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Cohesive Acceleration and Focusing of Relativistic Electrons in Overdense Plasma

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We describe our studies of the generation of plasma wake fields by a relativistic electron bunch and of phasing between the longitudinal and transverse fields in the wake. The leading edge of the electron bunch excites a high-amplitude plasma wake inside the overdense plasma column, and the acceleration and focusing wake fields are probed by the bunch tail. By monitoring the dependence of the acceleration upon the plasma's density, we approached the beam-matching condition and achieved an energy gain of 0.6 MeV over the 17 mm plasma length, corresponding to an average acceleration gradient of 35 MeV/m. Wake-induced modulation in energy and angular divergence of the electron bunch are mapped within a wide range of plasma density. We confirm a theoretical prediction about the phase offset between the accelerating and focusing components of plasma wake.

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Plasma-based accelerator schemes use laser (LWFAs) or electron beams (PWFAs) to drive plasma waves that induce ultrahigh acceleration gradients not achievable with conventional radio-frequency accelerators. The PWFA mechanism [1] uses a highly relativistic electron beam propagating in plasma to excite a large amplitude wake field that can accelerate a second trailing electron bunch to high energy. Recognizing that precise control of the transverse dynamics of an accelerating beam is crucial for reaching the necessary high luminosity in an accelerator, features of the motion of transverse particles have attracted considerable interest.

A fundamental feature of wake field acceleration is the phase offset between the longitudinal and radial forces in the wake. This statement follows from the Panofski-Wenzel theorem [2] that relates these forces by the equation

$$\frac{\partial E_z}{\partial r} = \frac{\partial (E_r - B_\theta)}{\partial \xi}, \qquad (1)$$

where $\xi = (k_p z - \omega_p t)$. For a linear regime, these forces take a simple analytical form

$$E_z \propto \cos\xi, \qquad E_r - B_\theta \propto r\sin\xi, \qquad (2)$$

implying that there is a $p/2$ phase offset between the longitudinal and radial fields. Thus, attaining stable acceleration in the plasma's wake field requires precisely placing the accelerated particles in the relatively narrow window within the wake, where both acceleration and focusing are maintained simultaneously.

In Experiment E157 at SLAC, a change in plasma focusing was observed along the bunch, using an externally imposed energy chirp [3,4]. Yet, although this finding was fundamentally important, the phasing between the accelerating and focusing components in the wake field lacked empirical verification. Our study provides the first observation of such phase correlation in the linear overdense regime, $n_e \gg n_b$. This regime fosters a simplified analytical treatment, yet still offers the maximum accelerating fields for technically achievable bunch charges, provided that the resonance condition between the plasma and electron bunch is attained. We will show that our experiment met this condition.

The PWFA experiment, set in beam line 1 of the Brookhaven Accelerator Test Facility, used as a plasma source a 60-MeV electron beam produced by a photocathode rf electron gun followed by rf linac and a capillary electrical discharge. The plasma source is described in detail elsewhere [5]. The polypropylene capillary was 17 mm long with an inner diameter of 1 mm. It was mounted on a combination of translation and tilt manipulators to align the capillary along the path of the electron beam. The electron density of the highly ionized carbon-hydrogen plasma, produced by applying a 20-kV voltage pulse to the capillary's electrodes, reached $n_e \sim 5 \times 10^{17}$ cm^{-3}. Off-line optical interferometry [6], MHD simulations, and measurements of the CO_2 laser-energy absorption confirmed this number. Lower density levels can be obtained easily in the afterglow plasma after terminating the discharge.

