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Search for lepton-number violating processes in $B^+ \rightarrow h^- l^+ l^+$ decays


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In the Standard Model (SM), lepton number $L$ is conserved in low-energy collisions and decays [1] and the lepton flavor numbers for the three lepton families are served in low-energy collisions and decays [1]. If the neutrinos are of the Majorana type [3], the neutrino and antineutrino are the same particle, and processes that involve lepton-number violation become possible. The lepton number must change by two units ($\Delta L = 2$) in this case, and the most sensitive searches have so far involved neutrinoless nuclear double beta decays $0\nu\beta\beta$ [4]. The nuclear environment complicates the extraction of the neutrino mass scale. Processes involving meson decays have been proposed as an alternative that can also look for lepton-number violation with muons or tau leptons.

An example of a decay involving mesons is $B^+ \rightarrow h^- \ell^+ \ell^+$, where $\ell^+ = e^+$ or $\mu^+$ and $h^-$ is a meson with neutrino oscillations [2] indicates that neutrinos have mass. If the neutrinos are of the Majorana type [3], the neutrino and antineutrino are the same particle, and processes that involve lepton-number violation become possible. The lepton number must change by two units ($\Delta L = 2$) in this case, and the most sensitive searches have so far involved neutrinoless nuclear double beta decays $0\nu\beta\beta$ [4]. The nuclear environment complicates the extraction of the neutrino mass scale. Processes involving meson decays have been proposed as an alternative that can also look for lepton-number violation with muons or tau leptons.

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We select events that have at least four charged tracks, the ratio of the second to zeroth Fox-Wolfram moments [17] less than 0.5, and two same-sign charged leptons, each with momentum greater than 0.3 GeV/c in the laboratory frame. The total transverse vector momentum of an event calculated in the laboratory frame must be less than 4 GeV/c; the distribution of this quantity peaks at 0.2 GeV/c for signal events. The two leptons are constrained to come from a single vertex and an invariant mass $m_{e^+e^-} < 5.0$ GeV/c$^2$ is required, to maintain compatibility with Ref. [6]. Electrons and positrons from photon conversions are removed, where photon conversion is indicated by electron-positron pairs with an invariant mass less than 0.03 GeV/c$^2$ and a production vertex more than 2 cm from the beam axis.

The charged pions and kaons are identified by measurements of their energy loss in the tracking detectors, the number of photons recorded by the ring-imaging Cherenkov detector, and the corresponding Cherenkov angle. These measurements are combined with information from the electromagnetic calorimeter and the instrumented magnetic-flux return detector to identify electrons and muons [12].

The four-momenta of the electrons and positrons are corrected for Bremsstrahlung emission by searching for compatible photons. Using measurements made in the laboratory frame, the photon and electron four-momenta are combined if the photon energy $E_{\gamma}$ is greater than 0.05 GeV, the shape of the energy deposit in the electromagnetic calorimeter is compatible with a photon shower, and the difference in polar angle between the photon and electron, measured at the point of closest approach to the beam spot, is less than 0.035 rad. In addition, the azimuthal angles $\phi$ of the photon $\phi_\gamma$, the lepton $\phi_e$, and the calorimeter deposit associated with the lepton $\phi_c$, all measured at the primary vertex, must be compatible with $|\phi_e - \phi_\gamma - \phi_c| < 0.05$ for electrons and $|\phi_e - \phi_\gamma - \phi_c| + 0.05$ for positrons.

The two leptons and the hadron track are combined to form a $B$ candidate. The $B$ candidate is rejected if the invariant mass of the two leptons is in the range $2.85 < m_{e^+e^-} < 3.15$ GeV/c$^2$ or $3.59 < m_{e^+\mu^-} < 3.77$ GeV/c$^2$. Although a peaking background in the $J/\psi$ or $\psi(2S)$ mass regions is not expected, these criteria maintain consistency with Ref. [6]. For the mode $B^+ \rightarrow \pi^- \mu^+ \mu^+$, the invariant mass of each muon and the hadron must be outside the region $3.05 < m_{\mu^-\mu^+} < 3.13$ GeV/c$^2$. This rejects events where a muon from a $J/\psi$ decay is misidentified as a pion. The probability to misidentify a pion as a muon is of the order 2% and to misidentify an electron less than 0.1%.

