

Search for the leptonic decay $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ *

M. Ablikim (麦迪娜)¹ M. N. Achasov^{4,c} P. Adlarson⁷⁶ O. Afedulidis³ X. C. Ai (艾小聪)⁸¹ R. Aliberti³⁵
A. Amoroso^{75A,75C} Q. An (安琪)^{72,58,a} Y. Bai (白羽)⁵⁷ O. Bakina³⁶ I. Balossino^{29A} Y. Ban (班勇)^{46,h}
H.-R. Bao (包浩然)⁶⁴ V. Batozskaya^{1,44} K. Begzsuren³² N. Berger³⁵ M. Berlowski⁴⁴ M. Bertani^{28A} D. Bettoni^{29A}
F. Bianchi^{75A,75C} E. Bianco^{75A,75C} A. Bortone^{75A,75C} I. Boyko³⁶ R. A. Briere⁵ A. Brueggemann⁶⁹ H. Cai (蔡浩)⁷⁷
X. Cai (蔡啸)^{1,58} A. Calcaterra^{28A} G. F. Cao (曹国富)^{1,64} N. Cao (曹宁)^{1,64} S. A. Cetin^{62A} X. Y. Chai (柴新宇)^{46,h}
J. F. Chang (常劲帆)^{1,58} G. R. Che (车国荣)⁴³ Y. Z. Che (车逾之)^{1,58,64} G. Chelkov^{36,b} C. Chen (陈琛)⁴³
C. H. Chen (陈春卉)⁹ Chao Chen (陈超)⁵⁵ G. Chen (陈刚)¹ H. S. Chen (陈和生)^{1,64} H. Y. Chen (陈弘扬)²⁰
M. L. Chen (陈玛丽)^{1,58,64} S. J. Chen (陈申见)⁴² S. L. Chen (陈思璐)⁴⁵ S. M. Chen (陈少敏)⁶¹ T. Chen (陈通)^{1,64}
X. R. Chen (陈旭荣)^{31,64} X. T. Chen (陈肖婷)^{1,64} Y. B. Chen (陈元柏)^{1,58} Y. Q. Chen³⁴ Z. J. Chen (陈卓俊)^{25,i}
Z. Y. Chen (陈正元)^{1,64} S. K. Choi¹⁰ G. Cibinetto^{29A} F. Cossio^{75C} J. J. Cui (崔佳佳)⁵⁰ H. L. Dai (代洪亮)^{1,58}
J. P. Dai (代建平)⁷⁹ A. Dbeyssi¹⁸ R. E. de Boer³ D. Dedovich³⁶ C. Q. Deng (邓创旗)⁷³ Z. Y. Deng (邓子艳)¹
A. Denig³⁵ I. Denysenko³⁶ M. Destefanis^{75A,75C} F. De Mori^{75A,75C} B. Ding (丁彪)^{67,1} X. X. Ding (丁晓萱)^{46,h}
Y. Ding (丁勇)⁴⁰ Y. Ding (丁逸)³⁴ J. Dong (董静)^{1,58} L. Y. Dong (董燎原)^{1,64} M. Y. Dong (董明义)^{1,58,64}
X. Dong (董翔)⁷⁷ M. C. Du (杜蒙川)¹ S. X. Du (杜书先)⁸¹ Y. Y. Duan (段尧予)⁵⁵ Z. H. Duan (段宗欢)⁴²
P. Egorov^{36,b} Y. H. Fan (范宇晗)⁴⁵ J. Fang (方建)^{1,58} J. Fang (方进)⁵⁹ S. S. Fang (房双世)^{1,64}
W. X. Fang (方文兴)¹ Y. Fang (方易)¹ Y. Q. Fang (方亚泉)^{1,58} R. Farinelli^{29A} L. Fava^{75B,75C} F. Feldbauer³
G. Felici^{28A} C. Q. Feng (封常青)^{72,58} J. H. Feng (冯俊华)⁵⁹ Y. T. Feng (冯均潼)^{72,58} M. Fritsch³ C. D. Fu (傅成栋)¹
J. L. Fu (傅金林)⁶⁴ Y. W. Fu (傅亦威)^{1,64} H. Gao (高涵)⁶⁴ X. B. Gao (高鑫博)⁴¹ Y. N. Gao (高原宁)^{46,h}
Yang Gao (高扬)^{72,58} S. Garbolino^{75C} I. Garzia^{29A,29B} L. Ge (葛玲)⁸¹ P. T. Ge (葛潘婷)¹⁹ Z. W. Ge (葛振武)⁴²
C. Geng (耿聪)⁵⁹ E. M. Gersabeck⁶⁸ A. Gilman⁷⁰ K. Goetzen¹³ L. Gong (龚丽)⁴⁰ W. X. Gong (龚文煊)^{1,58}
W. Gradl³⁵ S. Gramigna^{29A,29B} M. Greco^{75A,75C} M. H. Gu (顾旻皓)^{1,58} Y. T. Gu (顾运厅)¹⁵ C. Y. Guan (关春懿)^{1,64}
A. Q. Guo (郭爱强)^{31,64} L. B. Guo (郭立波)⁴¹ M. J. Guo (国梦娇)⁵⁰ R. P. Guo (郭如盼)⁴⁹ Y. P. Guo (郭玉萍)^{12,g}
A. Guskov^{36,b} J. Gutierrez²⁷ K. L. Han (韩坤霖)⁶⁴ T. T. Han (韩婷婷)¹ F. Hanisch³ X. Q. Hao (郝喜庆)¹⁹
F. A. Harris⁶⁶ K. K. He (何凯凯)⁵⁵ K. L. He (何康林)^{1,64} F. H. Heinsius³ C. H. Heinz³⁵ Y. K. Heng (衡月昆)^{1,58,64}
C. Herold⁶⁰ T. Holtmann³ P. C. Hong (洪鹏程)³⁴ G. Y. Hou (侯国一)^{1,64} X. T. Hou (侯贤涛)^{1,64}
Y. R. Hou (侯颖锐)⁶⁴ Z. L. Hou (侯治龙)¹ B. Y. Hu (胡碧颖)⁵⁹ H. M. Hu (胡海明)^{1,64} J. F. Hu (胡继峰)^{56,j}
S. L. Hu (胡圣亮)^{12,g} T. Hu (胡涛)^{1,58,64} Y. Hu (胡誉)¹ G. S. Huang (黄光顺)^{72,58} K. X. Huang (黄凯旋)⁵⁹
L. Q. Huang (黄麟钦)^{31,64} X. T. Huang (黄性涛)⁵⁰ Y. P. Huang (黄燕萍)¹ Y. S. Huang (黄永盛)⁵⁹ T. Hussain⁷⁴
F. Hölzken³ N. Hüskens³⁵ N. in der Wiesche⁶⁹ J. Jackson²⁷ S. Janchiv³² J. H. Jeong¹⁰ Q. Ji (纪全)¹
Q. P. Ji (姬清平)¹⁹ W. Ji (季旺)^{1,64} X. B. Ji (季晓斌)^{1,64} X. L. Ji (季筱璐)^{1,58} Y. Y. Ji (吉钰瑶)⁵⁰