The $E_e = 60$ MeV, 300 pC, 1.5 ps (rms) long electron beam was focused to an rms spot size of $\sigma_r \sim 100\ \mu$m in the capillary discharge by upstream quadrupole triplet magnets. Because of ballistic compression in the linac, the electron beam is not Gaussian in time. It has a

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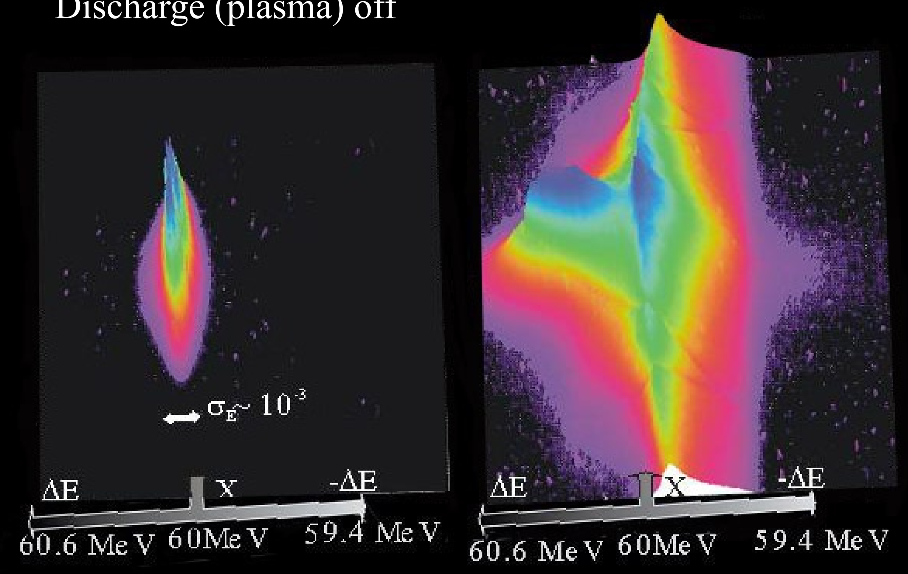
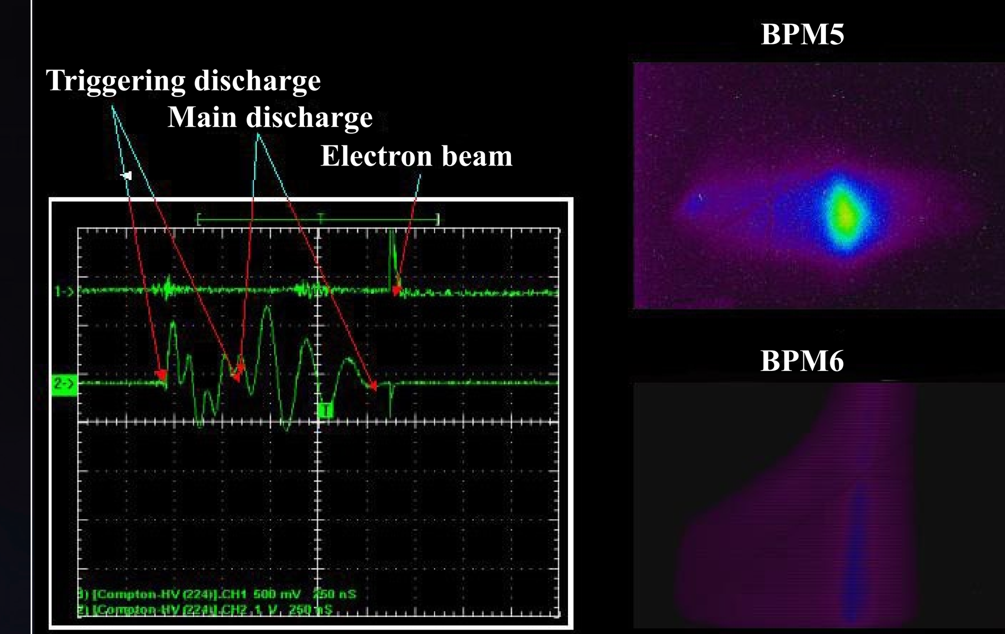
The picture