We measure the kinematic variables $m_{ES} = \sqrt{s/4 - p_H^2}$ and $\Delta E = E_H - \sqrt{s}/2$, where $p_H$ and $E_H$ are the $B$ momentum and energy in the $Y(4S)$ CM frame, and $\sqrt{s}$ is the total CM energy. For signal events, the $m_{ES}$ distribution
peaks at the $B$ meson mass with a resolution of about 2.5 MeV/$c^2$, and the $\Delta E$ distribution peaks near zero with a resolution of about 20 MeV, indicating that the candidate system of particles has total energy consistent with the beam energy in the CM frame. The $B$ candidate is required to be in the kinematic region $5.200 < m_{ES} < 5.289$ GeV/$c^2$ and $-0.10 < \Delta E < 0.05$ GeV.

The main backgrounds arise from light quark $q\bar{q}$ continuum events and $B\bar{B}$ backgrounds formed from random combinations of leptons from semileptonic $B$ and $D$ decays. These are suppressed through the use of boosted decision tree discriminants (BDTs) [18]. As the input variable distributions for the $q\bar{q}$ continuum and the $B\bar{B}$ backgrounds are sufficiently different, two BDTs are trained, one to distinguish between signal and $q\bar{q}$ continuum and the other between signal and $B\bar{B}$ backgrounds. Each BDT is trained in four regions according to lepton type (muon versus electron) and mass range ($m_{e^+e^+}$ above or below the $J/\psi$ mass). The input variables consist of $\Delta E$ and 17 parameters that represent the event shape of the decay, the distance of closest approach of the di-lepton system to the beam axis, the vertex probabilities of the di-lepton and $B$ candidates, the magnitudes of the thrusts of both the decay particles and the rest of the event, and the thrust directions with respect to the beam axis of the experiment.

To construct the BDTs, we use simulated samples of events for the signal and background, and we assume background decay rates consistent with measured values [19]. We compare the distributions of the data and the simulated background variables used as input to the BDTs and confirm that they are consistent.

The output distributions of the $q\bar{q}$ and $B\bar{B}$ BDTs are each used to define probability distribution functions $P_{\text{sig}}$ and $P_{\text{bkg}}$ for signal and background, respectively. The probabilities are used to define a likelihood ratio $R$ as

$$R = \frac{P_{\text{sig}}^{q\bar{q}} + P_{\text{bkg}}^{q\bar{q}}}{P_{\text{sig}}^{q\bar{q}} + P_{\text{bkg}}^{q\bar{q}} + P_{\text{sig}}^{B\bar{B}} + P_{\text{bkg}}^{B\bar{B}}}.$$  

We veto candidates if either $P_{\text{sig}}^{q\bar{q}}$ or $P_{\text{sig}}^{B\bar{B}}$ is less than 0.5 or the ratio $R$ is less than 0.2. This retains 85% of the simulated signal events while rejecting more than 95% of the background.

After the application of all selection criteria, some events will contain more than one reconstructed $B$ candidate. Fewer than 1% of accepted events have more than one $B$ candidate. We select the most probable $B$ candidate from among all the candidates in the event using the likelihood ratio $R$. Averaged over all events, the correct $B$ candidate in simulated signal events is selected with greater than 98.5% accuracy. For events with more than one $B$ candidate, the correct candidate is selected with an accuracy of 67%–82%, depending on the mode. The final event selection efficiency for simulated signal is 13%–48%, depending on the final state. The selection efficiency for all modes is approximately constant to within a relative $\pm 10\%$ as a function of $m_{e^+e^-}$ between $m_{h^-}$ and 4.6 GeV/$c^2$.

We extract the signal and background yields from the data with an unbinned maximum likelihood (ML) fit using

$$L = \frac{1}{N!} \exp \left( -\sum_{i} n_{i} \right) \prod_{i} \left( \sum_{j} n_{j} P_{j}(\tilde{x}_{i}; \tilde{a}_{j}) \right).$$  

where the likelihood $L$ for each event candidate $i$ is the sum of $n_{j} P_{j}(\tilde{x}_{i}; \tilde{a}_{j})$ over two categories $j$: the signal mode $B^+ \rightarrow h^{-}(\ell^{+} \ell^{-})$ (including the small number of misreconstructed $B$ candidates) and background, as will be discussed. For each category $j$, $P_{j}(\tilde{x}_{i}; \tilde{a}_{j})$ is the product of the probability density functions (PDFs) evaluated for the $i$th event’s measured variables $\tilde{x}_{i}$. The number of events for category $j$ is denoted by $n_{j}$ and $N$ is the total number of events in the sample. The quantities $\tilde{a}_{j}$ represent the parameters describing the expected distributions of the measured variables for each category $j$. Each discriminating variable $\tilde{x}_{i}$ in the likelihood function is modeled with a PDF, where the parameters $\tilde{a}_{j}$ are extracted from MC simulation, off-resonance data, or on-resonance data with $m_{ES} < 5.27$ GeV/$c^2$. The two variables $\tilde{x}_{i}$ used in the fit are $m_{ES}$ and $R$. Since the linear correlations between the two variables are found to be only 4%–7% for simulated signal modes and 8%–12% for simulated background and on-resonance data, we take each $P_{j}$ to be the product of the PDFs for the separate variables. Any correlations in the variables are treated later as a systematic uncertainty. The three free parameters in the fit are the numbers of signal and background events and the slope of the background $m_{ES}$ distribution.

