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Phys. Rev. C **85**, 037601 — Published 9 March 2012

DOI: [10.1103/PhysRevC.85.037601](https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevC.85.037601)

# $^{19}\text{Ne}$ levels studied with the $^{18}\text{F}(d, n)^{19}\text{Ne}^*(^{18}\text{F} + p)$ reaction

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(Dated: February 20, 2012)

A good understanding of the level structure of  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  around the proton threshold is critical to estimating the destruction of long-lived  $^{18}\text{F}$  in novae. Here we report the properties of levels in  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  in the excitation energy range of  $6.9 \leq E_x \leq 8.4$  MeV studied via the proton-transfer  $^{18}\text{F}(d, n)\text{Ne}^*$  reaction at Holifield Radioactive Ion Beam Facility. The populated  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  levels decay by breakup into  $p + ^{18}\text{F}$  and  $\alpha + ^{15}\text{O}$  particles. The results presented in this manuscript are those of levels that are simultaneously observed from the breakup into both channels. An s-wave state is observed at 1468 keV above the proton threshold, which is a potential candidate for a predicted broad  $J^\pi = 1/2^+$  state. The proton and alpha partial widths are deduced to be  $\Gamma_p = 228 \pm 50$  keV and  $\Gamma_\alpha = 130 \pm 30$  keV for this state.

PACS numbers: 27.20.+n, 25.40.Hs, 25.60.-t, 26.30.-k

Knowledge of the properties of resonances near the proton threshold in  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  is required to determine the  $^{18}\text{F}(p, \alpha)^{15}\text{O}$  reaction rate, which predominantly destroys the long-lived radionuclide  $^{18}\text{F}$  in nova outbursts. The reaction rate is dominated by s- and p-wave resonances in  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  arising from states near the proton threshold at 6411 keV. Despite years of measurements with stable and radioactive beams to better understand this reaction [1–9], the cross section has only been measured directly down to  $\sim 250$  keV [10]. Large uncertainties remain due to the unknown properties of levels near the proton threshold and unknown characteristics of the interference between the  $J^\pi = 3/2^+$  resonances.

The present understanding is that the  $^{18}\text{F}(p, \alpha)^{15}\text{O}$  rate is dominated by the two known resonances at  $E_{c.m.} = 665$  keV ( $J^\pi = 3/2^+$ ) and 330 keV ( $J^\pi = 3/2^-$ ) that arise from  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  levels at  $E_x = 7076$  and 6741 keV, respectively [11, 12]. Dufour and Descouvemont [13] predict an s-wave state around 1.5 MeV above the proton threshold with decay widths of  $\Gamma_p = 157$  keV and  $\Gamma_\alpha = 139$  keV that such a state has yet to be confirmed supports the need for additional studies of the level structure of  $^{19}\text{Ne}$ . A tentative observation of a broad state near this

energy was measured by Dalouzy *et al.* [14] using the inelastic scattering reaction  $^1\text{H}(^{19}\text{Ne}, p)^{19}\text{Ne}^*(p)^{18}\text{F}$ , but the proton and alpha widths could not be determined.

The  $^{18}\text{F}(d, n)$  reaction had been previously studied at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) Holifield Radioactive Ion Beam Facility (HRIBF) in order to clarify the level structure of  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  near the proton threshold. The final  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  states at these excitation energies decay promptly into  $\alpha + ^{15}\text{O}$  particles. However, at higher excitation energies, the states become broader and breakup into the  $p + ^{18}\text{F}$  channel becomes stronger. The present experimental approach of using the proton-transfer reaction  $^{18}\text{F}(d, n)$  enables the study of resonances that have a yield too small to be measured directly in the  $^{18}\text{F}(p, \alpha)$  reaction. In addition, since both sets of decay products were detected in coincidence by silicon detectors, the decay branching ratios can be determined from

$$\frac{\Gamma_p}{\Gamma_\alpha} = \frac{N_p}{N_\alpha} \frac{\epsilon_\alpha}{\epsilon_p}, \quad (1)$$

where  $\Gamma_{p,\alpha}$ ,  $N_{p,\alpha}$  and  $\epsilon_{p,\alpha}$  are the partial widths, coincidence yield and detection efficiency, respectively for the breakup of  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  states into the  $p$  and  $\alpha$  channels.