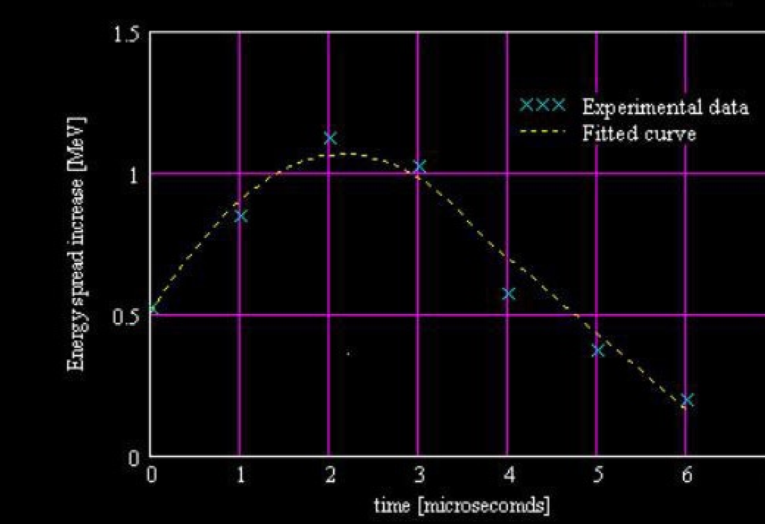


Energy distribution and transverse beam phase space dramatically changed after a 60 MeV, 0.5nC, 3 ps (FWHM) e-beam passes through 17 mm of ~10^{17} plasma.

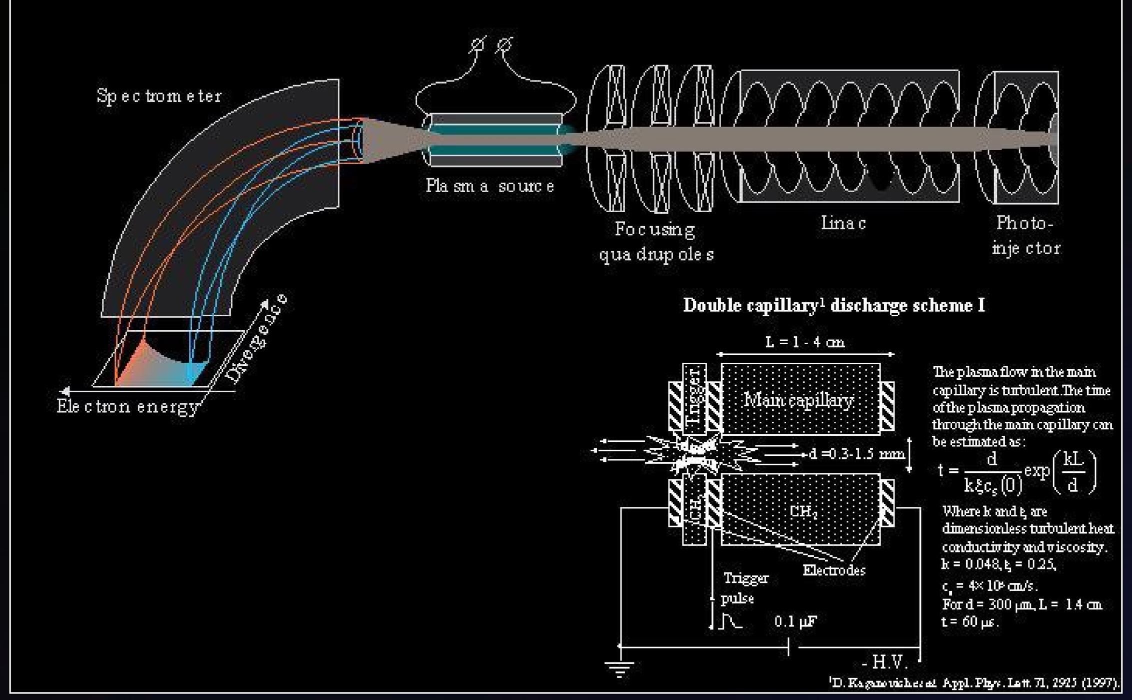
Discharge Timing (delay set to 1.2μs)



