

中国地质大学（武汉）

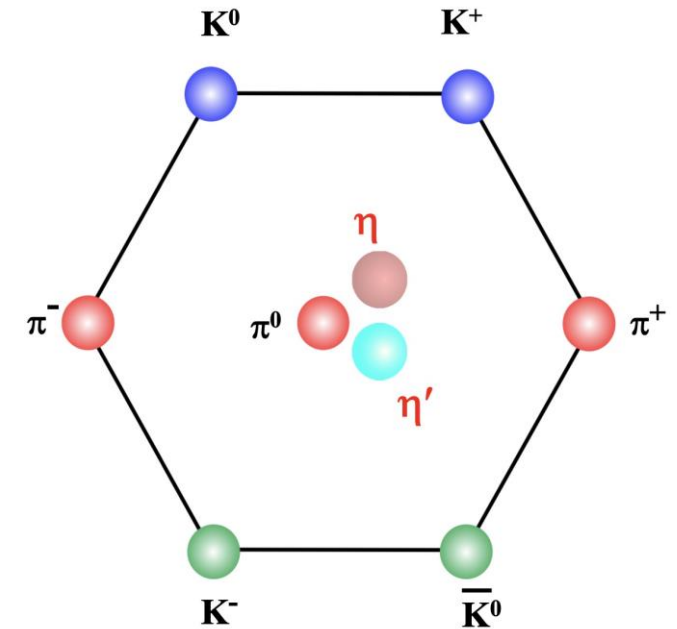
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2026.07.13-07.19 广州

Outline

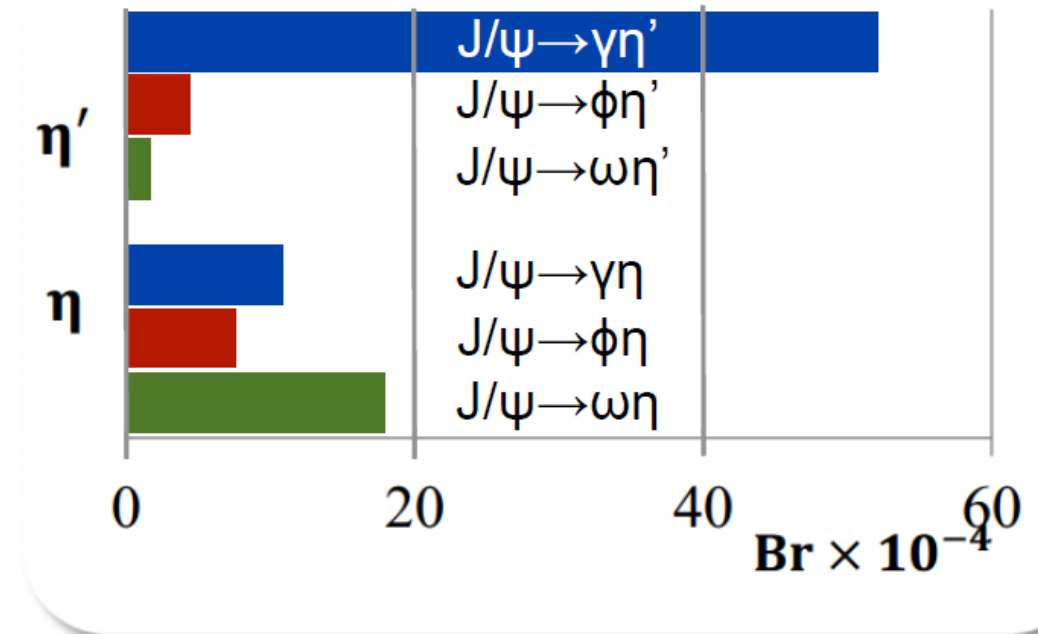
- Light meson Physics
- BESIII: a light meson factory
- Recent highlights
- Conclusion

Light meson Physics

- Light mesons
 - ✓ Important roles in particle physics
 - ✓ Strong interactions, Quark Model, CP violation ...
- Rich physics
 - ✓ Test ChPT predictions
 - ✓ EM Form factors
 - ✓ Test fundamental symmetries
 - ✓ Probe new physics beyond the SM



η/η' sample from J/ψ decays at BESIII



- High production rate of η/η' in J/ψ decays
 - Radiative decays: $5.2 \times 10^7 \eta'$, $1.1 \times 10^7 \eta$
 - Hadronic decays: $6.5 \times 10^6 \eta'$, $2.5 \times 10^7 \eta$
- Unique opportunity to investigate the decays of η/η'

BESIII: an important role in η/η' decays

η REFERENCES

ABLIKIM	23AN	PR D107 092007	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)
HAYRAPETY...	23A	PRL 131 091903	A. Hayrapetyan <i>et al.</i>	(CMS Collab.)
ABLIKIM	21AM	PR D104 092004	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)
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ZHEVLAKOV	19	PR D99 031703	A.S. Zhevlakov <i>et al.</i>	(TMSK, MAINZ, TUBIN+)
ACHASOV	18B	PR D98 052007	M.N. Achasov <i>et al.</i>	(SND Collab.)
ADLARSON	18C	PL B784 378	P. Adlarson <i>et al.</i>	(WASA-at-COSY Collab.)
PRAKHOV	18	PR C97 065203	S. Prakhov <i>et al.</i>	(A2 Collab. at MAMI)
AAIJ	17D	PL B764 233	R. Aaij <i>et al.</i>	(LHCb Collab.)
ADLARSON	17B	PR C95 035208	P. Adlarson <i>et al.</i>	(A2 Collab. at MAMI)
ANASTASI	16A	JHEP 1605 019	A. Anastasi <i>et al.</i>	(KLOE-2 Collab.)
ARNALDI	16	PL B757 437	R. Arnaldi <i>et al.</i>	(NA60 Collab.)
ABLIKIM	15G	PR D92 012014	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)
ADLARSON	14A	PR C90 045207	P. Adlarson <i>et al.</i>	(WASA-at-COSY Collab.)
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NEFKENS	14	PR C90 025206	B.M.K. Nefkens <i>et al.</i>	(A2 Collab. at MAMI)
NIKOLAEV	14	EPJ A50 58	A. Nikolaev <i>et al.</i>	(MAMI-B, MAINZ, BONN)
ABLIKIM	13	PR D87 012009	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)
ABLIKIM	13G	PR D87 032006	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)
BABUSCI	13	PL B718 910	D. Babusci <i>et al.</i>	(KLOE/KLOE-2 Collab.)
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GOSLAWSKI	12	PR D85 112011	P. Goslawski <i>et al.</i>	(COSY-ANKE Collab.)
ABLIKIM	11G	PR D84 032006	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)

PDG2024 $\eta'(958)$ REFERENCES

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AAIJ	17D	PL B764 233	R. Aaij <i>et al.</i>	(LHCb Collab.)
ABLIKIM	17	PRL 118 012001	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)
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ABLIKIM	15G	PR D92 012014	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)
ABLIKIM	15O	PR D92 012001	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)
ABLIKIM	15P	PR D92 012007	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)
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PDG	15	RPP 2015 at pdg.lbl.gov		(PDG Collab.)
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DONSKOV	14	MPL A29 1450213	S. Donskov <i>et al.</i>	(GAMS-4 π Collab.)
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ABLIKIM	11G	PR D84 032006	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)

New approach to investigate η decays with $\eta' \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \eta$

Xiao-lin Kang, Yuyao Ji et al, PRD 108, 014038 (2023)

PDG2024

η REFERENCES

ABLIKIM	23AN	PR D107 092007	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)
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ABLIKIM	11G	PR D84 032006	M. Ablikim <i>et al.</i>	(BESIII Collab.)

- Production rate lower than η'
- Background from QED and J/ψ decays
- Help distinguish muons from pions

$$\triangleright J/\psi \rightarrow \gamma \eta \Rightarrow 1 \times 10^7 \eta$$

$$\triangleright J/\psi \rightarrow \gamma \eta', \eta' \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \eta \Rightarrow 2.2 \times 10^7 \eta$$

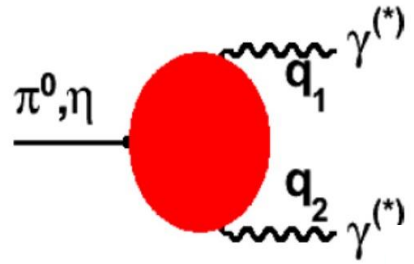
One more η' constraint to suppress the background events !

Allow us to access the rare η decays!