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- X. Q. Jia (贾晓倩)⁵⁰ Z. K. Jia (贾泽坤)^{72,58} D. Jiang (姜地)^{1,64} H. B. Jiang (姜候兵)⁷⁷ P. C. Jiang (蒋沛成)^{46,h}
 S. S. Jiang (姜赛赛)³⁹ T. J. Jiang (蒋庭俊)¹⁶ X. S. Jiang (江晓山)^{1,58,64} Y. Jiang (蒋艺)⁶⁴ J. B. Jiao (焦健斌)⁵⁰
 J. K. Jiao (焦俊坤)³⁴ Z. Jiao (焦铮)²³ S. Jin (金山)⁴² Y. Jin (金毅)⁶⁷ M. Q. Jing (荆茂强)^{1,64} X. M. Jing (景新媚)⁶⁴
 T. Johansson⁷⁶ S. Kabana³³ N. Kalantar-Nayestanaki⁶⁵ X. L. Kang (康晓琳)⁹ X. S. Kang (康晓坤)⁴⁰
 M. Kavatsyuk⁶⁵ B. C. Ke (柯百谦)⁸¹ V. Khachatryan²⁷ A. Khoukaz⁶⁹ R. Kiuchi¹ O. B. Kolcu^{62A} B. Kopt³
 M. Kuessner³ X. Kui (奎贤)^{1,64} N. Kumar²⁶ A. Kupsc^{44,76} W. Kühn³⁷ J. J. Lane⁶⁸ L. Lavezzi^{75A,75C}
 T. T. Lei (雷天天)^{72,58} Z. H. Lei (雷祚弘)^{72,58} M. Lellmann³⁵ T. Lenz³⁵ C. Li (李聪)⁴³ C. Li (李翠)⁴⁷
 C. H. Li (李春花)³⁹ Cheng Li (李澄)^{72,58} D. M. Li (李德民)⁸¹ F. Li (李飞)^{1,58} G. Li (李刚)¹ H. B. Li (李海波)^{1,64}
 H. J. Li (李惠静)¹⁹ H. N. Li (李衡讷)^{56j} Hui Li (李慧)⁴³ J. R. Li (李嘉荣)⁶¹ J. S. Li (李静舒)⁵⁹ K. Li (李科)¹
 K. L. Li (李凯璐)¹⁹ L. J. Li (李林健)^{1,64} L. K. Li (李龙科)¹ Lei Li (李蕾)⁴⁸ M. H. Li (李明浩)⁴³
 P. R. Li (李培荣)^{38,k,1} Q. M. Li (李启铭)^{1,64} Q. X. Li (李起鑫)⁵⁰ R. Li (李燃)^{17,31} S. X. Li (李素娴)¹² T. Li (李腾)⁵⁰
 W. D. Li (李卫东)^{1,64} W. G. Li (李卫国)^{1,a} X. Li (李旭)^{1,64} X. H. Li (李旭红)^{72,58} X. L. Li (李晓玲)⁵⁰
 X. Y. Li (李晓宇)^{1,64} X. Z. Li (李绪泽)⁵⁹ Y. G. Li (李彦谷)^{46,h} Z. J. Li (李志军)⁵⁹ Z. Y. Li (李紫阳)⁷⁹
 C. Liang (梁畅)⁴² H. Liang (梁浩)^{1,64} H. Liang (梁昊)^{72,58} Y. F. Liang (梁勇飞)⁵⁴ Y. T. Liang (梁羽铁)^{31,64}
 G. R. Liao (廖广睿)¹⁴ Y. P. Liao (廖一朴)^{1,64} J. Libby²⁶ A. Limphirat⁶⁰ C. C. Lin (蔺长城)⁵⁵ D. X. Lin (林德旭)^{31,64}
 T. Lin (林韬)¹ B. J. Liu (刘北江)¹ B. X. Liu (刘宝鑫)⁷⁷ C. Liu (刘成)³⁴ C. X. Liu (刘春秀)¹ F. Liu (刘芳)¹
 F. H. Liu (刘福虎)⁵³ Feng Liu (刘峰)⁶ G. M. Liu (刘国明)^{56j} H. Liu (刘昊)^{38,k,1} H. B. Liu (刘宏邦)¹⁵
 H. H. Liu (刘欢欢)¹ H. M. Liu (刘怀民)^{1,64} Huihui Liu (刘汇慧)²¹ J. B. Liu (刘建北)^{72,58} J. Y. Liu (刘晶译)^{1,64}
 K. Liu (刘凯)^{38,k,1} K. Y. Liu (刘魁勇)⁴⁰ Ke Liu (刘珂)²² L. Liu (刘亮)^{72,58} L. C. Liu (刘良辰)⁴³ Lu Liu (刘露)⁴³
 M. H. Liu (刘美宏)^{12,g} P. L. Liu (刘佩莲)¹ Q. Liu (刘倩)⁶⁴ S. B. Liu (刘树彬)^{72,58} T. Liu (刘桐)^{12,g}
 W. K. Liu (刘维克)⁴³ W. M. Liu (刘卫民)^{72,58} X. Liu (刘翔)^{38,k,1} X. Liu (刘鑫)³⁹ Y. Liu (刘义)⁸¹ Y. Liu (刘英)^{38,k,1}
 Y. B. Liu (刘玉斌)⁴³ Z. A. Liu (刘振安)^{1,58,64} Z. D. Liu (刘宗德)⁹ Z. Q. Liu (刘智青)⁵⁰ X. C. Lou (娄辛丑)^{1,58,64}
 F. X. Lu (卢飞翔)⁵⁹ H. J. Lu (吕海江)²³ J. G. Lu (吕军光)^{1,58} X. L. Lu (陆小玲)¹ Y. Lu (卢宇)⁷