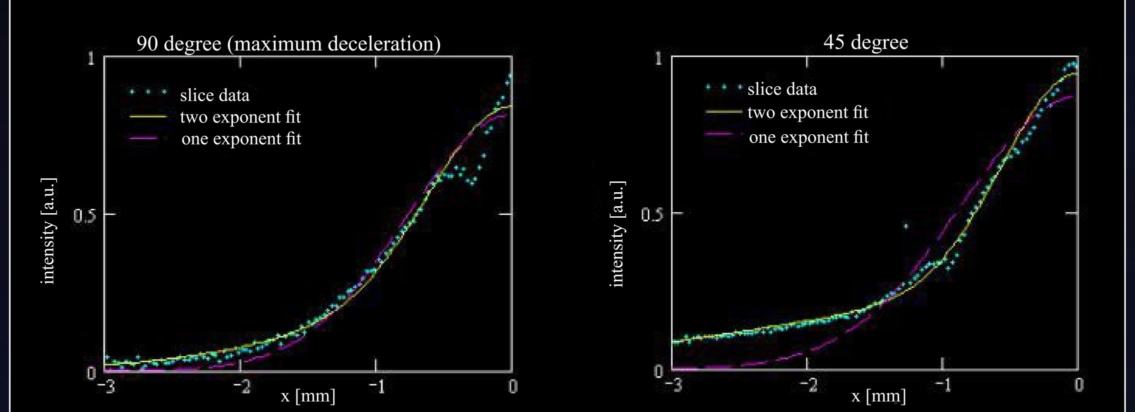
Acceleration VS time



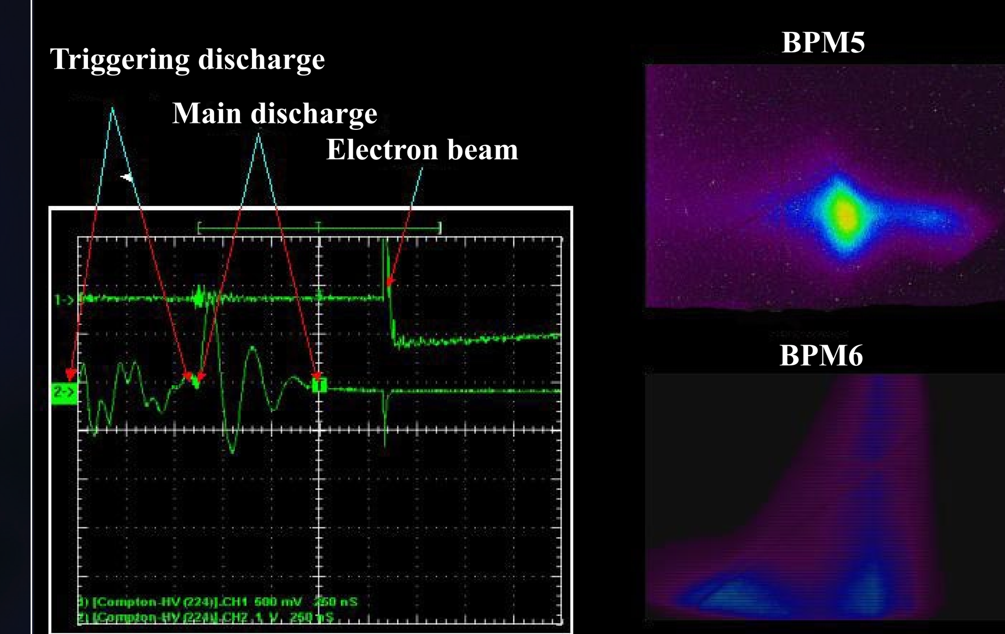
Experimental setup



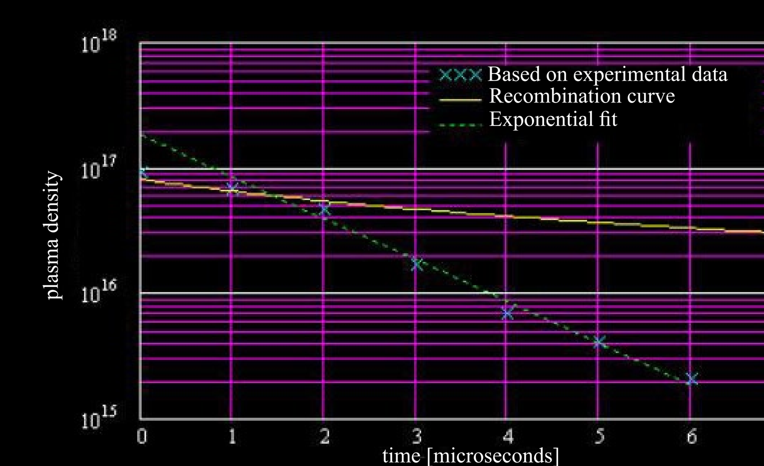
Focus Vs acceleration



Discharge Timing (delay set to 1.8μs)