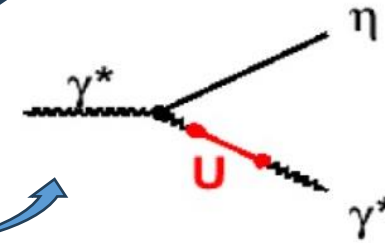
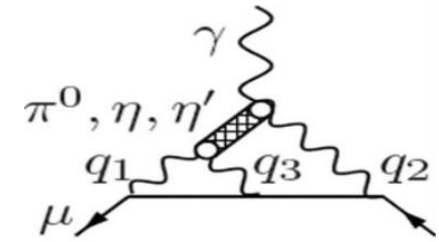
Recent highlights

- ✓ **Transition Form Factor**
 - ✓ **Double Dalitz Decays**
 - ✓ **Charge Lepton Flavor Violation Decays**

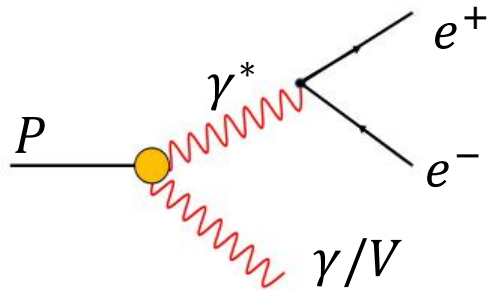
Meson transition form factors



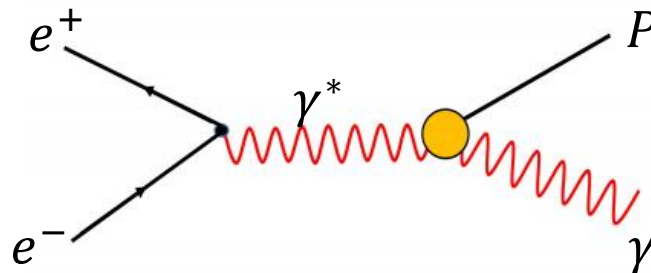
- Low energy QCD:
 - Enters in th. description of QCD processes
 - Evolution with Q^2 predicted by pQCD: models can be tested using data on Q^2 dependance
- Light-by-light contribution to a_μ
- Search for light dark force mediator



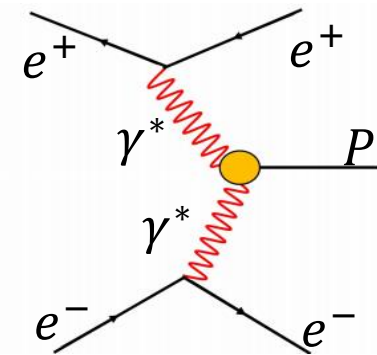
Experimentally



Dalitz decays $0 < q^2 < M^2$

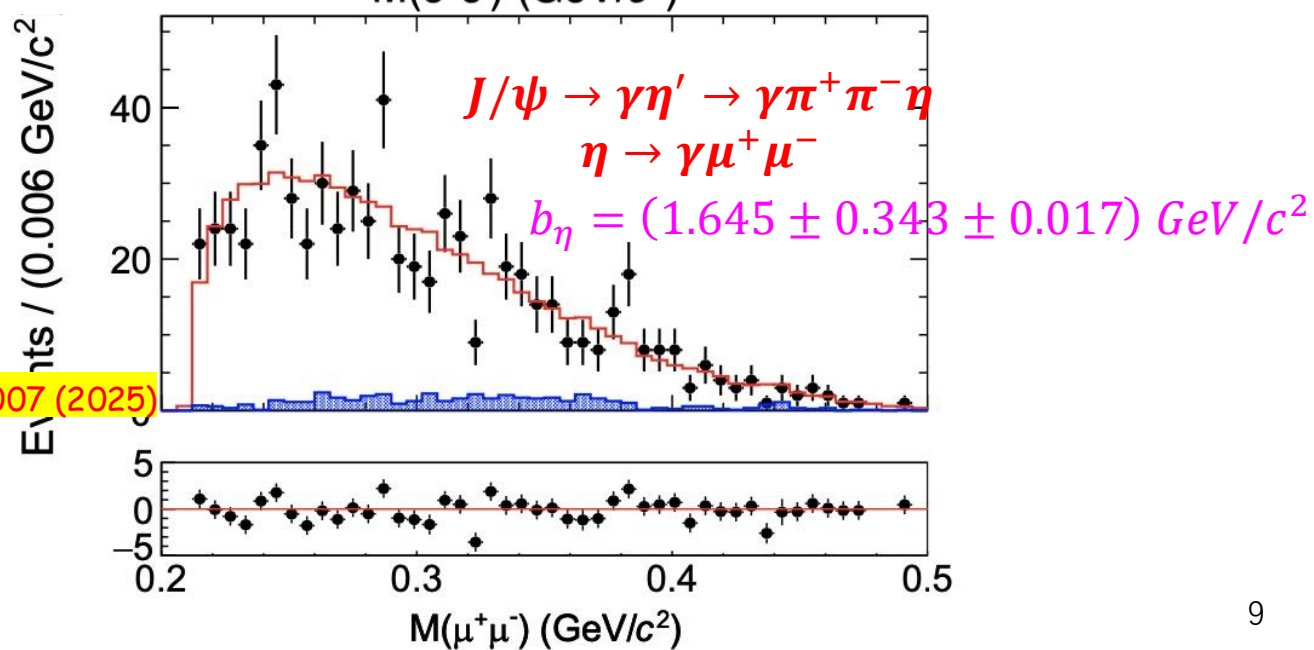
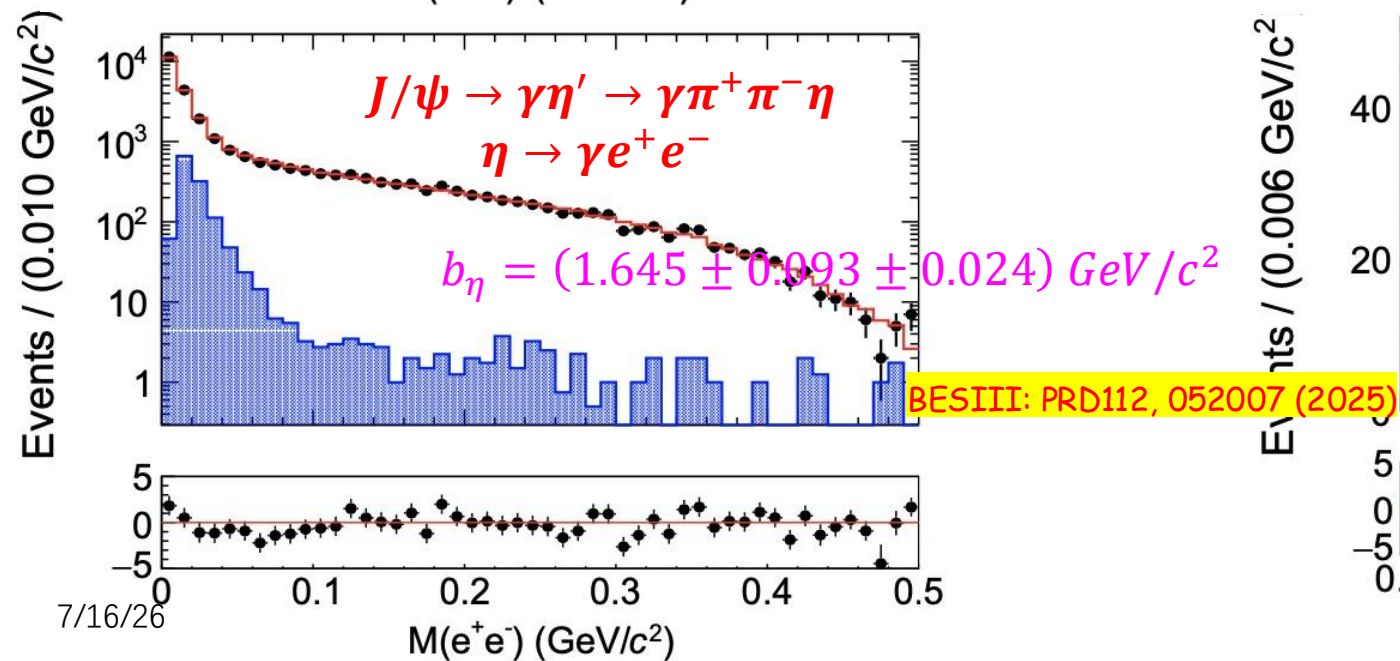
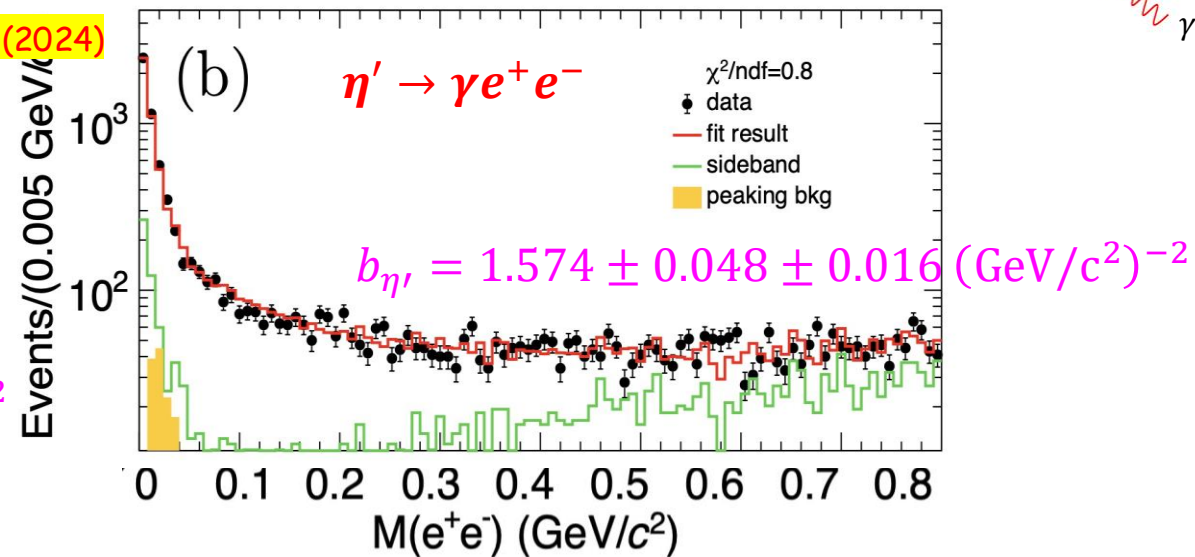
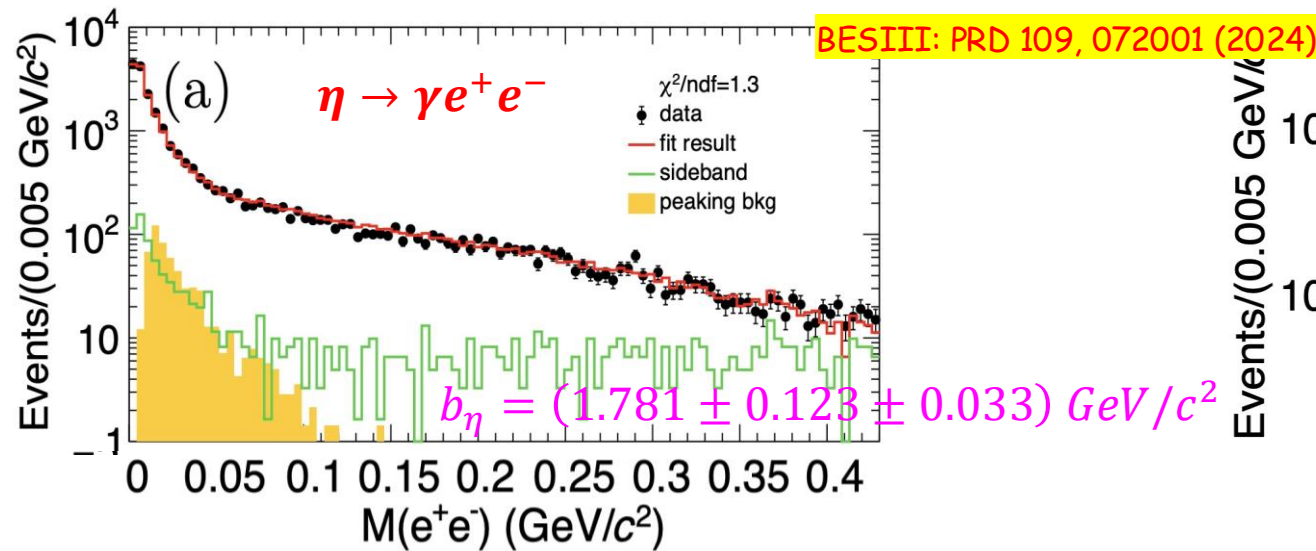
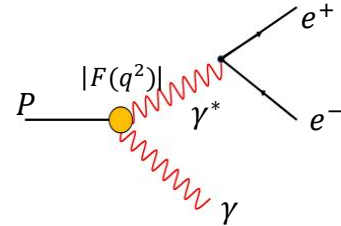