MC simulations show that the $q\bar{q}$ and $B\bar{B}$ backgrounds have very similar distributions in $m_{ES}$ and $R$. We therefore use a single ARGUS shape [20] to describe the $m_{ES}$ combinatorial background, allowing the shape parameter to float in the fits. The ratio $R$ for both signal and background is fitted using a nonparametric kernel estimation KEYS algorithm [21].

We parameterize the signal $m_{ES}$ distributions using a Gaussian shape unique to each final state, with the mean and width determined from fits to the analogous final states in the $B^+ \rightarrow J/\psi(\rightarrow \ell^{+} \ell^{-})h^+$ events from the on-resonance data. The same selection criteria as previously given are used, with the modification that two opposite-sign leptons are required, the reconstructed $J/\psi$ mass must be in the range 2.95 to 3.15 GeV/$c^2$, $m_{ES}$ greater than 5.24 GeV/$c^2$, and $\Delta E$ between $-0.3$ and 0.2 GeV. The signal and background $m_{ES}$ on-resonance data distributions are fitted with a Gaussian and an ARGUS function, respectively. For modes with a pion in the final state, we account for $J/\psi K^+$ misidentified as $J/\psi \pi^+$ by using the signal distribution extracted from the $J/\psi K^+$ data as an
The numbers of signal and background events used in the ensembles is taken from the full default model fit to the selected on-resonance data sample described previously. We generate and fit 5,000 datasets with the number of signal and background events allowed to fluctuate according to a Poisson distribution. The signal yield bias in the ensemble of fits is between −0.30 and 0.15 events, depending on the mode, and this is subtracted from the yield taken from the data.

The results of the ML fits to the on-resonance data are summarized in Table I. Fig. 3 shows the \( m_{ES} \) distributions for the four modes. The signal significance is defined as

\[
S = \sqrt{\Delta \ln \mathcal{L}},
\]

where \( \Delta \ln \mathcal{L} \) is the change in log-likelihood from the maximum value to the value when the number of signal events is set to zero. Systematic errors are included in the log-likelihood distribution by convolving the likelihood function with a Gaussian distribution with a variance equal to the total systematic error defined later in this paper. The branching fraction \( \mathcal{B} \) is given by

\[
n_{f}/(\eta N_{BB}),
\]

where \( n_{f} \) is the signal yield corrected for the fit bias, \( \eta \) is the reconstruction efficiency, and \( N_{BB} \) is the number of \( B\bar{B} \) events collected.

The systematic uncertainties in the branching fractions are summarized in Table II. They arise from the PDF parameterization, fit biases, background yields, and efficiencies. The PDF uncertainties are calculated by varying, by their errors, the PDF parameters that are held fixed in the default fit, taking into account correlations. For the nonparametric kernel estimation KEYS algorithm, we vary the smearing parameter between 50% and 200% of the nominal value. The uncertainty from the fit bias includes the statistical uncertainty from the simulated experiments and half of the correction itself, added in quadrature.