The results from the breakup of  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  to  $\alpha + ^{15}\text{O}$  particles focusing on levels close to the proton threshold have been previously published [15, 16]. The present manuscript presents analysis of states in  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  that appear in both  $p$  and  $\alpha$  decay channels in the excitation energy range of  $6.9 \leq E_x \leq 8.4$  MeV that corresponds to  $\sim 0.5 - 2.0$  MeV above the proton threshold. Spectroscopic factors were extracted for strongly-populated levels from which proton-widths could be deduced. The alpha widths were then estimated from the observed proton to alpha branching ratios.

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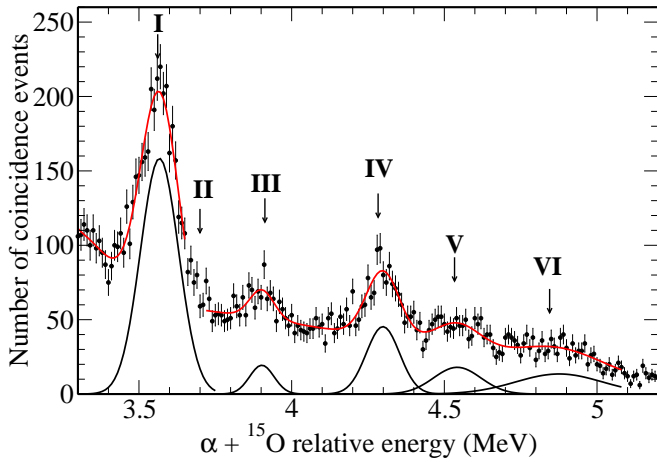


FIG. 1: (Color online) Partial spectrum from the breakup of  $^{19}\text{Ne} \rightarrow \alpha + ^{15}\text{O}$  above 3.3 MeV  $\alpha + ^{15}\text{O}$  relative energy. The fits to the five resolved levels (I, III - VI). The red line is the sum of the individual peaks shown as black-solid lines. State IV is the state of interest in the proton channel.

The detailed description of the experimental approach is in Refs. [15, 16]. The measurements of the  $^{18}\text{F}(d, n)$  reaction were performed at ORNL's HRIBF utilizing a 150-MeV isotopically-pure  $^{18}\text{F}$  beam to bombard a  $716\text{-}\mu\text{g}/\text{cm}^2$   $\text{CD}_2$  target. The reaction neutrons were emitted predominantly at backward angles in the laboratory system while the  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  was limited to a narrow cone at forward angles. The neutrons were not measured. The  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  states near the proton threshold decay promptly by emitting  $\alpha$  particles. However, at higher excitation energies, the states become broader, and decay via proton emission becomes stronger. Each pair of charged particles decay products was detected in coincidence using six  $5\text{-cm} \times 5\text{-cm}$  position-sensitive E- $\Delta$ E telescopes located  $\approx 46$  cm downstream of the target allowing for the measurement of energy, position, and particle type. Two of the telescopes covered laboratory angles of  $2.5^\circ - 8.5^\circ$  on both sides of the beam axis and were optimized to measure heavier particles. The remaining four telescopes covered laboratory angles  $10.5^\circ - 16.5^\circ$  on both sides of the beam axis and were optimized to detect the light particles.

The  $^{18}\text{F}(d, n)$  reaction populates excitations in  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  above the  $\alpha$  particle unbound region. Therefore the residual  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  was observed in its breakup channels. The  $\alpha + ^{15}\text{O}$  relative energy spectrum obtained [15, 16] using the coincidence, particle identification, and  $Q$ -value requirements is shown in Fig. 1. The  $p + ^{18}\text{F}$  relative energy spectrum is shown in Fig. 2. The proton breakup spectrum was analyzed with the MINUIT [17] fitting program using five Gaussian peaks covering  $6.9 \leq E_x \leq 8.4$  MeV. These peaks correspond to excited states in  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  that have relatively large branching ratios for proton emission. The parameters extracted from the fit are presented in Table I. The fitting was done allowing the