Annihilation process $q^2 > M^2$



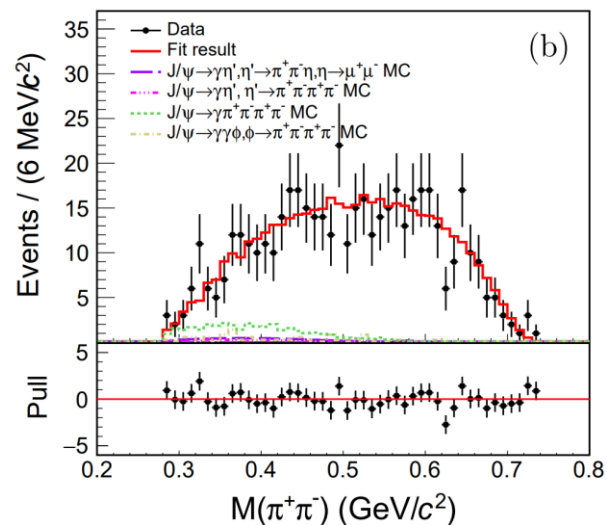
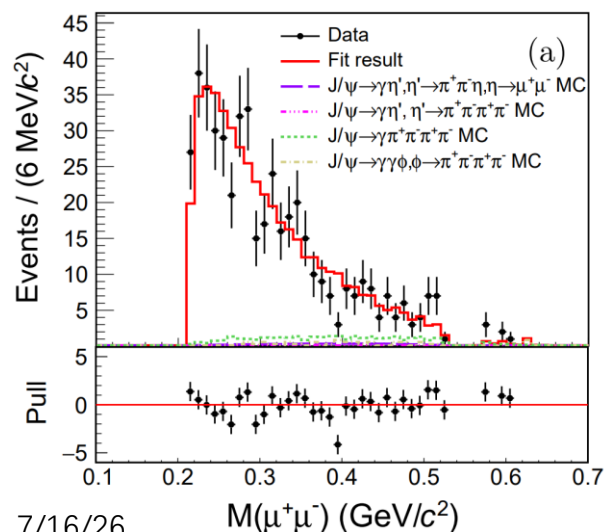
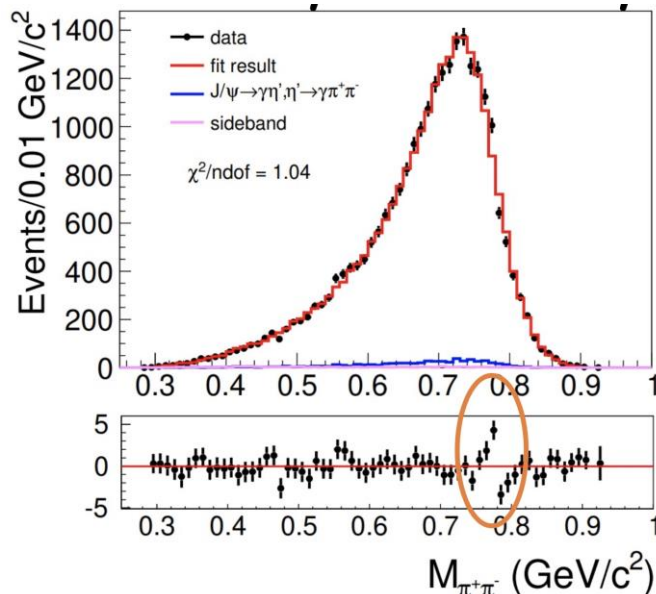
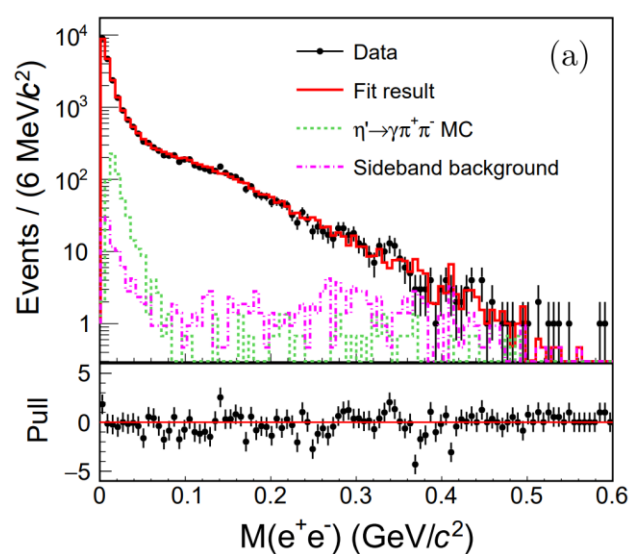
Two photon process $q^2 < 0$

TFF of $\eta/\eta' \rightarrow \gamma e^+ e^-$



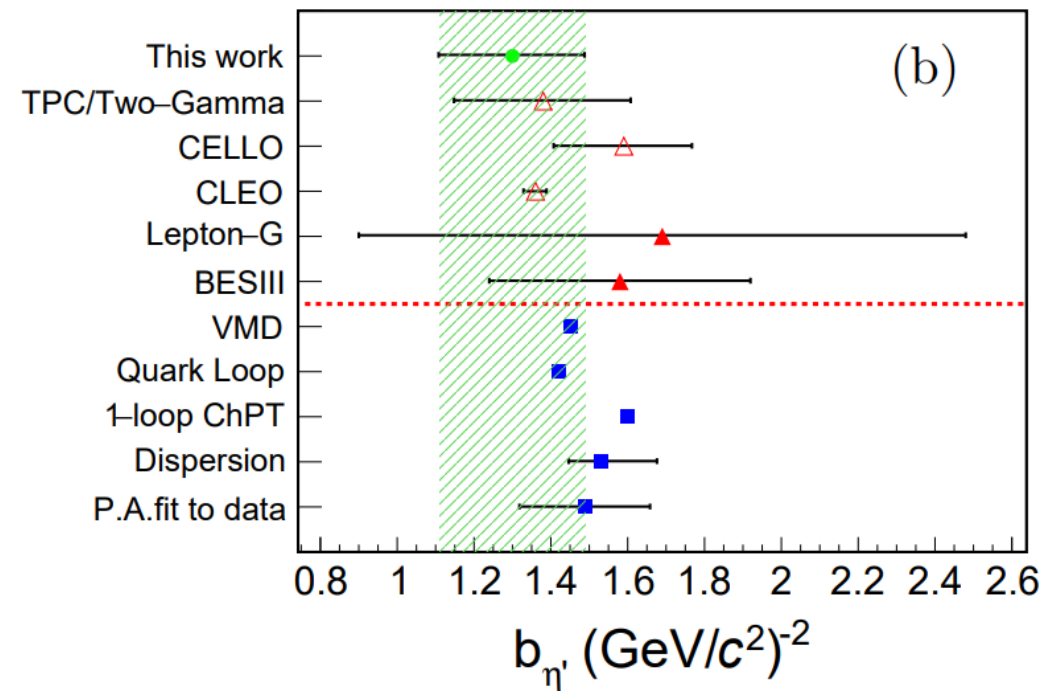
TFF of $\eta' \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- l^+ l^-$

BESIII: JHEP 07, 135 (2024)