 Y. P. Lu (卢云鹏)^{1,58} Z. H. Lu (卢泽辉)^{1,64} C. L. Luo (罗成林)⁴¹ J. R. Luo (罗家瑞)⁵⁹ M. X. Luo (罗民兴)⁸⁰
 T. Luo (罗涛)^{12,g} X. L. Luo (罗小兰)^{1,58} X. R. Lyu (吕晓睿)⁶⁴ Y. F. Lyu (吕翌丰)⁴³ F. C. Ma (马凤才)⁴⁰
 H. Ma (马衡)⁷⁹ H. L. Ma (马海龙)¹ J. L. Ma (马俊力)^{1,64} L. L. Ma (马连良)⁵⁰ L. R. Ma (马立瑞)⁶⁷
 M. M. Ma (马明明)^{1,64} Q. M. Ma (马秋梅)¹ R. Q. Ma (马润秋)^{1,64} T. Ma (马腾)^{72,58} X. T. Ma (马晓天)^{1,64}
 X. Y. Ma (马骁妍)^{1,58} Y. M. Ma (马玉明)³¹ F. E. Maas¹⁸ I. MacKay⁷⁰ M. Maggiora^{75A,75C} S. Malde⁷⁰
 Y. J. Mao (冒亚军)^{46,h} Z. P. Mao (毛泽普)¹ S. Marcello^{75A,75C} Z. X. Meng (孟召霞)⁶⁷ J. G. Messchendorp^{13,65}
 G. Mezzadri^{29A} H. Miao (妙晗)^{1,64} T. J. Min (闵天觉)⁴² R. E. Mitchell²⁷ X. H. Mo (莫晓虎)^{1,58,64} B. Moses²⁷
 N. Yu. Muchnoi^{4,c} J. Muskalla³⁵ Y. Nefedov³⁶ F. Nerling^{18,e} L. S. Nie (聂麟苏)²⁰ I. B. Nikolaev^{4,c}
 Z. Ning (宁哲)^{1,58} S. Nisar^{11,m} Q. L. Niu (牛祺乐)^{38,k,1} W. D. Niu (牛文迪)⁵⁵ Y. Niu (牛艳)⁵⁰ S. L. Olsen⁶⁴
 S. L. Olsen^{10,64} Q. Ouyang (欧阳群)^{1,58,64} S. Pacetti^{28B,28C} X. Pan (潘祥)⁵⁵ Y. Pan (潘越)⁵⁷ A. Pathak³⁴
 Y. P. Pei (裴宇鹏)^{72,58} M. Pelizaeus³ H. P. Peng (彭海平)^{72,58} Y. Y. Peng (彭云翊)^{38,k,1} K. Peters^{13,e}
 J. L. Ping (平加伦)⁴¹ R. G. Ping (平荣刚)^{1,64} S. Plura³⁵ V. Prasad³³ F. Z. Qi (齐法制)¹ H. Qi (齐航)^{72,58}
 H. R. Qi (漆红荣)⁶¹ M. Qi (祁鸣)⁴² T. Y. Qi (齐天钰)^{12,g} S. Qian (钱森)^{1,58} W. B. Qian (钱文斌)⁶⁴
 C. F. Qiao (乔从丰)⁶⁴ X. K. Qiao (乔晓珂)⁸¹ J. J. Qin (秦佳佳)⁷³ L. Q. Qin (秦丽清)¹⁴ L. Y. Qin (秦龙宇)^{72,58}
 X. P. Qin (覃潇平)^{12,g} X. S. Qin (秦小帅)⁵⁰ Z. H. Qin (秦中华)^{1,58} J. F. Qiu (邱进发)¹ Z. H. Qu (屈子皓)⁷³
 C. F. Redmer³⁵ K. J. Ren (任旷洁)³⁹ A. Rivetti^{75C} M. Rolo^{75C} G. Rong (荣刚)^{1,64} Ch. Rosner¹⁸
 M. Q. Ruan (阮曼奇)^{1,58} S. N. Ruan (阮氏宁)⁴³ N. Salone⁴⁴ A. Sarantsev^{36,d} Y. Schelhaas³⁵ K. Schoenning⁷⁶
 M. Scodeggio^{29A} K. Y. Shan (尚科羽)^{12,g} W. Shan (单葳)²⁴ X. Y. Shan (单心钰)^{72,58} Z. J. Shang (尚子杰)^{38,k,1}
 J. F. Shangguan (上官剑锋)¹⁶ L. G. Shao (邵立港)^{1,64} M. Shao (邵明)^{72,58} C. P. Shen (沈成平)^{12,g}
 H. F. Shen (沈宏飞)^{1,8} W. H. Shen (沈文涵)⁶⁴ X. Y. Shen (沈肖雁)^{1,64} B. A. Shi (施伯安)⁶⁴ H. Shi (史华)^{72,58}
 H. C. Shi (石煌超)^{72,58} J. L. Shi (石家磊)^{12,g} J. Y. Shi (石京燕)¹ Q. Q. Shi (石勤强)⁵⁵ S. Y. Shi (史书宇)⁷³
 X. Shi (史欣)^{1,58} J. J. Song (宋娇娇)¹⁹ T. Z. Song (宋天资)⁵⁹ W. M. Song (宋维民)^{34,1} Y. J. Song (宋宇镜)^{12,g}
 Y. X. Song (宋昀轩)^{46,h,n} S. Sosio^{75A,75C} S. Spataro^{75A,75C} F. Stieler³⁵ S. S. Su (苏闪闪)⁴⁰ Y. J. Su (粟捷扬)⁶⁴