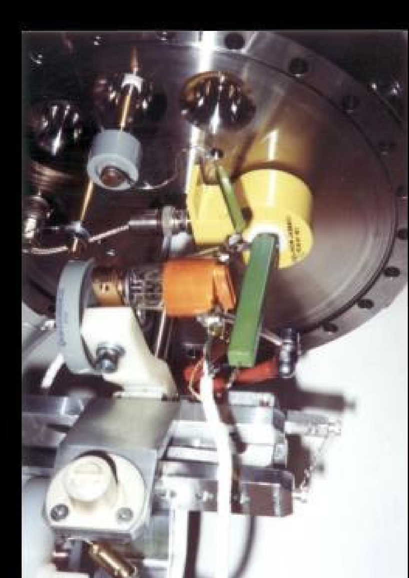


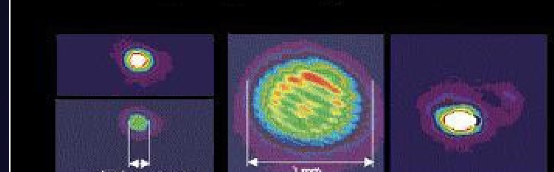
Plasma density Vs time



Plasma source

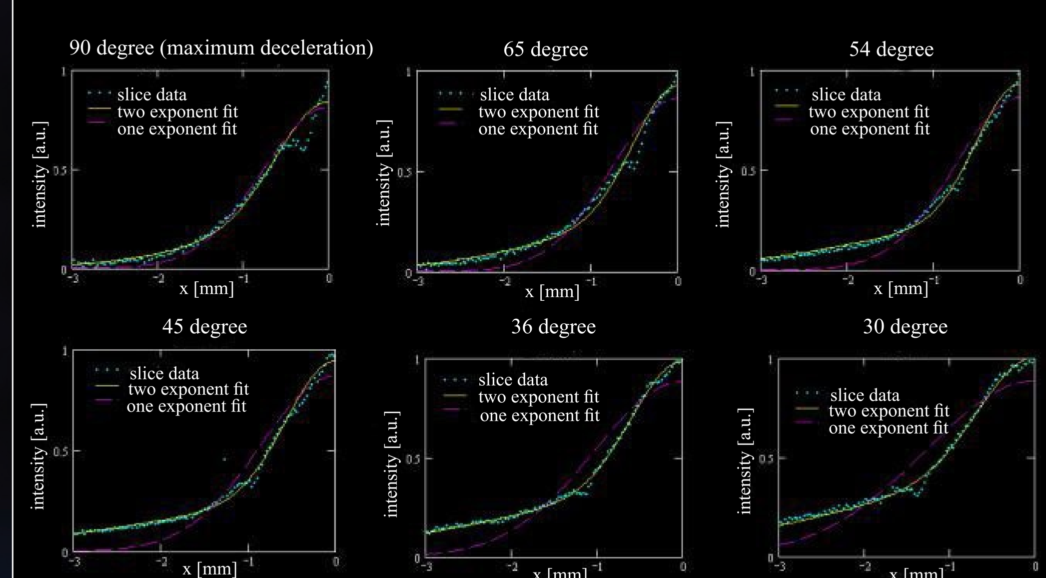
Channeling CO2 laser light through capillary