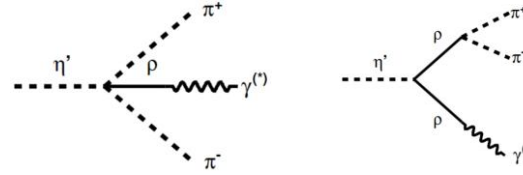


- 10 billion J/ψ allows to access the dynamic
- **Box-anomaly** is needed to describe data
- **$\omega \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^-$ is also necessary**
- First time to assess the form factors with $\eta' \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- l^+ l^-$ within VMD

$$b_{\eta'} = 1.30 \pm 0.19 (\text{GeV}/c^2)^{-2}$$

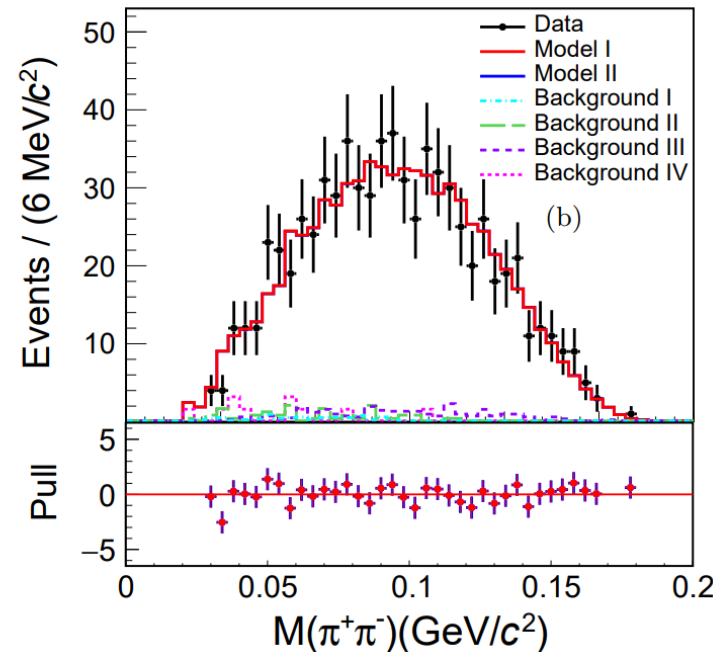
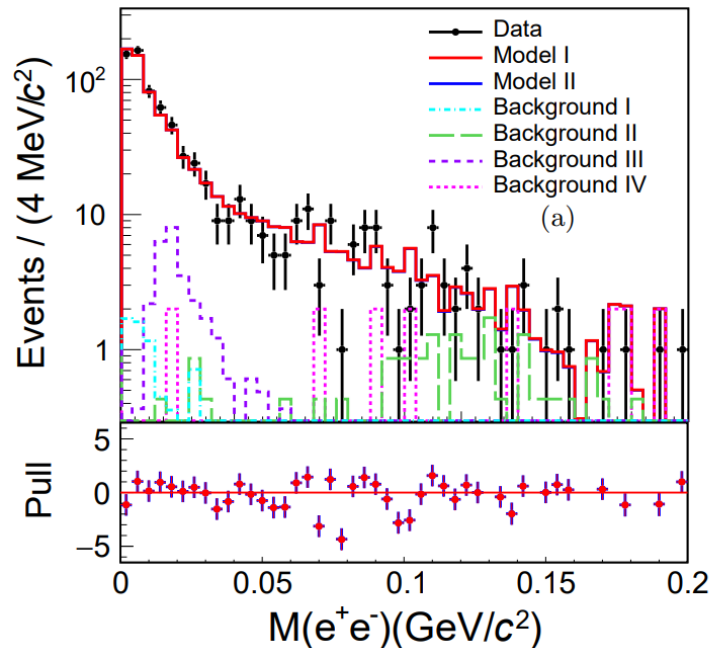


Study of $\eta \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- l^+ l^-$



BESIII: PRD 111 (2025) 072008
(arXiv:2501.10130)

- BESIII: 10 billion J/ψ radiative decays $Br(\eta \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- e^+ e^-) = (3.07 \pm 0.12 \pm 0.19) \times 10^{-4}$
- Allow to access **dynamic** but with limited statistics $m_V = (749 \pm 54 \pm 14) \text{ MeV}/c$
- No event left for $\eta \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \mu^+ \mu^-$ hypothesis $Br(\eta \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \mu^+ \mu^-) < 4.0 \times 10^{-4}$ at 90% CL.



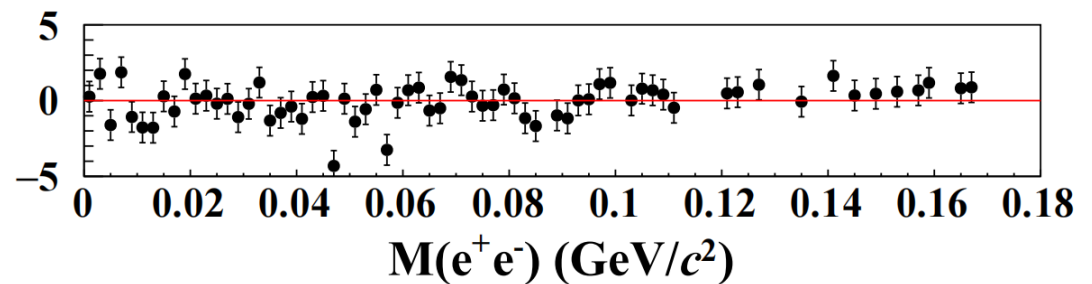
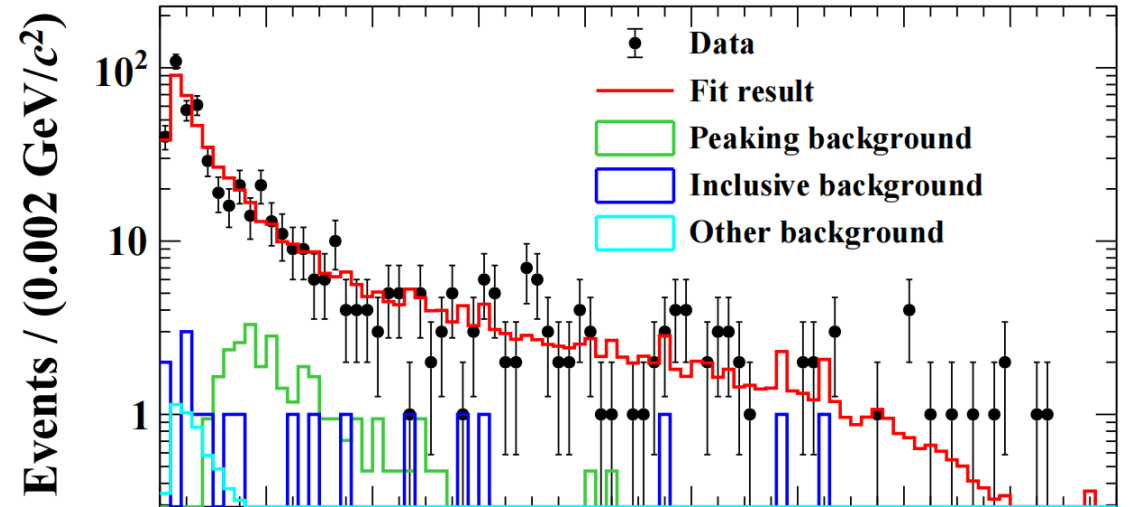
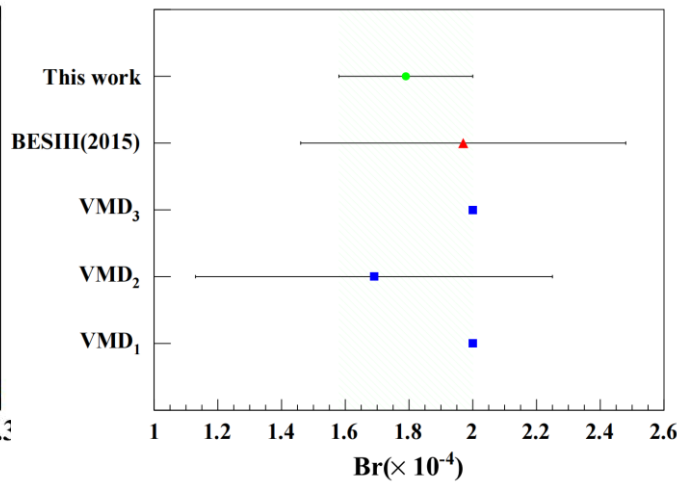
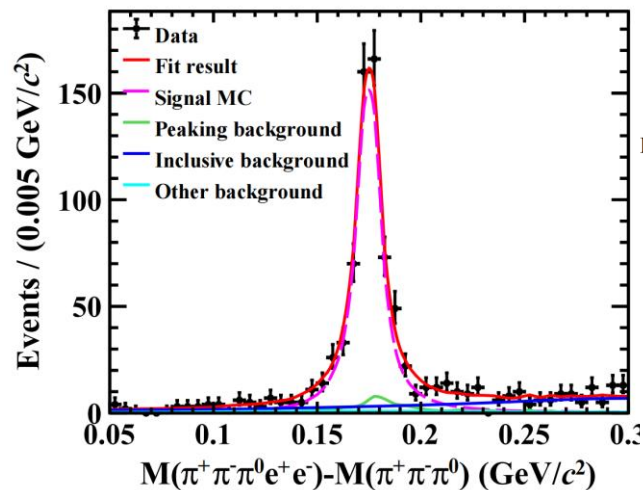
	$\mathcal{B}(\eta \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- e^+ e^-)$ (10^{-4})	$\mathcal{B}(\eta \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \mu^+ \mu^-)$ (10^{-9})
Unitary χ PT [1]	$2.99^{+0.06}_{-0.09}$	$7.50^{+1.80}_{-0.70}$
Hidden gauge [2]	3.14 ± 0.17	8.65 ± 0.39
VMD [2]	3.02 ± 0.12	8.64 ± 0.25
CMD-2 [4]	$3.7^{+2.5}_{-1.8} \pm 3.0$	...
WASA [5]	$4.3^{+0.2}_{-1.6} \pm 0.4$	$< 3.6 \times 10^5$
KLOE [6]	$2.68 \pm 0.09 \pm 0.07$	...