G. B. Sun (孙光豹)⁷⁷ G. X. Sun (孙功星)¹ H. Sun (孙昊)⁶⁴ H. K. Sun (孙浩凯)¹ J. F. Sun (孙俊峰)¹⁹
 K. Sun (孙开)⁶¹ L. Sun (孙亮)⁷⁷ S. S. Sun (孙胜森)^{1,64} T. Sun^{51,f} W. Y. Sun (孙文玉)³⁴ Y. Sun (孙源)⁹
 Y. J. Sun (孙勇杰)^{72,58} Y. Z. Sun (孙永昭)¹ Z. Q. Sun (孙泽群)^{1,64} Z. T. Sun (孙振田)⁵⁰ C. J. Tang (唐昌建)⁵⁴
 G. Y. Tang (唐光毅)¹ J. Tang (唐健)⁵⁹ M. Tang (唐嘉骏)^{72,58} Y. A. Tang (唐迎澳)⁷⁷ L. Y. Tao (陶璐燕)⁷³
 Q. T. Tao (陶秋田)^{25,i} M. Tat⁷⁰ J. X. Teng (滕佳秀)^{72,58} V. Thoren⁷⁶ W. H. Tian (田文辉)⁵⁹ Y. Tian (田野)^{31,64}
 Z. F. Tian (田喆飞)⁷⁷ I. Uman^{62B} Y. Wan (万宇)⁵⁵ S. J. Wang (王少杰)⁵⁰ B. Wang (王斌)¹ B. L. Wang (王滨龙)⁶⁴
 Bo Wang (王博)^{72,58} D. Y. Wang (王大勇)^{46,h} F. Wang (王菲)⁷³ H. J. Wang (王泓鉴)^{38,k,1} J. J. Wang (王家驹)⁷⁷
 J. P. Wang (王吉鹏)⁵⁰ K. Wang (王科)^{1,58} L. L. Wang (王亮亮)¹ M. Wang (王萌)⁵⁰ N. Y. Wang (王南洋)⁶⁴
 S. Wang (王石)^{38,k,1} S. Wang (王顺)^{12,g} T. Wang (王婷)^{12,g} T. J. Wang (王腾蛟)⁴³ W. Wang (王维)⁷³
 W. Wang (王为)⁵⁹ W. P. Wang (王维平)^{35,58,72,o} X. Wang (王轩)^{46,h} X. F. Wang (王雄飞)^{38,k,1} X. J. Wang (王希俊)³⁹
 X. L. Wang (王小龙)^{12,g} X. N. Wang (王新南)¹ Y. Wang (王亦)⁶¹ Y. D. Wang (王雅迪)⁴⁵ Y. F. Wang (王贻芳)^{1,58,64}
 Y. L. Wang (王艺龙)¹⁹ Y. N. Wang (王亚男)⁴⁵ Y. Q. Wang (王雨晴)¹ Yaqian Wang (王亚乾)¹⁷ Yi Wang (王义)⁶¹
 Z. Wang (王铮)^{1,58} Z. L. Wang (王治浪)⁷³ Z. Y. Wang (王至勇)^{1,64} Ziyi Wang (王子一)⁶⁴ D. H. Wei (魏代会)¹⁴
 F. Weidner⁶⁹ S. P. Wen (文硕频)¹ Y. R. Wen (温亚冉)³⁹ U. Wiedner³ G. Wilkinson⁷⁰ M. Wolke⁷⁶
 L. Wollenberg³ C. Wu (吴晨)³⁹ J. F. Wu (吴金飞)^{1,8} L. H. Wu (伍灵慧)¹ L. J. Wu (吴连近)^{1,64} X. Wu (吴潇)^{12,g}
 X. H. Wu (伍雄浩)³⁴ Y. Wu (吴言)^{72,58} Y. H. Wu (吴业昊)⁵⁵ Y. J. Wu (吴英杰)³¹ Z. Wu (吴智)^{1,58}
 L. Xia (夏磊)^{72,58} X. M. Xian (咸秀梅)³⁹ B. H. Xiang (向本后)^{1,64} T. Xiang (相腾)^{46,h} D. Xiao (肖栋)^{38,k,1}
 G. Y. Xiao (肖光延)⁴² S. Y. Xiao (肖素玉)¹ Y. L. Xiao (肖云龙)^{12,g} Z. J. Xiao (肖振军)⁴¹ C. Xie (谢陈)⁴²
 X. H. Xie (谢昕海)^{46,h} Y. Xie (谢勇)⁵⁰ Y. G. Xie (谢宇广)^{1,58} Y. H. Xie (谢跃红)⁶ Z. P. Xie (谢智鹏)^{72,58}
 T. Y. Xing (邢天宇)^{1,64} C. F. Xu^{1,64} C. J. Xu (许创杰)⁵⁹ G. F. Xu (许国发)¹ H. Y. Xu (许皓月)^{67,2,p}
 M. Xu (徐明)^{72,58} Q. J. Xu (徐庆君)¹⁶ Q. N. Xu³⁰ W. Xu (许威)¹ W. L. Xu (徐万伦)⁶⁷ X. P. Xu (徐新平)⁵⁵
 Y. Xu (徐月)⁴⁰ Y. C. Xu (胥英超)⁷⁸ Z. S. Xu (许昭桑)⁶⁴ F. Yan (严芳)^{12,g} L. Yan (严亮)^{12,g}
 W. B. Yan (鄢文标)^{72,58} W. C. Yan (闫文成)⁸¹ X. Q. Yan (严薛强)^{1,64} H. J. Yang (杨海军)^{51,f} H. L. Yang (杨昊霖)³⁴
 H. X. Yang (杨洪勋)¹ T. Yang (杨涛)¹ Y. Yang (杨莹)^{12,g} Y. F. Yang (杨翊凡)^{1,64} Y. F. Yang (杨艳芳)⁴³
 Y. X. Yang (杨逸翔)^{1,64} Z. W. Yang (杨政武)^{38,k,1} Z. P. Yao (姚志鹏)⁵⁰ M. Ye (叶梅)^{1,58} M. H. Ye (叶铭汉)⁸
 J. H. Yin (殷俊昊)¹ Junhao Yin (殷俊昊)⁴³ Z. Y. You (尤邦昀)⁵⁹ B. X. Yu (俞伯祥)^{1,58,64} C. X. Yu (喻纯旭)⁴³
 G. Yu (余刚)^{1,64} J. S. Yu (俞洁晟)^{25,i} M. C. Yu⁴⁰ T. Yu (于涛)⁷³ X. D. Yu (余旭东)^{46,h} Y. C. Yu (于勇超)⁸¹
 C. Z. Yuan (苑长征)^{1,64} J. Yuan (袁菁)³⁴ J. Yuan (袁杰)⁴⁵ L. Yuan (袁丽)² S. C. Yuan (苑思成)^{1,64}
 Y. Yuan (袁野)^{1,64} Z. Y. Yuan (袁朝阳)⁵⁹ C. X. Yue (岳崇兴)³⁹ A. A. Zafar⁷⁴ F. R. Zeng (曾凡蕊)⁵⁰
 S. H. Zeng^{63A,63B,63C,63D} X. Zeng (曾鑫)^{12,g} Y. Zeng (曾云)^{25,i} Y. J. Zeng (曾宇杰)⁵⁹ Y. J. Zeng (曾溢嘉)^{1,64}
 X. Y. Zhai (翟星晔)³⁴ Y. C. Zhai (翟云聪)⁵⁰ Y. H. Zhan (詹永华)⁵⁹ A. Q. Zhang (张安庆)^{1,64}
 B. L. Zhang (张伯伦)^{1,64} B. X. Zhang (张丙新)¹ D. H. Zhang (张丹昊)⁴³ G. Y. Zhang (张广义)¹⁹ H. Zhang (张晗)⁸¹
 H. Zhang (张豪)^{72,58} H. C. Zhang (张航畅)^{1,58,64} H. H. Zhang (张宏宏)³⁴ H. H. Zhang (张宏浩)⁵⁹
 H. Q. Zhang (张华桥)^{1,58,64} H. R. Zhang (张浩然)^{72,58} H. Y. Zhang (章红宇)^{1,58} J. Zhang (张晋)⁵⁹ J. Zhang (张进)⁸¹
 J. J. Zhang (张进军)⁵² J. L. Zhang (张杰磊)²⁰ J. Q. Zhang (张敬庆)⁴¹ J. S. Zhang (张家声)^{12,g}
 J. W. Zhang (张家文)^{1,58,64} J. X. Zhang (张景旭)^{38,k,1} J. Y. Zhang (张建勇)¹ J. Z. Zhang (张景芝)^{1,64}
 Jianyu Zhang (张剑宇)⁶⁴ L. M. Zhang (张黎明)⁶¹ Lei Zhang (张雷)⁴² N. Zhang (张楠)⁸¹ P. Zhang (张鹏)^{1,64}
 Q. Y. Zhang (张秋岩)³⁴ R. Y. Zhang (张若愚)^{38,k,1} S. H. Zhang (张水涵)^{1,64} Shulei Zhang (张书磊)^{25,i}
 X. M. Zhang (张晓梅)¹ X. Y. Zhang⁴⁰ X. Y. Zhang (张学尧)⁵⁰ Y. Zhang (张瑶)¹ Y. Zhang (张宇)⁷³
 Y. T. Zhang (张亚腾)⁸¹ Y. H. Zhang (张银鸿)^{1,58} Y. M. Zhang (张悦明)³⁹ Yan Zhang (张言)^{72,58}
 Z. D. Zhang (张正德)¹ Z. H. Zhang (张泽恒)¹ Z. L. Zhang (张兆领)³⁴ Z. Y. Zhang (张振宇)⁷⁷
 Z. Y. Zhang (张子羽)⁴³ Z. Z. Zhang (张子扬)⁴⁵ G. Zhao (赵光)¹ J. Y. Zhao (赵静宜)^{1,64} J. Z. Zhao (赵京周)^{1,58}
 L. Zhao (赵玲)¹ Lei Zhao (赵雷)^{72,58} M. G. Zhao (赵明刚)⁴³ N. Zhao (赵宁)⁷⁹ R. P. Zhao (赵若平)⁶⁴
 S. J. Zhao (赵书俊)⁸¹ Y. B. Zhao (赵豫斌)^{1,58} Y. X. Zhao (赵宇翔)^{31,64} Z. G. Zhao (赵政国)^{72,58} A. Zhemchugov^{36,b}
 B. Zheng (郑波)⁷³ B. M. Zheng (郑变敏)³⁴ J. P. Zheng (郑建平)^{1,58} W. J. Zheng (郑文静)^{1,64} Y. H. Zheng (郑阳恒)⁶⁴
 B. Zhong (钟彬)⁴¹ X. Zhong (钟鑫)⁵⁹ H. Zhou (周航)⁵⁰ J. Y. Zhou (周佳莹)³⁴ L. P. Zhou (周利鹏)^{1,64}