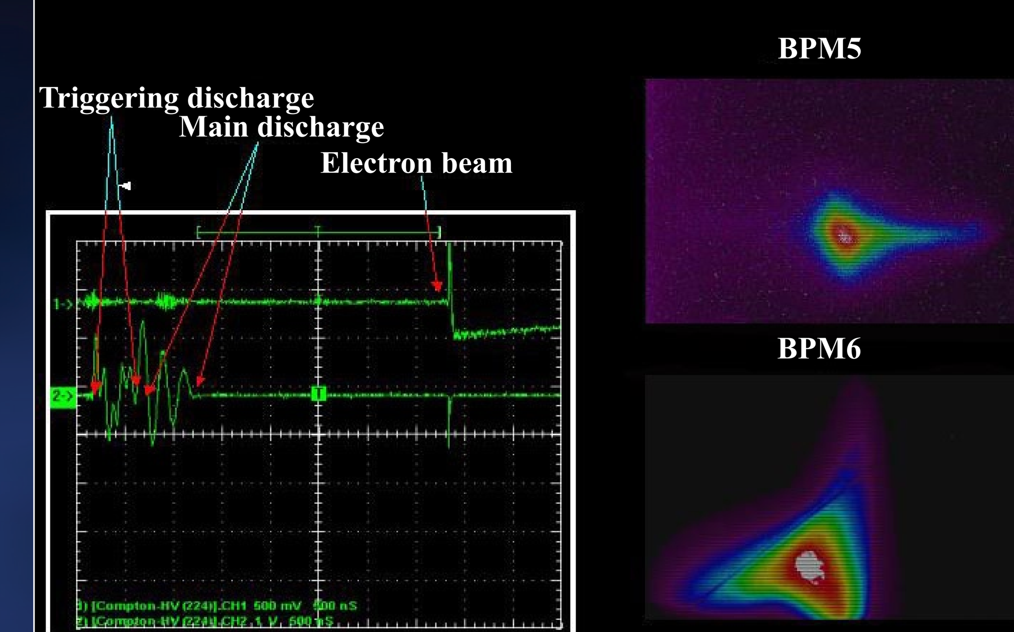


Laser beam at the focal point — Laser beam 18 mm downstream from the focus in free space — in plasma

Focusing Vs accelerating phase



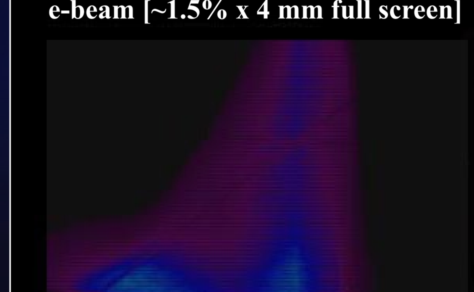
Discharge Timing (delay set to 3.7μs)

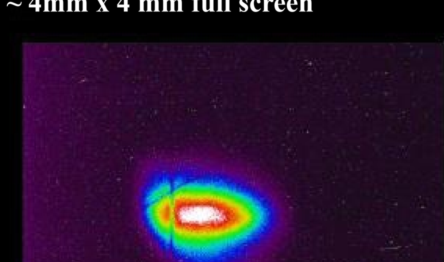


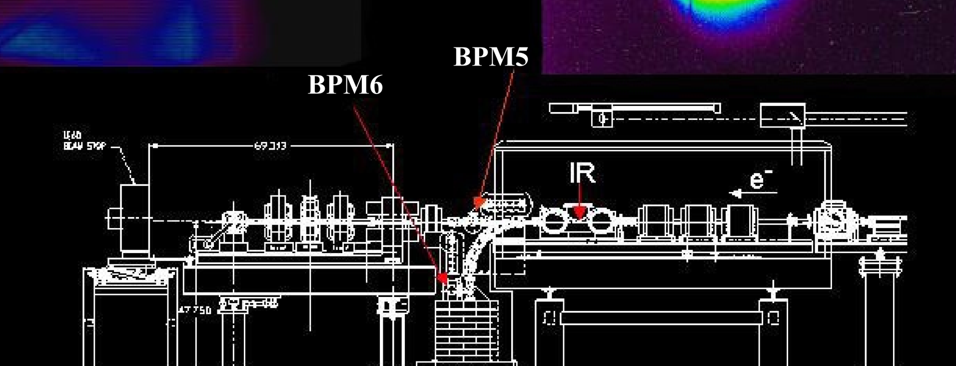
Electron beam observation points

BPM 6 image (90 degrees bend) X-beam energy, Y-horizontal profile of e-beam [~1.5% x 4 mm full screen]