TFF of $\eta' \rightarrow \omega e^+ e^-$

BESIII arXiv:2603.08120

- With 10 billion J/ψ events, $609.1 \pm 27.7 \eta' \rightarrow \omega e^+ e^-$ signal events are observed

$$\text{Br}(\eta' \rightarrow \omega e^+ e^-) = (1.79 \pm 0.09 + 0.12) \times 10^{-4}$$

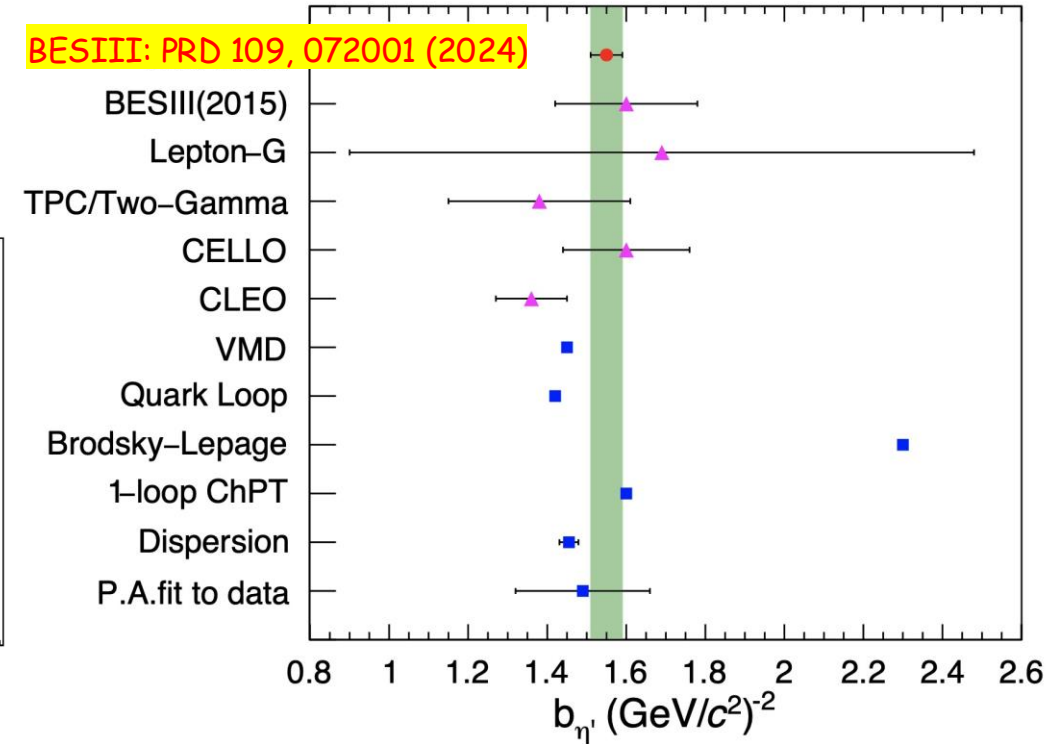
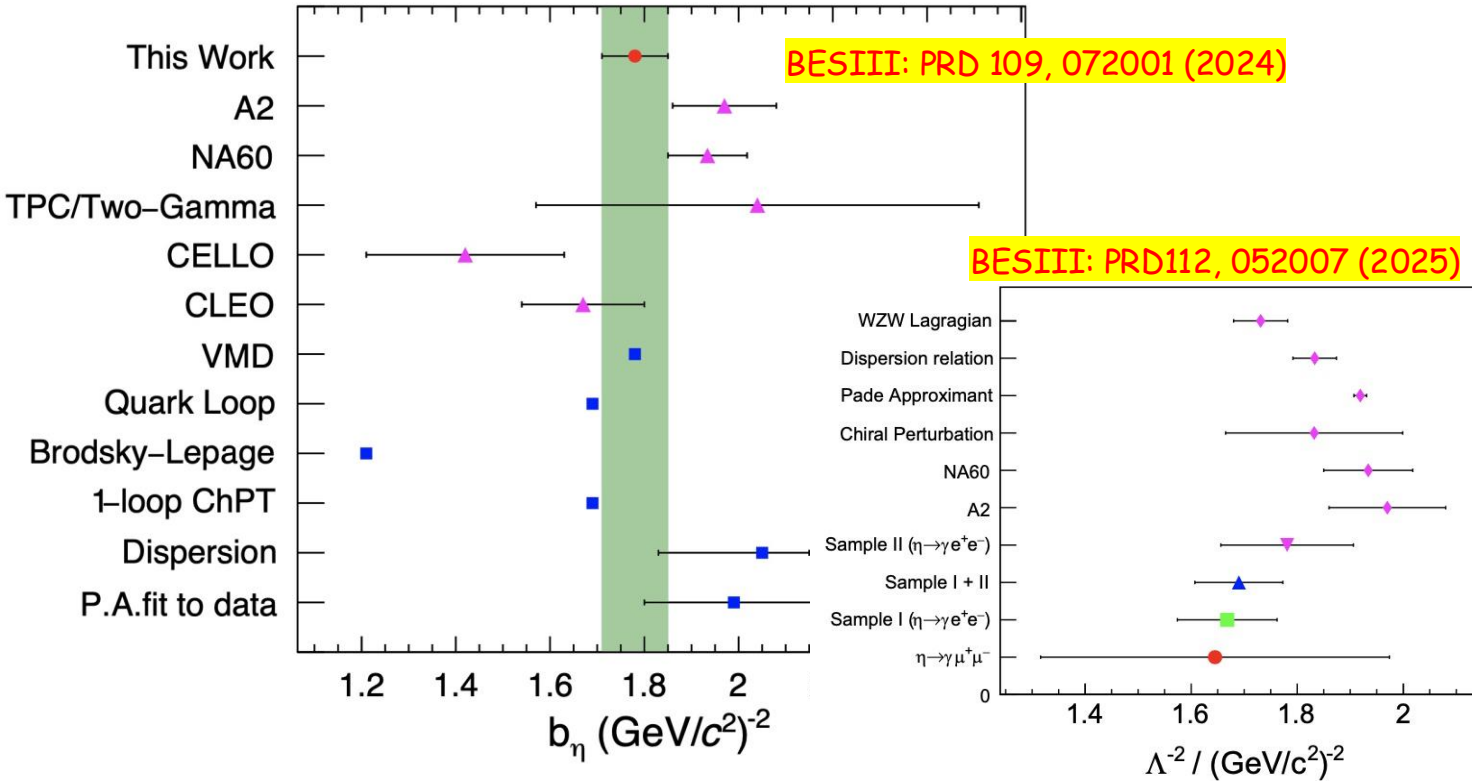


$$|\mathcal{A}_{\eta' \rightarrow e^+ e^- \omega}|^2 = \frac{2^6 \pi^2 M_{\eta'}^3 \alpha \Gamma_{\eta' \rightarrow \gamma \omega}}{(M_{\eta'}^2 - M_{\omega}^2)^3} |F(q^2)|^2 \cdot \frac{(M_{\eta'}^2 - q^2 - M_{\omega}^2)^2 - 4M_{\omega}^2 q^2}{q^2} (2 - \beta^2 \sin^2 \theta)$$

$$\text{slope} \equiv \left. \frac{dF}{dq^2} \right|_{q^2=0} = \frac{1}{\Lambda^2}$$

TFF is measured for the first time: $\Lambda^{-1} = (2.92 \pm 0.83 \pm 0.15) \text{ GeV}^{-1}$

Summary of the TFF for η/η'



Combined the two $\eta \rightarrow \gamma e^+ e^-$ samples:

$$b_\eta = (1.707 \pm 0.076 \pm 0.029) \text{ GeV}/c^2$$

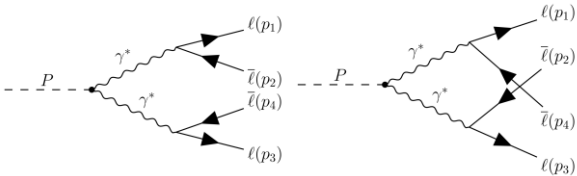
$$\eta \rightarrow \gamma \mu^+ \mu^-: b_\eta = (1.645 \pm 0.343 \pm 0.017) \text{ GeV}/c^2$$

$$\eta' \rightarrow \gamma e^+ e^-: b_{\eta'} = 1.574 \pm 0.048 \pm 0.016 (\text{GeV}/c^2)^{-2}$$

$$\eta' \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- e^+ e^-: b_{\eta'} = 1.30 \pm 0.19 (\text{GeV}/c^2)^{-2}$$