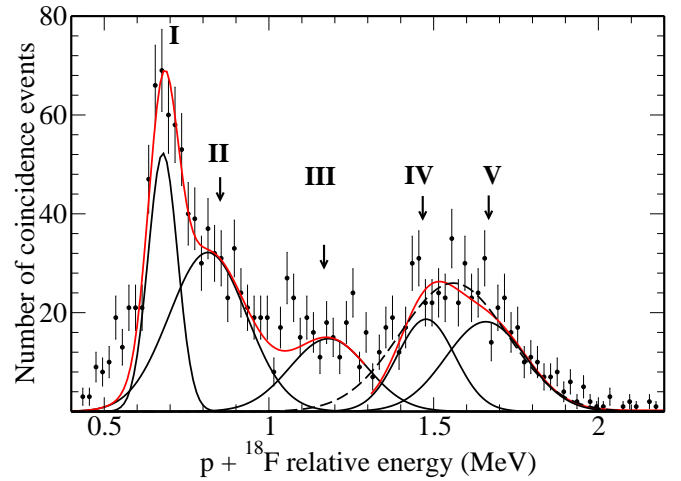


FIG. 2: (Color online) Spectrum from the breakup of  $^{19}\text{Ne} \rightarrow p + ^{18}\text{F}$  with fits to the five levels (I - V). The red line is the sum of the individual peaks shown as black-solid lines. The excitation energies determined for  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  are listed in Table I

area, resonance energy, and width to vary as free parameters.

Figure 3 shows the expected full width at half maximum (FWHM) resolution of the reconstructed relative energy ( $E_{\text{rel}}$ ) as a function of  $E_{\text{rel}}$  in the  $p$  channel calculated from a Monte Carlo simulation. Also shown in Fig. 3 are the measured resolutions of the individual peaks identified in Fig. 2. There is reasonably good agreement between the calculated and experimentally measured resolution for peak I, IV and V. The measured

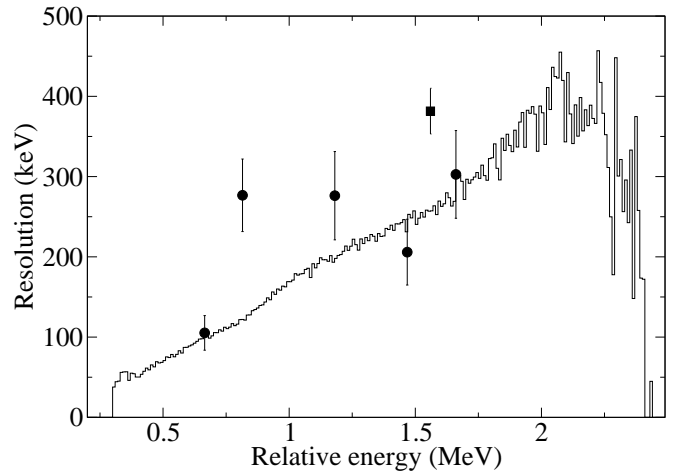


FIG. 3: The Monte Carlo simulated (solid histogram) FWHM resolution for the reconstructed relative energy for  $p + ^{18}\text{F}$ . The observed experimental resolutions are indicated by shaded-circles. The square data point is the resolution of the peak at  $E_{c.m.} = 1.5$  MeV would have when fitted with only one peak.

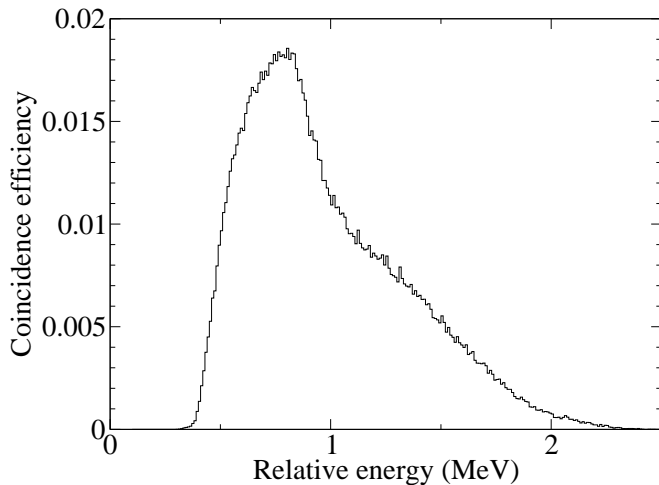


FIG. 4: The calculated  $p + {}^{18}\text{F}$  coincidence efficiency for geometry used in this measurement.

width of peaks II and III exceeded the experimental resolution. The intrinsic width of the state might be large, or it could be that they consist of two or more unresolved states.