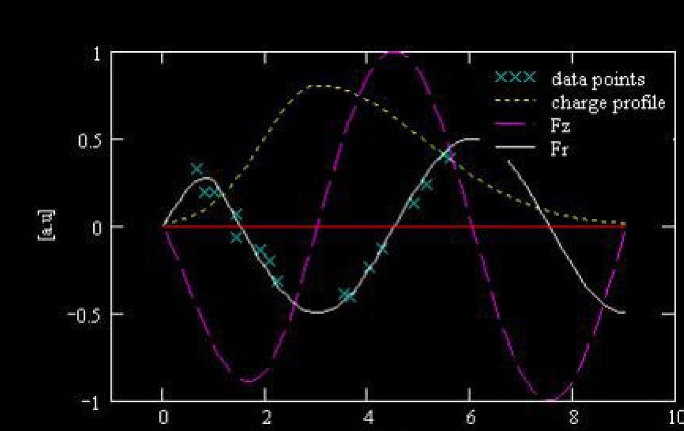
BPM 5 image (straight ahead) X-horizontal, Y-vertical size of e-beam ~ 4mm x 4 mm full screen

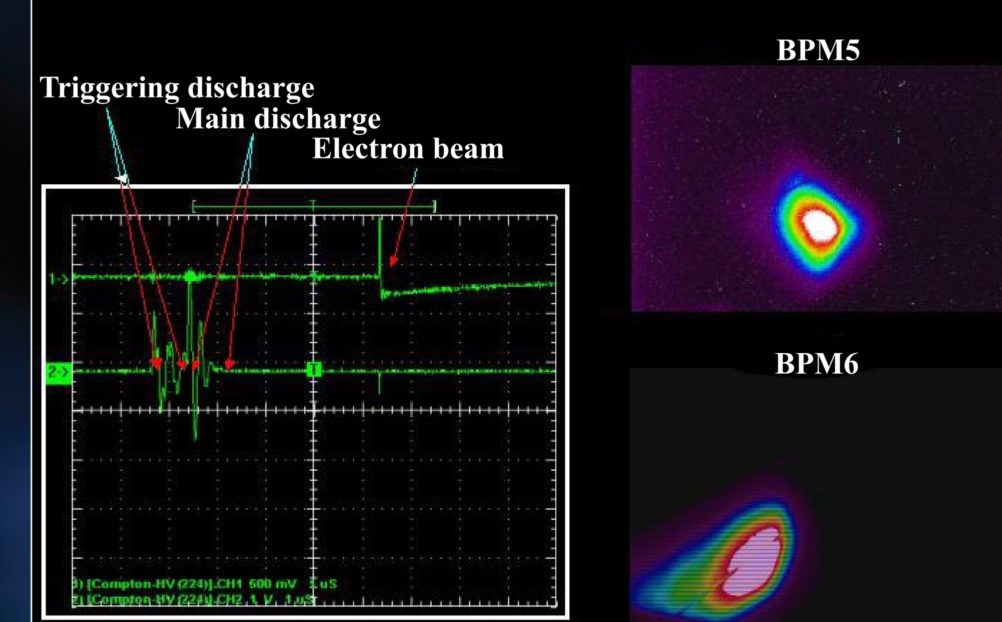






Correlation between longitudinal and transverse wakes phases



Beam size as a function of the wake phase. Solid lines schematically show expected longitudinal (blue) and transverse (magenta) wakes phases. Experimental points are reconstructed from the energy slices using double Gaussian fit.

Discharge Timing (delay set to 5μs)