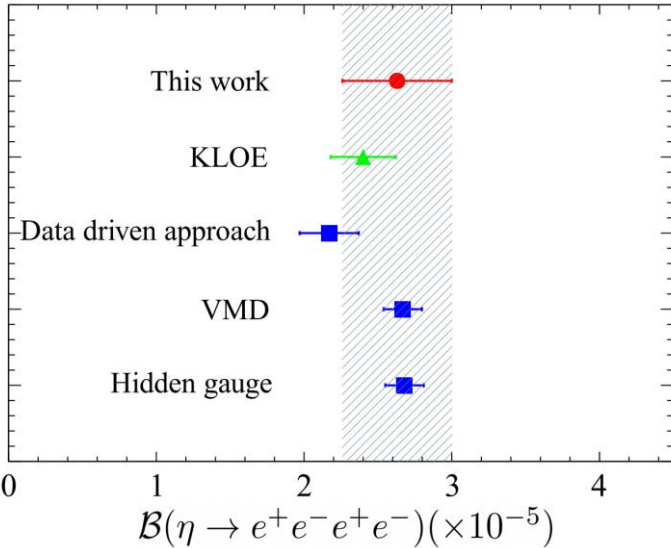
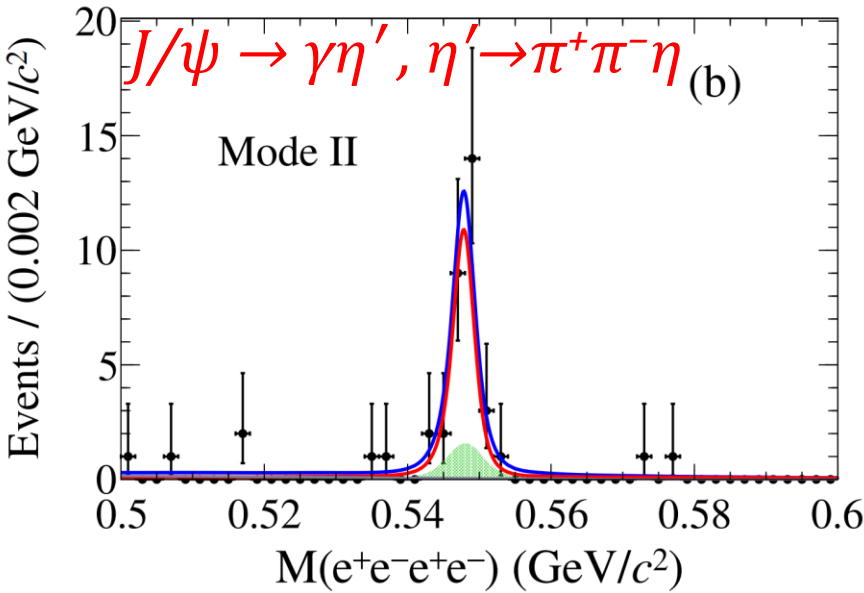
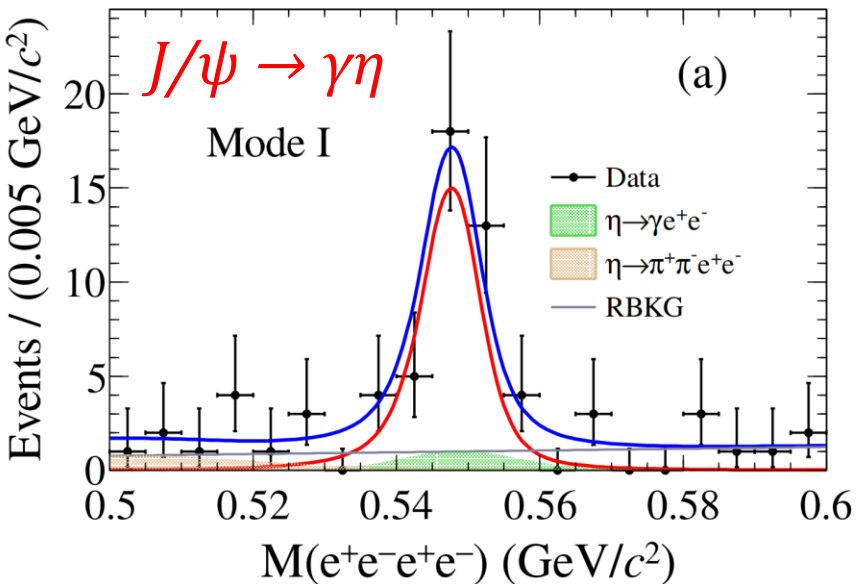
$$\eta' \rightarrow \omega e^+ e^-: \Lambda^{-1} = (2.92 \pm 0.83 \pm 0.15) \text{ GeV}^{-1}$$

Double Dalitz decays $\eta \rightarrow e^+ e^- e^+ e^-$



➤ Expected to proceed through two virtual photons, TFF

BESIII: [arXiv:2605.04898v1](#)



Mode	N^{obs}	ϵ (%)	$\mathcal{B}$ ($\times 10^{-5}$)
I	35.9 ± 6.7	13.1	2.51 ± 0.47
II	29.5 ± 6.1	4.7	2.80 ± 0.58

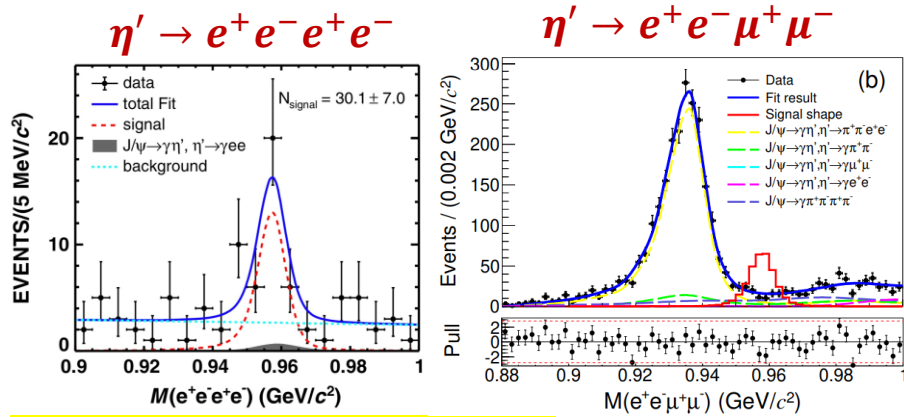
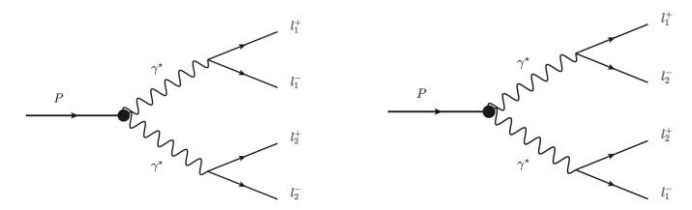
The combined branching fraction is determined to be $(2.63 \pm 0.34 \pm 0.16) \times 10^{-5}$

Source	$\eta \rightarrow e^+ e^- e^+ e^-$ ($\times 10^{-5}$)	$\eta' \rightarrow e^+ e^- e^+ e^-$ ($\times 10^{-6}$)
Hidden gauge [11]	2.68 ± 0.13	2.38 ± 0.40
Modified VMD [11]	2.67 ± 0.13	2.32 ± 0.40
Data driven approach [12]	2.17 ± 0.20	2.10 ± 0.45
KLOE [13]	2.40 ± 0.22	...
BESIII [14]	...	4.50 ± 0.12

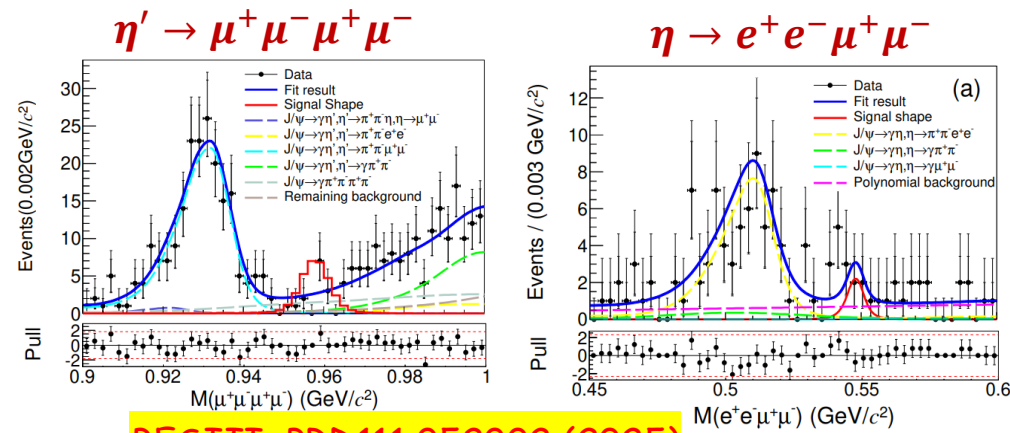
T. Petri, [arXiv:1010.237](#)

CPC 42 (2018) 023109

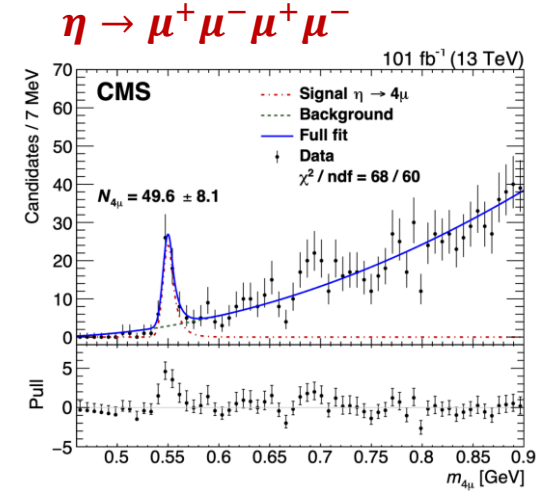
Double Dalitz decays $\eta/\eta' \rightarrow l^+ l^- l^+ l^-$



BESIII: PRD105,112010 (2022)



BESIII: PRD111,052002 (2025)



CMS: PRL 131 (2023) 091903

- Very limited Statistics!

Decay	Hidden gauge [9]	Modified VMD [9]	Data driven approach [10]	Experimental result
$\eta \rightarrow e^+ e^- e^+ e^-$	$2.680(13) \times 10^{-5}$	$2.668(13) \times 10^{-5}$	$2.17(2) \times 10^{-5}$	$2.40(22) \times 10^{-5}$ [11]
$\eta' \rightarrow e^+ e^- e^+ e^-$	$2.384(4) \times 10^{-6}$	$2.317(4) \times 10^{-6}$	$2.10(45) \times 10^{-6}$	$4.5(1) \times 10^{-6}$ [12]
$\eta \rightarrow \mu^+ \mu^- \mu^+ \mu^-$	$3.992(27) \times 10^{-9}$	$3.797(26) \times 10^{-9}$	$3.98(15) \times 10^{-9}$	$5.0(8) \times 10^{-9}$ [13]
$\eta' \rightarrow \mu^+ \mu^- \mu^+ \mu^-$	$2.360(12) \times 10^{-8}$	$2.185(10) \times 10^{-8}$	$1.69(36) \times 10^{-8}$	$< 5.28 \times 10^{-7}$
$\eta \rightarrow e^+ e^- \mu^+ \mu^-$	$2.213(26) \times 10^{-6}$	$2.154(22) \times 10^{-6}$	$2.39(7) \times 10^{-6}$	$< 6.88 \times 10^{-6}$
$\eta' \rightarrow e^+ e^- \mu^+ \mu^-$	$8.626(33) \times 10^{-7}$	$7.968(31) \times 10^{-7}$	$6.39(91) \times 10^{-7}$	$< 1.75 \times 10^{-6}$