S. Zhou (周帅)⁶ X. Zhou (周详)⁷⁷ X. K. Zhou (周晓康)⁶ X. R. Zhou (周小蓉)^{72,58} X. Y. Zhou (周兴玉)³⁹
 Y. Z. Zhou (周祎卓)^{12,g} Z. C. Zhou (周章丞)²⁰ A. N. Zhu (朱傲男)⁶⁴ J. Zhu (朱江)⁴³ K. Zhu (朱凯)¹
 K. J. Zhu (朱科军)^{1,58,64} K. S. Zhu (朱康帅)^{12,g} L. Zhu (朱林)³⁴ L. X. Zhu (朱琳萱)⁶⁴ S. H. Zhu (朱世海)⁷¹
 T. J. Zhu (朱腾蛟)^{12,g} W. D. Zhu (朱稳定)⁴¹ Y. C. Zhu (朱莹春)^{72,58} Z. A. Zhu (朱自安)^{1,64}
 J. H. Zou (邹佳恒)¹ J. Zu (祖健)^{72,58}

(BESIII Collaboration)

¹Institute of High Energy Physics, Beijing 100049, China

²Beihang University, Beijing 100191, China

³Bochum Ruhr-University, D-44780 Bochum, Germany

⁴Budker Institute of Nuclear Physics SB RAS (BINP), Novosibirsk 630090, Russia

⁵Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15213, USA

⁶Central China Normal University, Wuhan 430079, China

⁷Central South University, Changsha 410083, China

⁸China Center of Advanced Science and Technology, Beijing 100190, China

⁹China University of Geosciences, Wuhan 430074, China

¹⁰Chung-Ang University, Seoul, 06974, Republic of Korea

¹¹COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus, Defence Road, Off Raiwind Road, 54000 Lahore, Pakistan

¹²Fudan University, Shanghai 200433, China

¹³GSI Helmholtzcentre for Heavy Ion Research GmbH, D-64291 Darmstadt, Germany

¹⁴Guangxi Normal University, Guilin 541004, China

¹⁵Guangxi University, Nanning 530004, China

¹⁶Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou 310036, China

¹⁷Hebei University, Baoding 071002, China

¹⁸Helmholtz Institute Mainz, Staudinger Weg 18, D-55099 Mainz, Germany

¹⁹Henan Normal University, Xinxiang 453007, China

²⁰Henan University, Kaifeng 475004, China

²¹Henan University of Science and Technology, Luoyang 471003, China

²²Henan University of Technology, Zhengzhou 450001, China

²³Huangshan College, Huangshan 245000, China

²⁴Hunan Normal University, Changsha 410081, China

²⁵Hunan University, Changsha 410082, China

²⁶Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai 600036, India

²⁷Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405, USA

^{28A}INFN Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, INFN Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, I-00044, Frascati, Italy

^{28B}INFN Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, INFN Sezione di Perugia, I-06100, Perugia, Italy

^{28C}INFN Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, University of Perugia, I-06100, Perugia, Italy

^{29A}INFN Sezione di Ferrara, INFN Sezione di Ferrara, I-44122, Ferrara, Italy

^{29B}INFN Sezione di Ferrara, University of Ferrara, I-44122, Ferrara, Italy

³⁰Inner Mongolia University, Hohhot 010021, China

³¹Institute of Modern Physics, Lanzhou 730000, China

³²Institute of Physics and Technology, Peace Avenue 54B, Ulaanbaatar 13330, Mongolia

³³Instituto de Alta Investigación, Universidad de Tarapacá, Casilla 7D, Arica 1000000, Chile

³⁴Jilin University, Changchun 130012, China

³⁵Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Johann-Joachim-Becher-Weg 45, D-55099 Mainz, Germany

³⁶Joint Institute for Nuclear Research, 141980 Dubna, Moscow region, Russia

³⁷Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen, II. Physikalisches Institut, Heinrich-Buff-Ring 16, D-35392 Giessen, Germany

³⁸Lanzhou University, Lanzhou 730000, China

³⁹Liaoning Normal University, Dalian 116029, China

⁴⁰Liaoning University, Shenyang 110036, China

⁴¹Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing 210023, China

⁴²Nanjing University, Nanjing 210093, China

⁴³Nankai University, Tianjin 300071, China

⁴⁴National Centre for Nuclear Research, Warsaw 02-093, Poland

⁴⁵North China Electric Power University, Beijing 102206, China

⁴⁶Peking University, Beijing 100871, China

⁴⁷Qufu Normal University, Qufu 273165, China

⁴⁸Renmin University of China, Beijing 100872, China

⁴⁹Shandong Normal University, Jinan 250014, China

⁵⁰Shandong University, Jinan 250100, China

⁵¹Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai 200240, China

⁵²Shanxi Normal University, Linfen 041004, China

⁵³Shanxi University, Taiyuan 030006, China

⁵⁴Sichuan University, Chengdu 610064, China

⁵⁵Soochow University, Suzhou 215006, China

⁵⁶South China Normal University, Guangzhou 510006, China

- ⁵⁷Southeast University, Nanjing 211100, China
⁵⁸State Key Laboratory of Particle Detection and Electronics, Beijing 100049, Hefei 230026, China
⁵⁹Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou 510275, China
⁶⁰Suranaree University of Technology, University Avenue 111, Nakhon Ratchasima 30000, Thailand
⁶¹Tsinghua University, Beijing 100084, China
^{62A}Turkish Accelerator Center Particle Factory Group, Istinye University, 34010, Istanbul, Turkey
^{62B}Turkish Accelerator Center Particle Factory Group, Near East University, Nicosia, North Cyprus, 99138, Mersin 10, Turkey
^{63A}University of Bristol, H H Wills Physics Laboratory
^{63B}University of Bristol, Tyndall Avenue
^{63C}University of Bristol, Bristol
^{63D}University of Bristol, BS8 1TL
⁶⁴University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100049, China
⁶⁵University of Groningen, NL-9747 AA Groningen, The Netherlands
⁶⁶University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822, USA
⁶⁷University of Jinan, Jinan 250022, China
⁶⁸University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, United Kingdom
⁶⁹University of Muenster, Wilhelm-Klemm-Strasse 9, 48149 Muenster, Germany
⁷⁰University of Oxford, Keble Road, Oxford OX13RH, United Kingdom
⁷¹University of Science and Technology Liaoning, Anshan 114051, China
⁷²University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei 230026, China
⁷³University of South China, Hengyang 421001, China
⁷⁴University of the Punjab, Lahore-54590, Pakistan
^{75A}University of Turin and INFN, University of Turin, I-10125, Turin, Italy
^{75B}University of Turin and INFN, University of Eastern Piedmont, I-15121, Alessandria, Italy
^{75C}University of Turin and INFN, INFN, I-10125, Turin, Italy
⁷⁶Uppsala University, Box 516, SE-75120 Uppsala, Sweden
⁷⁷Wuhan University, Wuhan 430072, China
⁷⁸Yantai University, Yantai 264005, China
⁷⁹Yunnan University, Kunming 650500, China
⁸⁰Zhejiang University, Hangzhou 310027, China
⁸¹Zhengzhou University, Zhengzhou 450001, China
^aDeceased
^bAlso at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, Moscow 141700, Russia
^cAlso at the Novosibirsk State University, Novosibirsk, 630090, Russia
^dAlso at the NRC "Kurchatov Institute", PNPI, 188300, Gatchina, Russia
^eAlso at Goethe University Frankfurt, 60323 Frankfurt am Main, Germany
^fAlso at Key Laboratory for Particle Physics, Astrophysics and Cosmology, Ministry of Education; Shanghai Key Laboratory for Particle Physics and Cosmology; Institute of Nuclear and Particle Physics, Shanghai 200240, China
^gAlso at Key Laboratory of Nuclear Physics and Ion-beam Application (MOE) and Institute of Modern Physics, Fudan University, Shanghai 200443, China
^hAlso at State Key Laboratory of Nuclear Physics and Technology, Peking University, Beijing 100871, China
ⁱAlso at School of Physics and Electronics, Hunan University, Changsha 410082, China
^jAlso at Guangdong Provincial Key Laboratory of Nuclear Science, Institute of Quantum Matter, South China Normal University, Guangzhou 510006, China
^kAlso at MOE Frontiers Science Center for Rare Isotopes, Lanzhou University, Lanzhou 730000, China
^lAlso at Lanzhou Center for Theoretical Physics, Lanzhou University, Lanzhou 730000, China
^mAlso at the Department of Mathematical Sciences, IBA, Karachi 75270, Pakistan
ⁿAlso at Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne (EPFL), CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland
^oAlso at Helmholtz Institute Mainz, Staudinger Weg 18, D-55099 Mainz, Germany
^pAlso at School of Physics, Beihang University, Beijing 100191, China

Abstract: We search for the leptonic decay $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ using an e^+e^- collision data sample with an integrated luminosity of 20.3 fb^{-1} collected with the BESIII detector at a center-of-mass energy of 3.773 GeV . Significant signal is not observed, and an upper limit on the branching fraction of $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ is set as 9.7×10^{-7} , at a confidence level of 90%. Our upper limit is an order of magnitude smaller than the previous limit for this decay mode.