Two tests are used to calculate the contribution to the error caused by the assumption that the \( q\bar{q} \) and \( B\bar{B} \) backgrounds have similar distributions. We first vary the relative proportions of light quark \( q\bar{q} \), \( c\bar{c} \), and \( B\bar{B} \) used in the simulated background between 0% and 100%. The new simulated background \( R \) PDF is then used in the fit to the data and compared to the default fit to data. We also perform an ensemble of fits to MC samples consisting of one simulated signal event and the number of simulated background events given by the default fit to data. The relative proportions of light quark \( q\bar{q} \), \( c\bar{c} \), and \( B\bar{B} \) in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Fit bias</th>
<th>Yield</th>
<th>( \eta ) (%)</th>
<th>( S(\sigma) )</th>
<th>( \mathcal{B} \times 10^{-8} )</th>
<th>( \mathcal{B}_{UL} \times 10^{-8} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( B^+ \to \pi^- \pi^+ )</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>+0.15 ± 0.09</td>
<td>0.6^{+2.5}_{-2.7}</td>
<td>47.8 ± 0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.27^{+1.1}_{-1.2} ± 0.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>( B^+ \to K^- \pi^- )</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>−0.30 ± 0.15</td>
<td>0.7^{+1.3}_{-1.2}</td>
<td>30.9 ± 0.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.49^{+1.3}_{-0.8} ± 0.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>( B^+ \to K^- \mu^+ \mu^- )</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>−0.01 ± 0.05</td>
<td>0.0^{+3.2}_{-2.0}</td>
<td>13.1 ± 0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.03^{+1.1}_{-0.8} ± 0.6</td>
<td>10.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>( B^+ \to K^- \mu^+ \mu^- )</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>+0.02 ± 0.04</td>
<td>0.5^{+3.5}_{-2.5}</td>
<td>23.0 ± 0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.45^{+1.2}_{-0.7} ± 0.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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simulated background are varied and a fit is performed to the MC sample. The result is compared to the fit to the default MC sample. The error is calculated as half the difference between the default fit and the maximum deviation seen in the ensemble of fits. All the errors described previously are additive in nature and affect the significance of the branching fraction results.

Multiplicative uncertainties include reconstruction efficiency uncertainties from tracking (0.8% per track added linearly for the leptons and 0.7% for the kaon or pion), charged lepton particle identification (0.7% per track added linearly for electrons, 1.0% for muons), hadron particle identification (0.2% for pions, 0.6% for kaons), uncertainty in the BDT response from comparison to charmonium control samples (2.0%), the number of $B\bar{B}$ pairs (0.6%), and MC signal statistics (0.2%). The total multiplicative branching fraction uncertainty is 3.2% or less for all modes.

As shown in Table I, we observe no significant yields. The 90% C.L. branching fraction upper limits $B_{UL}$ are determined by integrating the total likelihood distribution (taking into account statistical and systematic errors) as a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systematic</th>
<th>$\pi^- e^+ e^+$</th>
<th>$K^- e^+ e^+$</th>
<th>$\pi^- \mu^+ \mu^+$</th>
<th>$K^- \mu^+ \mu^+$</th>
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<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.35</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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</table>

Branching fraction $B$ uncertainties ($\times 10^{-8}$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Additive</th>
<th>Multiplicative</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\pi^- e^+ e^+$</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$K^- e^+ e^+$</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\pi^- \mu^+ \mu^+$</td>
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<tr>
<td>$K^- \mu^+ \mu^+$</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.35</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
function of the branching fraction from 0 to $B_{UL}$, such that $f_{UL}^{B_{UL}} \bar{L}d\bar{B} = 0.9 \times f_{0}^{\infty} \bar{L}d\bar{B}$. The upper limits are dominated by the statistical error.

Fig. 4 shows $B_{UL}$ as a function of the mass $m_{e^+h^-}$ for the four modes. The $B_{UL}$ limit is recalculated in bins of 0.1 GeV/c^2 with the assumption that all the fitted signal events are contained in that bin. The total likelihood distribution from the default fit is rescaled taking into account the reconstruction efficiency in each $m_{e^+h^-}$ bin and the increased uncertainty in the estimate of the reconstruction efficiency due to reduced MC statistics. The $B_{UL}$ limit in each $m_{e^+h^-}$ bin is then recalculated using the formula given above. The change in shape is mainly due to the variation of the reconstruction efficiency as a function of the mass. If the decay $B^+ \rightarrow h^- e^+ l^+$ is caused by the exchange of a Majorana neutrino, as illustrated in Fig. 1, then $m_{e^+h^-}$ can be related to the Majorana neutrino mass $m_\nu$ [5].

In summary, we have searched for the four lepton-number violating processes $B^+ \rightarrow h^- e^+ l^+$. We find no significant yields and place 90% C.L. upper limits on the branching fractions in the range $(2.3 - 10.7) \times 10^{-5}$. The branching fraction upper limit for $B^+ \rightarrow \pi^+ \mu^+ \mu^+$ is less restrictive than the result reported in Ref. [9], while the $B^+ \rightarrow K^- \mu^+ \mu^+$ limit is commensurate. The limits for $B^+ \rightarrow K^- e^+ e^+$ and $B^+ \rightarrow \pi^- e^+ e^+$ are 30 and 70 times more stringent, respectively, than previous measurements at $e^+e^-$ colliders [8].

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