Study of $\eta \rightarrow e^+ e^-$ and $\mu^+ \mu^-$

➤ **SM:** $\eta \rightarrow l^+ l^-$ proceeds via fourth-order electromagnetic transition, dominated by a two-photon intermediate state

➤ $\eta \rightarrow e^+ e^-$: Suppressed, helicity factor is proportional to m_e^2

$$Br(\eta \rightarrow e^+ e^-) = (5.31^{+0.14}_{-0.04}) \times 10^{-9}$$

P. Masjuan and P. Sanchez-Puertas, JHEP 2016 (8), 108.

$$Br(\eta \rightarrow \mu^+ \mu^-) = (4.72^{+0.05}_{-0.21}) \times 10^{-6}$$

➤ Based on dispersive representation for the η transition form factors:

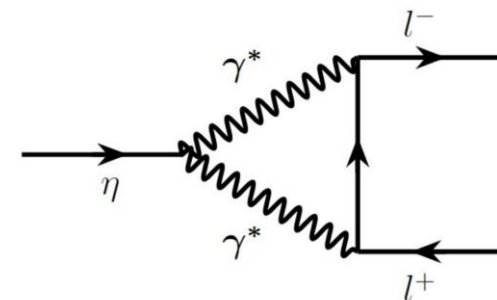
$$Br(\eta \rightarrow e^+ e^-) = (5.37 \pm 0.04 \pm 0.02) \times 10^{-9}$$

N. Messerli, M. Hoferichter, B.-L. Hoid, S. Holz, and

$$Br(\eta \rightarrow \mu^+ \mu^-) = (4.54 \pm 0.04 \pm 0.02) \times 10^{-6}$$

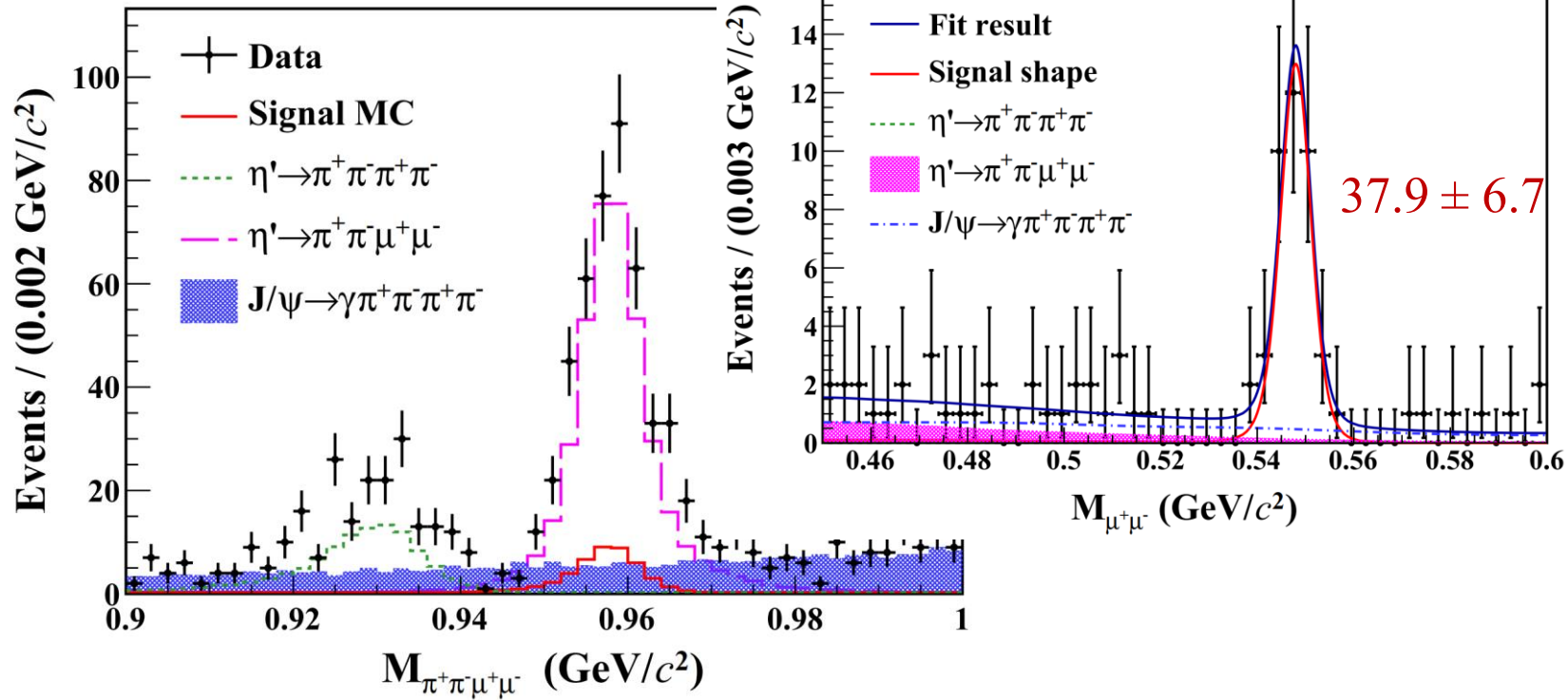
B. Kubis, arXiv:2512.13776

- A stringent UL of $Br(\eta \rightarrow e^+ e^-) < 7 \times 10^{-7}$ at 90% CL obtained from $e^+ e^- \rightarrow \eta$
- The world average of $Br(\eta \rightarrow \mu^+ \mu^-) = (5.7 \pm 0.8) \times 10^{-6}$, combining the results from SATURNEII and Lepton-G more than thirty years ago

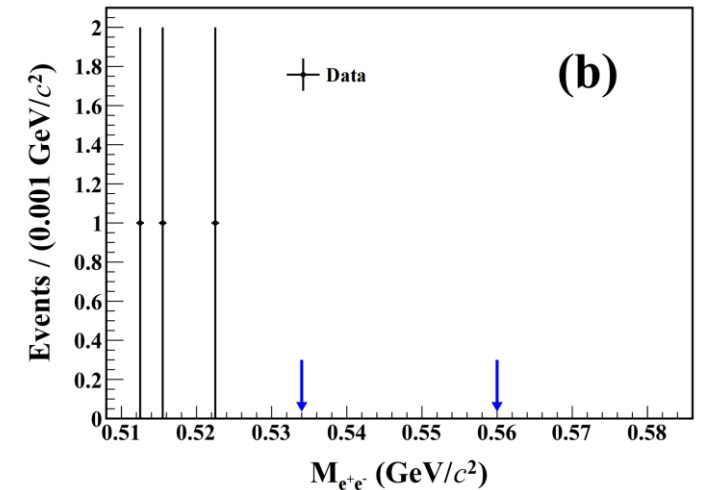
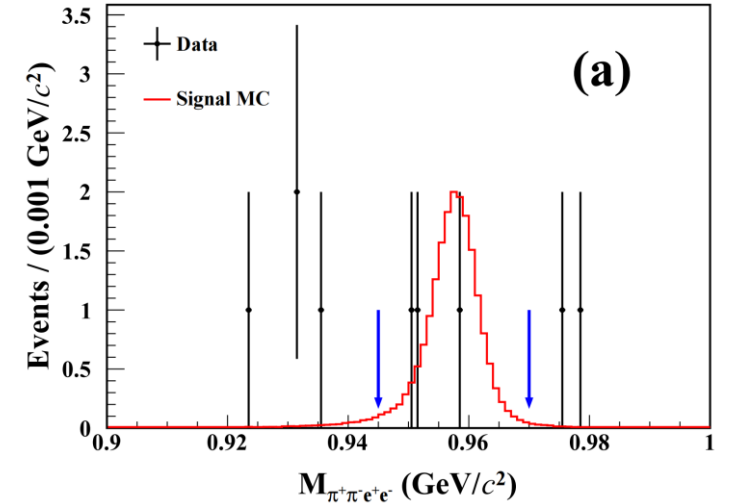


- With η sample from $J/\psi \rightarrow \gamma\eta', \eta' \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-\eta, J/\psi \rightarrow \gamma l^+l^-$ background is highly reduced compared with $J/\psi \rightarrow \gamma\eta$

BESIII: arXiv:2512.07144v2



$$Br(\eta \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-) = (5.8 \pm 1.0 \pm 0.2) \times 10^{-6}$$