Keywords: BESIII, charm physics, leptonic decay

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I. INTRODUCTION

Leptonic decays of charmed mesons offer a clean and direct approach to understand weak decays of the c quark (see, e.g., [1] for a recent review). The leptonic decays $D^+ \rightarrow$

$\ell^+ \nu_\ell$ ($\ell = e, \mu$, or τ) occur via the annihilation of the c and $\bar{d}$ quarks into an $\ell^+ \nu_\ell$ mediated by a virtual W^+ boson, as depicted in Fig. 1. The weak and strong interaction effects factorize, which leads to a simple expression for the partial decay width of $D^+ \rightarrow \ell^+ \nu_\ell$ at the lowest or-

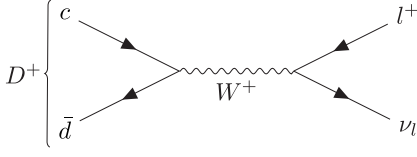


Fig. 1. Feynman diagram of $D^+ \rightarrow \ell^+ \nu_\ell$.

der in the Standard Model (SM). It is proportional to the product of the decay constant f_{D^+} , which characterizes the strong-interaction effects between the initial-state quarks, and magnitude of the Cabibbo-Kobayashi-Maskawa (CKM) matrix element $|V_{cd}|$, representing the $c \rightarrow d$ flavor-changing interaction. In the SM, the decay width can be written as [2]

$$\Gamma_{D^+ \rightarrow \ell^+ \nu_\ell} = \frac{G_F^2}{8\pi} |V_{cd}|^2 f_{D^+}^2 m_\ell^2 m_{D^+} \left(1 - \frac{m_\ell^2}{m_{D^+}^2}\right)^2, \quad (1)$$

where G_F is the Fermi coupling constant, m_ℓ is the lepton mass, and m_{D^+} is the D^+ mass. Thus, the ratio of branching fractions between different lepton channels depends only on the lepton masses and is accurately predicted to be

$$e^+ \nu_e : \mu^+ \nu_\mu : \tau^+ \nu_\tau = 2.35 \times 10^{-5} : 1 : 2.67, \quad (2)$$

with negligible uncertainty. Any observation of violation of this relation indicates new physics beyond the SM.

The $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ decay, with an expected branching fraction lower than 10^{-8} , has not yet been observed experimentally. The CLEO Collaboration searched for $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ [3] and reported an upper limit of the branching fraction of 8.8×10^{-6} at the 90% confidence level using 818 pb^{-1} of the $\psi(3770)$ data. In this study, we search for $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ by using 20.3 fb^{-1} of $e^+ e^-$ collision data [4, 5], approximately 25 times larger than that of the CLEO measurement, collected with the BESIII detector at the center-of-mass energy of 3.773 GeV. Charge-conjugate modes are always implied throughout the text.

II. DESCRIPTION OF BEPCII AND BESIII DETECTOR

The BESIII detector [6] records symmetric $e^+ e^-$ collisions provided by the BEPCII storage ring [7] operating in the center-of-mass energy ($\sqrt{s}$) range of 1.84 to 4.95 GeV, with a peak luminosity of $1.1 \times 10^{33} \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ achieved at $\sqrt{s} = 3.773 \text{ GeV}$. BESIII has collected large data samples in this energy region [8–10]. The cylindrical core of the BESIII detector covers 93% of the full solid angle and consists of a helium-based multilayer drift chamber (MDC), plastic scintillator time-of-flight system (TOF), and CsI (TI) electromagnetic calorimeter (EMC),

which are enclosed in a superconducting solenoidal magnet providing a magnetic field of 1.0 T. The solenoid is supported by an octagonal flux-return yoke with resistive plate counter muon identification modules interleaved with steel. The charged-particle momentum resolution at 1 GeV/c is 0.5%, while the dE/dx resolution is 6% for electrons from Bhabha scattering. The EMC measures photon energies with a resolution of 2.5% (5%) at 1 GeV in the barrel (end-cap) region. The time resolution in the TOF barrel region is 68 ps, while that in the end-cap region is 110 ps. The end-cap TOF system was upgraded in 2015 using a multigap resistive plate chamber technology, providing a time resolution of 60 ps [11–13]. Approximately 85% of the data used here benefit from this upgrade.

III. MONTE CARLO SIMULATION

Monte Carlo (MC) simulated data samples produced with the GEANT4-based [14] software package, which includes the geometric description of the BESIII detector and detector response, are used to determine detection efficiencies and estimate backgrounds. The simulation models the beam energy spread and initial state radiation (ISR) in the $e^+ e^-$ annihilations with the generator KKMC [15]. The inclusive MC sample includes the production of $D\bar{D}$ pairs (and treats quantum coherence for the neutral D channels), non- $D\bar{D}$ decays of the $\psi(3770)$, ISR production of the J/ψ and $\psi(3686)$ states, and continuum processes incorporated in KKMC [15, 16]. All particle decays are modelled with EVTGEN [17, 18] using branching fractions either obtained from the Particle Data Group (PDG) [19] when available, or otherwise estimated with LUNDCHARM [20]. Final state radiation (FSR) from charged final state particles is incorporated using PHOTOS [21]. The leptonic decay $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ is simulated with the SLN model [22]. A signal MC sample comprising 5 million simulated signal events is used to determine the selection efficiencies and model the signal shape.

IV. ANALYSIS METHOD

The process $e^+ e^- \rightarrow \psi(3770) \rightarrow D^+ D^-$, without accompanying hadrons, allows studies on D^+ decays with a double tag technique [1, 23]. There are two types of samples used in this technique: single tag (ST) and double tag (DT). In the ST sample, a D^- meson is reconstructed via the six hadronic decay modes of $D^- \rightarrow K^+ \pi^- \pi^-$, $K_S^0 \pi^-$, $K^+ \pi^- \pi^- \pi^0$, $K_S^0 \pi^- \pi^0$, $K_S^0 \pi^+ \pi^- \pi^-$, and $K^+ K^- \pi^-$. In the DT sample, both charged D mesons in the event are reconstructed: a ST D^- and signal $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ decay reconstructed with the remaining tracks.

The branching fraction of the $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ decay is determined by

$$\mathcal{B}_{D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e} = \frac{N_{\text{DT}}}{N_{\text{ST}}^{\text{tot}} \bar{\epsilon}_{\text{sig}}}, \quad (3)$$

where $N_{\text{ST}}^{\text{tot}}$ is the total yield of ST D^- mesons, N_{DT} is the DT yield, and $\bar{\epsilon}_{\text{sig}}$ is the averaged signal efficiency weighted by the ST yields of the i^{th} tag mode in the data. This efficiency is calculated as

$$\bar{\epsilon}_{\text{sig}} = \frac{\sum_i (N_{\text{ST}}^i \epsilon_{\text{DT}}^i / \epsilon_{\text{ST}}^i)}{N_{\text{ST}}^{\text{tot}}}, \quad (4)$$

where N_{ST}^i is the number of ST D^- mesons for the i^{th} tag mode in the data, ϵ_{ST}^i is the efficiency of reconstruction of the ST mode i , and ϵ_{DT}^i is the efficiency of finding the tag mode i and $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ decay simultaneously.