Decay branching ratios were determined for states that appear in both  $\alpha$  and  $p$  decay channels using Eq. 1. The coincidence efficiencies,  $\epsilon_p$  and  $\epsilon_\alpha$  were calculated as a function of center-of-mass angle for each excitation energy with the Monte Carlo simulation assuming that the decay is isotropic in the center-of-mass system. The resulting  $p + {}^{18}\text{F}$  coincidence efficiency, integrated over the acceptance of the present experiment, is shown as a function of relative energy in Fig. 4. Because of the detector thicknesses used in the experiment, the energy range of protons that could be stopped and identified in the telescopes was from 4 to 12 MeV. This energy acceptance range, in part determines the acceptance of the experiment and explains the observed low-energy and high-energy fall-offs in the measured relative energy spectra (see Fig. 2). The analogous plot for the  $\alpha + {}^{15}\text{O}$  channel was published in Ref. [16].

The peak labeled I in Fig. 2 is centered at  $E_x = 7089$  keV, which agrees with the extracted centroid from the  $\alpha$  data. This energy corresponds to the well known state at  $E_x = 7076$  keV. In addition to the relatively good agreement in excitation energy, the extracted branching ratio,  $\Gamma_p/\Gamma_\alpha = 0.64 \pm 0.04$  is in excellent agreement with the value of  $0.639 \pm 0.066$  determined from previous widths of  $\Gamma_p = 15.2 \pm 1.0$  keV and  $\Gamma_\alpha = 23.8 \pm 0.12$  keV [12].

The peak labeled II is measured at  $E_x = 7266 \pm 20$  keV; this may correspond to the known state at  $E_x = 7238$  keV. A careful look at the  $\alpha$  data (Fig. 1) reveals a high energy tail on the 7089 keV state that might be an indication of this state.

As for the peak labeled III, the statistics were too poor to reach firm conclusions. Although an excitation energy of  $E_x = 7592$  keV was deduced by assuming only one

state in the fit, the poor quality data would also be consistent with more than one state in this excitation energy region.

The peak at  $E_{c.m.} = \sim 1.5$  MeV in Fig. 2 also seems to be too broad to consist of a single state. A fit to this peak with one Gaussian function is shown as the black-dashed line, giving a measured width of  $\sim 400$  keV, shown as square symbol in Fig. 3. Such a large width could reflect unresolved peaks. The red line corresponds to the best fit in this energy region assuming two levels are being populated. The best fit is shown as peaks labeled IV and V with energies at  $E_x = 7879 \pm 26$  and  $8072 \pm 30$  keV, which correspond to states that appear at  $E_x = 7834 \pm 6$  and  $8081 \pm 10$  keV in the  $\alpha$  data shown in Fig. 1.

The peak labeled V measured at  $E_x = 8072$  keV is likely the known state at  $E_x = 8069$  keV. The  $\Gamma_p$  for this level is unknown while the known  $\Gamma_\alpha$  is  $0.22 \pm 0.19$  keV [18]. In this work, the decay branching determined for this state was  $\Gamma_p/\Gamma_\alpha = 15.2 \pm 1.2$ , translating into  $\Gamma_p = 3.34 \pm 2.89$  keV. The errors on all the quantities presented in this manuscript are statistical. Sources of systematic errors and their contributions are given in Ref. [16].

Unfortunately, the limited statistics prevent extraction of meaningful neutron angular distributions from the  ${}^{18}\text{F}(d, n){}^{19}\text{Ne}^*(p + {}^{18}\text{F})$  reaction. However, the neutron angular distributions extracted for the 7834-keV state from the  $\alpha$  decay channel can be normalized to obtain differential cross sections using Eq. 7 of Ref. [16] and is shown in Fig. 5. The differential cross sections were compared to Distorted-wave Born Approximations (DWBA) calculations to extract spectroscopic factors. A DWBA calculation with angular momentum transfer,  $\ell = 0$  well reproduces the angular distributions. The  $J^\pi$  of this state could be  $1/2^+$  or  $3/2^+$  since the  $J^\pi$  of  ${}^{18}\text{F}_{g.s.}$  is  $1^+$ . The spectroscopic factor extracted for this state is  $(2J+1)S_p = 0.25 \pm 0.05$  assuming  $J^\pi = 1/2^+$ . The decay branch-