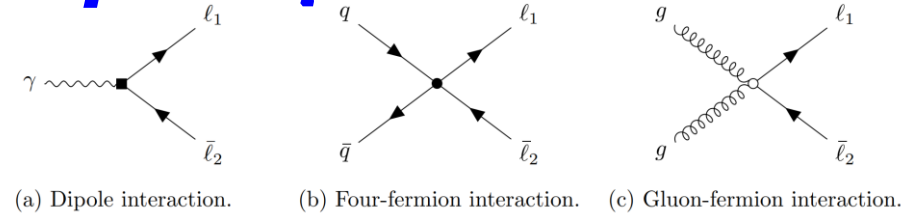


$$Br(\eta \rightarrow e^+e^-) < 2.2 \times 10^{-7} \text{ at } 90\% \text{ CL}$$

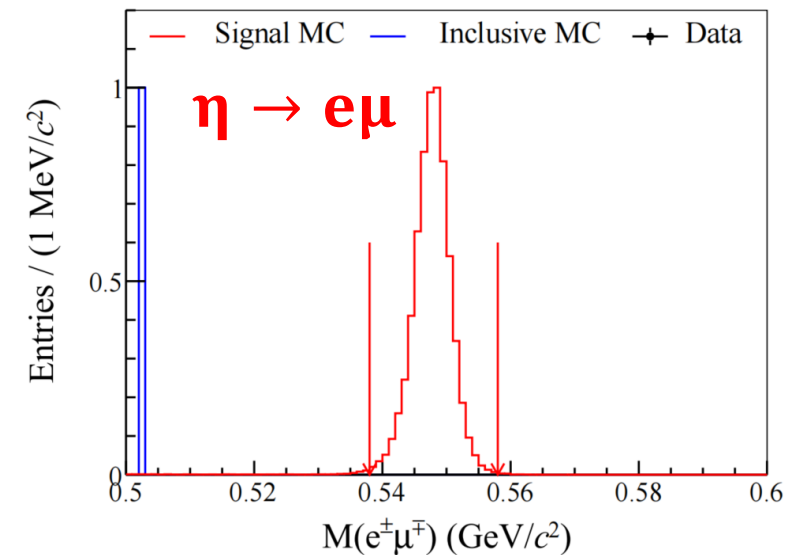
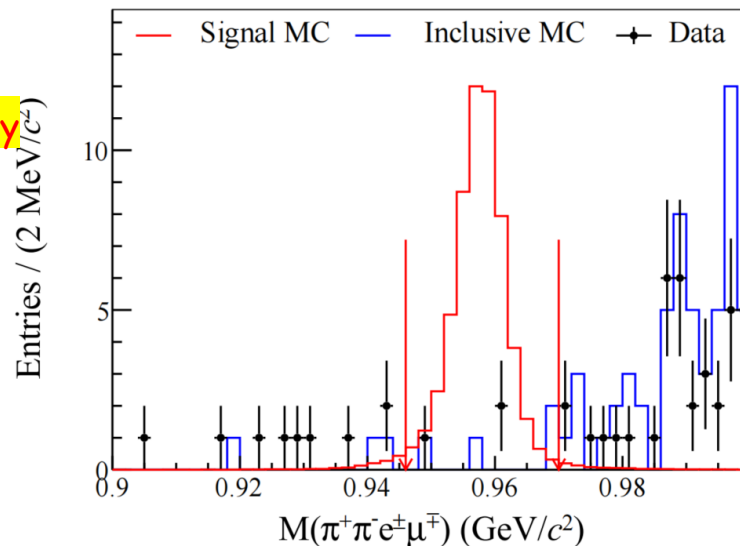
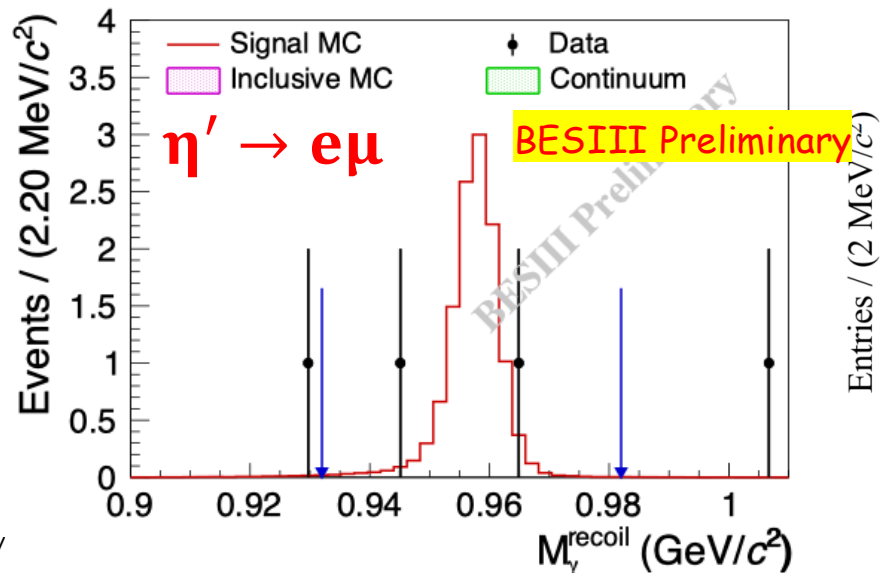
$$PDG: Br(\eta \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-) = (5.7 \pm 0.8) \times 10^{-6} \text{ and } Br(\eta \rightarrow e^+e^-) < 7 \times 10^{-7} \text{ at } 90\% \text{ CL}$$

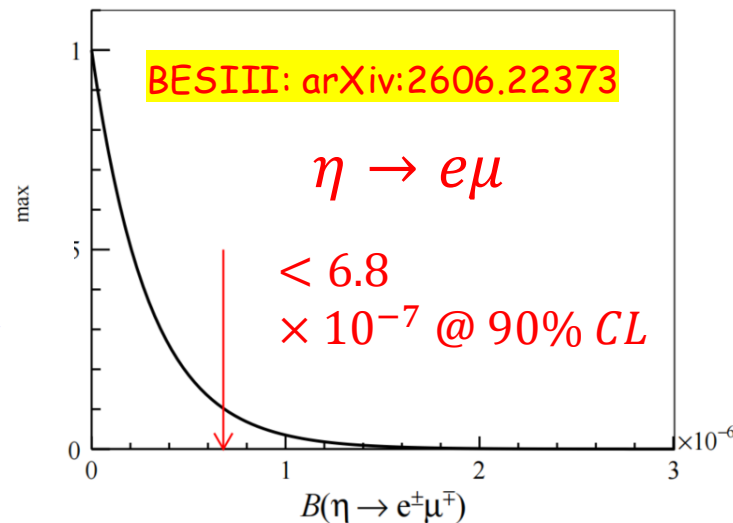
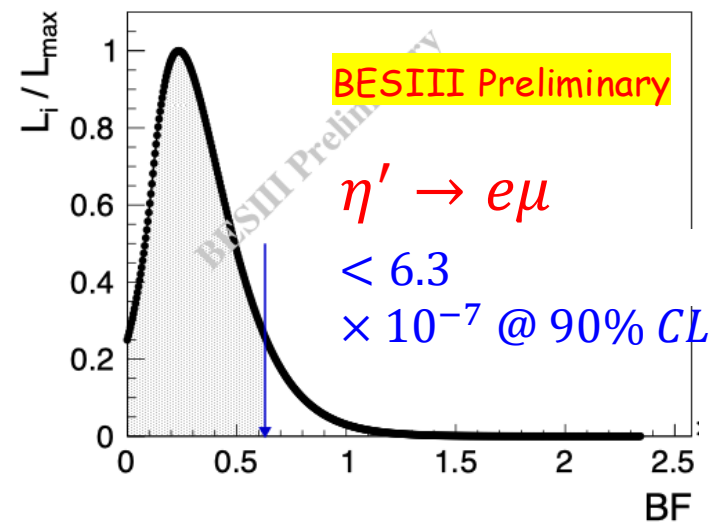
Search for CLFV process $\eta' \rightarrow e\mu$ and $\eta \rightarrow e\mu$

- Highly suppressed in SM $\propto (\Delta m_{ij}^2/M_W^2)^2 \sim 10^{-50}$
- Many New Physics models introduce **C**harge **L**epton **F**lavor **V**iolation (**CLFV**) processes
- Latest result $\mathcal{B}(\eta \rightarrow e\mu) < 6.0 \times 10^{-6}$ from CLEO in 2000 and $\mathcal{B}(\eta' \rightarrow e\mu) < 4.7 \times 10^{-4}$ from SPES2 in 1996
- For $\eta' \rightarrow e\mu$ with $J/\psi \rightarrow \gamma\eta'$ process is used.
- While for $\eta \rightarrow e\mu$, $J/\psi \rightarrow \gamma\eta' \rightarrow \gamma\pi^+\pi^-\eta$ is used to suppress continuum backgrounds



BESIII: arXiv:2606.22373





- $P \rightarrow \ell_1 \bar{\ell}_2$ are sensitive to different Wilson coefficients $C_i^{(D)}$ by $|C/\Lambda^2| \propto \sqrt{\mathcal{B}(P \rightarrow \ell_1 \bar{\ell}_2)}$
 - ✓ pseudoscalar coefficients in $\mathcal{L}_{\ell q}$: $C_{PL/PR}^{q\ell_1\ell_2}$
 - ✓ axial coefficients in $\mathcal{L}_{\ell q}$: $C_{AL/AR}^{q\ell_1\ell_2}$
 - ✓ gluonic coefficients in $\mathcal{L}_G$: $C_{\tilde{G}L/\tilde{G}R}^{q\ell_1\ell_2}$
- L/R specify the chirality of the heavier lepton

$ C/\Lambda^2 $ (GeV^{-2})	$\ell_1\ell_2$	PDG		This analysis		PDG		This work	
		$\mathcal{B}(\eta' \rightarrow e\mu)$	$< 4.7 \times 10^{-4}$	$\mathcal{B}(\eta' \rightarrow e\mu)$	$< 6.3 \times 10^{-7}$	$\mathcal{B}(\eta \rightarrow e\mu)$	$< 6.0 \times 10^{-6}$	$\mathcal{B}(\eta \rightarrow e\mu)$	$< 6.8 \times 10^{-7}$
		u, d	s	u, d	s	u, d	s	u, d	s
$ C_{AL/AR}^{q\ell_1\ell_2}/\Lambda^2 $	$e\mu$	2.1×10^{-1}	1.9×10^{-1}	7.4×10^{-3}	6.8×10^{-3}	3.0×10^{-3}	2.1×10^{-3}	1.0×10^{-3}	7.0×10^{-4}
$ C_{PL/PR}^{q\ell_1\ell_2}/\Lambda^2 $	$e\mu$	3.9×10^4	3.6×10^4	1.4×10^3	1.3×10^3	1.7×10^3	1.2×10^3	5.8×10^2	4.0×10^2
$ C_{\tilde{G}L/\tilde{G}R}^{q\ell_1\ell_2}/\Lambda^2 $	$e\mu$	5.0×10^3		1.8×10^2		1.6×10^2		5.4×10^1	

- Improvement of the ULs on the Wilson coefficients of effective operators describing LFV interactions at low energy scales

Conclusions

- BESIII: a light meson factory
- Significant progresses achieved on η/η' decays
 - transition form factors, decay dynamics, rare/forbidden decays ...
- $\eta' \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \eta$ significantly improves the ability to study rare η decays
- More results are expected to come soon !

Thanks for your attention!!!