V. PARTICLE RECONSTRUCTION

All charged tracks detected in the MDC must satisfy $|\cos\theta| < 0.93$, where θ is the polar angle with respect to the z -axis, which is the symmetry axis of the MDC. For charged tracks not originating from K_S^0 decays, the distance of closest approach to the interaction point (IP) is required to be smaller than 1 cm in the transverse plane, and smaller than 10 cm along the z -axis. Particle identification (PID) for charged tracks combines the dE/dx measurement in the MDC with the time of flight measurement of the TOF to define the likelihood function $\mathcal{L}(h)$ ($h = K, \pi, e$) for each particle (h) hypothesis. Charged kaons and pions are identified by requiring $\mathcal{L}(K) > \mathcal{L}(\pi)$ and $\mathcal{L}(\pi) > \mathcal{L}(K)$, respectively, while positron candidates must satisfy $\mathcal{L}(e) > 0.001$ and $\mathcal{L}(e)/(\mathcal{L}(e) + \mathcal{L}(K) + \mathcal{L}(\pi)) > 0.8$. To further reduce misidentifications between positrons and hadrons, we require $E/p > 0.8$, where E is the energy deposit in the EMC from the track and p is its momentum reconstructed in the MDC. To partially recover the energy loss due to FSR and bremsstrahlung, the four-momenta of photon(s) within 5° of the initial positron direction are added to the positron candidate's four-momentum.

The K_S^0 candidates are reconstructed from pairs of oppositely charged tracks, each with a distance of closest approach to the IP smaller than 20 cm along the z -axis. The tracks are assigned as $\pi^+ \pi^-$ without imposing any PID criteria. They are constrained to originate from a common vertex and are required to have an invariant mass within (0.487, 0.511) GeV/ c^2 . The decay length of the K_S^0 candidate is required to be larger than twice the vertex resolution away from the IP. The quality of both primary and secondary vertex fits is ensured by requiring $\chi^2 < 100$. The fitted K_S^0 four-vectors are used for later kinematic calculations.

The photon candidates are reconstructed from isolated EMC showers. The deposited energy of each shower

in the end-cap region ($0.86 < |\cos\theta| < 0.92$) and in the barrel region ($|\cos\theta| < 0.80$) must be larger than 50 MeV and 25 MeV, respectively. To exclude showers that originate from charged tracks, the angle subtended by the EMC shower and position of the closest charged track at the EMC must be larger than 10° as measured from the IP. The difference between the EMC time and event start time is required to be within [0, 700] ns to suppress electronic noise and showers unrelated to the event.

The π^0 candidates are reconstructed from photon pairs with a $\gamma\gamma$ invariant mass within (0.115, 0.150) GeV/ c^2 . A mass-constrained (1C) fit is imposed constraining the $\gamma\gamma$ invariant mass to the π^0 nominal mass [19] to improve the momentum resolution. χ^2 must be smaller than 50. The four-momentum of the π^0 candidate updated by the fit is used for further analysis.

VI. SINGLE-TAG SELECTION AND YIELDS

To separate ST D^- mesons from combinatorial backgrounds, we utilize two kinematic observables, the energy difference $\Delta E \equiv E_{D^-} - E_{\text{beam}}$ and beam-constrained mass $M_{\text{BC}} \equiv \sqrt{E_{\text{beam}}^2/c^4 - |\vec{p}_{D^-}|^2/c^2}$, where E_{beam} is the beam energy and E_{D^-} and $\vec{p}_{D^-}$ are the energy and momentum of the ST $\bar{D}$ meson in the e^+e^- center-of-mass frame, respectively. If there is more than one D^- candidate in a given ST mode, that with the smallest $|\Delta E|$ is kept for further analysis. The ΔE requirements on the different tag modes are summarized in Table 1.

For each tag mode, the yield of the ST D^- meson is extracted by fitting the corresponding M_{BC} distribution. In the fit, the signal shape is described by the MC-simulated signal shape convolved with a double-Gaussian function to account for the data-MC resolution difference. The background shape is described by an ARGUS function [24], with the endpoint fixed at $E_{\text{beam}} = 1.8865$ GeV. Figure 2 shows the fit results for the tag modes in the data. The ST efficiencies are obtained by analyzing the inclusive MC sample. The candidates with M_{BC} within (1.863, 1.877) GeV/ c^2 are kept for further analysis. The ST yields and efficiencies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Requirements on ΔE , ST D^- yields (N_{ST}^i) in the data, ST efficiencies (ϵ_{ST}^i), and DT efficiencies (ϵ_{DT}^i). The uncertainties on N_{ST}^i are only statistical.

Tag mode	$\Delta E/\text{MeV}$	$N_{\text{ST}}^i (\times 10^3)$	$\epsilon_{\text{ST}}^i (\%)$	$\epsilon_{\text{DT}}^i (\%)$
$K^+ \pi^- \pi^-$	[-25, 24]	5567.2 ± 2.5	51.08	33.92
$K_S^0 \pi^-$	[-25, 26]	656.5 ± 0.8	51.42	35.00
$K^+ \pi^- \pi^- \pi^0$	[-57, 46]	1740.2 ± 1.9	24.53	17.86
$K^+ K^- \pi^-$	[-24, 23]	481.4 ± 0.9	40.91	25.46
$K_S^0 \pi^- \pi^0$	[-62, 49]	1442.4 ± 1.5	26.45	20.12
$K_S^0 \pi^- \pi^- \pi^+$	[-28, 27]	790.2 ± 1.1	29.68	20.08

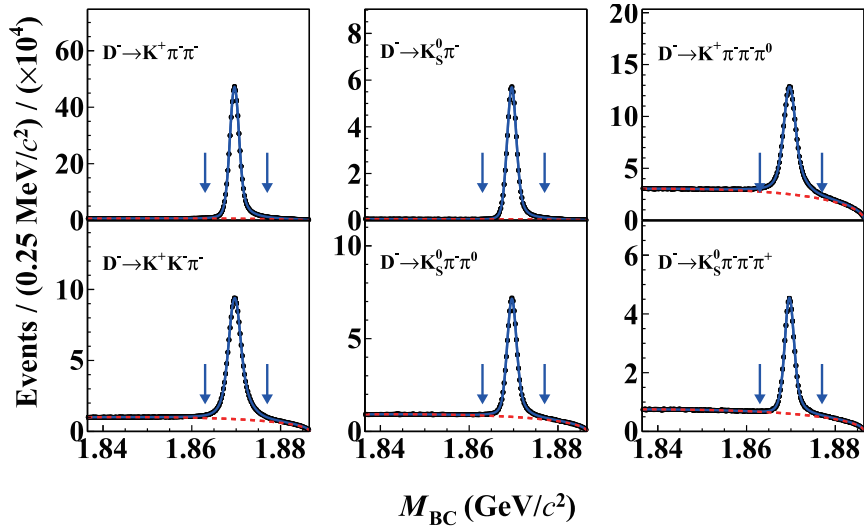


Fig. 2. (color online) Fits to the M_{BC} distributions of the ST D^- candidates. The dots with error bars are data, the solid blue lines are the total fit, and the red dashed curves describe the fitted combinatorial background shapes. The pairs of blue arrows indicate the M_{BC} signal window.