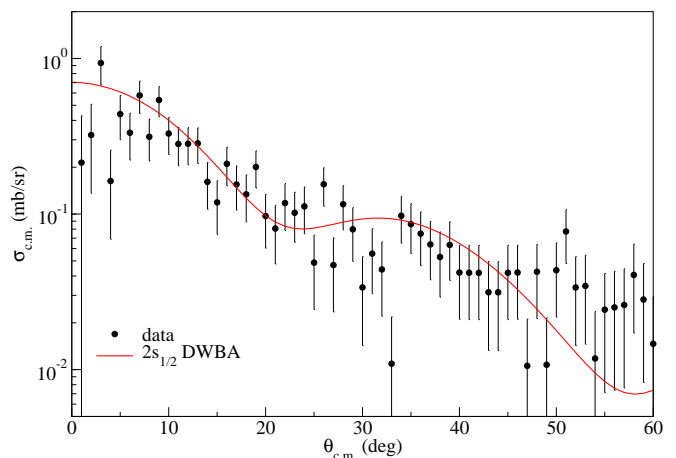


FIG. 5: (Color online) The differential cross sections for  $(d, n)$  transfer to the 7834-keV state in  ${}^{19}\text{Ne}$ . These data are deduced from the  $\alpha$ -decay channel.

TABLE I: Resonance parameters of levels in  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  measured from  $^{18}\text{F}(d, n)^{19}\text{Ne}^*(p + ^{18}\text{F})$  reaction. Except where indicated, known resonance energies were taken from Ref. [18] and their decay branching ratios were calculated using the widths adopted from the same reference.

	This experiment				Previous works			
	$E_r$ (keV)	$E_x$ (keV)	$\Gamma_p$ (keV)	$\Gamma_p/\Gamma_\alpha$	$E_r$ (keV)	$E_x$ (keV)	$\Gamma_p$ (keV)	$\Gamma_p/\Gamma_\alpha$
I	678(5)	7089(5)	13.5(7) <sup>a</sup>	0.64(4)	665	7076	15.2(1.0)	0.639(66)
II	815(20)	7226(20)			827	7238		0.058
III	1181(15)	7592(15)						
IV	1468(26)	7879(26)	228(50)	1.754(14)	1452(39) <sup>b</sup>	7863(39) <sup>c</sup>	$\Gamma = 292(107)^d$	1.129 <sup>e</sup>
V	1661(30)	8072(30)	3.34(2.89)	15.2(1.2)	1658	8069		

<sup>a</sup>Taken from Ref [16]

<sup>b</sup>Ref [14]

<sup>c</sup>Ref [14]

<sup>d</sup>The total width  $\Gamma$  taken from Ref [14]

<sup>e</sup>The  $\Gamma_p$  and  $\Gamma_\alpha$  are theoretical values from Ref. [13]

ing ratio  $\Gamma_p/\Gamma_\alpha$  of  $1.754 \pm 0.014$  measured for this state allowed for determination of  $p$ - and  $\alpha$ -decay branching ratios of  $0.637 \pm 0.005$  and  $0.363 \pm 0.003$ , respectively assuming negligible  $\gamma$  width and isotropic angular distributions. Using the measured spectroscopic factor, a partial proton width of  $\Gamma_p = 228 \pm 50$  keV was determined using the same procedure described previously [15] and a partial alpha width of  $\Gamma_\alpha = 130 \pm 30$  keV was extracted using the decay branching ratio for this state. The energy and the estimated widths of this resonance are consistent with the prediction of an  $s$ -wave state around 1.5 MeV above the proton threshold by Dufour and Descouvemont [13].

In summary, the proton-transfer reaction  $^{18}\text{F}(d, n)$  was used to populate states in  $^{19}\text{Ne}$  at excitation energies around 1.5 MeV above the proton threshold. The populated states decay by breakup into  $p + ^{18}\text{F}$  and  $\alpha + ^{15}\text{O}$  particles. The detection of both decay products in coinci-

dence allowed for direct determinations of decay branching ratios  $\Gamma_p/\Gamma_\alpha$ . The decay branching ratio of the known resonance at  $E_{c.m.} = 665$  keV was consistent with previous measurements. The spin and widths determined for an observed resonance at 1468 keV is consistent with the prediction of Dufour and Descouvemont [13] of an  $s$ -wave state with excitation energy at  $\sim 1.5$  MeV above proton threshold.

This work was supported in part by the U.S. Department of Energy under grant numbers DEFG02-88ER40387 (Ohio University), DE-FG02-96ER40990 (Tennessee Technical University), DE-FG02-96ER40955 (Tennessee Technical University) and the National Nuclear Security Administration under the Stewardship Science Academic Alliances program through U.S. Department of Energy Cooperative Agreement #DE-FG52-08NA28552 and the National Science Foundation (RUTGERS).

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