VII. DOUBLE-TAG SELECTION AND YIELDS

For the signal side of $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$, only the one positron can be reconstructed. The neutrino carries away energy and momentum that are not directly detectable, but may be inferred from four-momentum conservation. The recoiling positron and D^- tag are combined with the known initial-state four-momentum to achieve this and help select signal events. A kinematic fit is performed, constraining the total four-momentum to the four-momentum of the initial state and constraining the invariant masses of the D^- tag and D^+ signal to the known $D^\pm$ mass. The four-momentum of the missing neutrino is determined by the fit. χ^2 of this kinematic fit is required to be smaller than 50. To further suppress backgrounds, it is required that there are no extra π^0 ($N_{\pi^0}^{\text{extra}} = 0$) or good tracks ($N_{\text{char}}^{\text{extra}} = 0$) that are not used in the DT reconstruction. The maximum energy of any extra photon ($E_{\text{max},\gamma}^{\text{extra}}$) is also required to be smaller than 0.2 GeV. This is optimized by maximizing $\frac{\epsilon}{1.5 + \sqrt{B}}$ [25], where ϵ is the signal efficiency and B is the background yield estimated by the inclusive MC sample. The signal yield is determined from a fit to the missing-mass squared, M_{miss}^2 , defined as

$$M_{\text{miss}}^2 = (E_{\text{beam}} - E_{e^+})^2 - (-\vec{p}_{D^-} - \vec{p}_{e^+})^2, \quad (5)$$

where E_{e^+} ($\vec{p}_{e^+}$) is the energy (momentum) of the candidate positron.

We fit the M_{miss}^2 distribution in the data to obtain the yield of $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$. The signal shape is derived from the signal MC sample. The background shape is derived from the inclusive MC sample, smoothed with the tool

RooKeysPDF [26]. The decay $D^+ \rightarrow \pi^0 e^+ \nu_e$ is the main background, which is well modeled in the MC simulation. The fit result is shown in Fig. 3; the yield of $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ is $N_{\text{DT}} = 0.3^{+2.9}_{-3.4}(\text{stat})$.

VIII. SYSTEMATIC UNCERTAINTIES

Most systematic uncertainties related to the efficiency of reconstruction of the D^- mesons on the tag side are canceled due to the DT method. The multiplicative systematic uncertainty on the number of single tags, $N_{\text{ST}}^{\text{tot}}$, is estimated by varying the signal and background shapes, and allowing the parameters of the Gaussian to vary in the fit. It is assigned to be 0.1%. The e^+ tracking and PID efficiencies are studied by using a control sample of

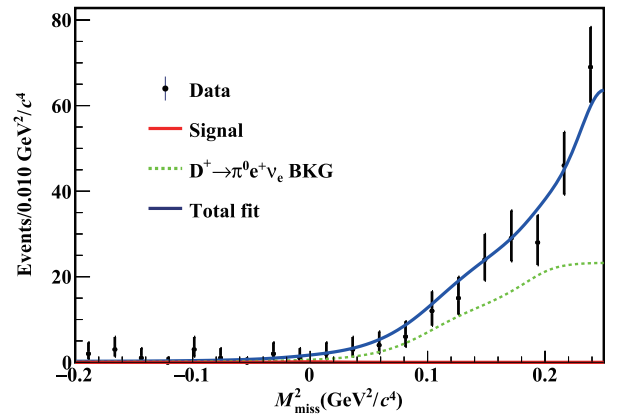


Fig. 3. (color online) Fit to the M_{miss}^2 distribution of the accepted candidates for $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$. The dots with error bars are data. The blue solid curve is the fit result. The red line is the fitted signal shape.

$e^+e^- \rightarrow \gamma e^+e^-$. The differences of the efficiencies between data and MC are 1.002 ± 0.005 for e^+ tracking and 0.972 ± 0.005 for PID. After correction for the data/MC discrepancy, we assign 0.5% and 0.5% as multiplicative systematic uncertainties for the e^+ tracking and PID, respectively. The efficiency for the combined requirements on $E_{\text{max},\gamma}^{\text{extra}}, N_{\text{char}}^{\text{extra}}$, and $N_{\pi^0}^{\text{extra}}$ is studied with a control sample of DT hadronic events where both D^+ and D^- decay to one of the six ST hadronic final states. The efficiency difference between data and MC simulation, 1.3%, is used as the multiplicative systematic uncertainty. We adjust the fit range to $(-0.25, 0.25) \text{ GeV}^2/c^4$ for M_{miss}^2 , with maximum upper limit and minimum values set as 1.0×10^{-6} and 9.7×10^{-7} , respectively, and thus consider 3% as an additive systematic uncertainty. All systematic uncertainties are summarized in Table 2. Their addition in quadrature results in a total systematic uncertainty of 4.3%.

IX. UPPER LIMIT OF THE BRANCHING FRACTION

As no significant signal is found, an upper limit on the branching fraction of $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ is estimated using the Bayesian approach. The sources of systematic uncertainties on the upper limit measurements are classified into two types: additive and multiplicative (σ_s). To incorporate the multiplicative systematic uncertainty in the calculation of the upper limit, the likelihood distribution is smeared by a Gaussian function with a mean of zero and width equal to σ_s , as described below [27],

$$L(\mathcal{B}) \propto \int_0^1 L\left(\frac{\epsilon_s}{\epsilon_s} \mathcal{B}\right) e^{\left[-\frac{(\epsilon_s - \epsilon_s)^2}{2\sigma_s^2}\right]} dS, \quad (6)$$

where we associate ϵ_s with the nominal efficiency, ϵ_s with the expected efficiency, and $L(\mathcal{B})$ is the likelihood distribution obtained from a fit to the likelihood of $\mathcal{B}$ (branching fraction) and parameterized as a Gaussian. The only significant additive uncertainty originates from the normalization of the $D^+ \rightarrow \pi^0 e^+ \nu_e$ branching fraction. We repeat the maximum-likelihood fit, varying this BF by the PDG uncertainty and choose the most conservative upper limit among these results. The distribution of the likelihood versus the assumed branching fraction is shown in Fig. 4. Finally, the upper limit on the branching fraction of $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ at the 90% confidence level is set at 9.7×10^{-7} .

Table 2. Systematic uncertainties on the branching fraction measurement.

Multiplicative uncertainty	Uncertainty (%)
$N_{\text{ST}}^{\text{tot}}$	0.1
e^+ tracking	0.5
e^+ PID	0.5
$E_{\text{max},\gamma}^{\text{extra}}, N_{\text{char}}^{\text{extra}}, N_{\pi^0}^{\text{extra}}$	3.0
Additive Uncertainty	Uncertainty (%)
M_{miss}^2 fit region	3.0
Total	4.3

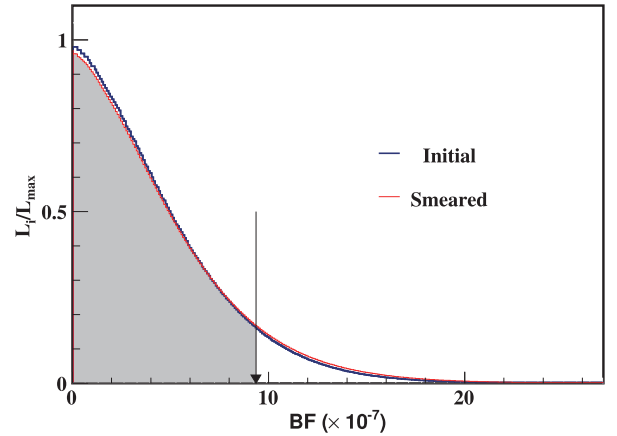


Fig. 4. (color online) Distribution of likelihood versus the branching fraction of $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$. The likelihood in each bin is denoted as L . The maximum of the likelihood is L_{max} . The results obtained with and without incorporation of the systematic uncertainties are shown by the red and blue curves, respectively. The black arrow shows the upper limit corresponding to the 90% confidence level.

X. SUMMARY

By analyzing 20.3 fb^{-1} of e^+e^- collision data collected at $\sqrt{s} = 3.773 \text{ GeV}$ with the BESIII detector, we search for the leptonic decay $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$. Significant signal is not observed, and an upper limit on the branching fraction of $D^+ \rightarrow e^+ \nu_e$ is set at 9.7×10^{-7} at the 90% confidence level. The sensitivity is improved by an order of magnitude compared to the CLEO measurement.

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