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Year: 2014

Version:

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Cold-Nuclear-Matter Effects on Heavy-Quark Production at Forward and Backward Rapidity in $d + Au$ Collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200$ GeV


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Heavy quarks are essential probes of the evolution of the medium created in heavy-ion collisions, because they are produced in the early stages of nuclear collisions. Heavy-quark production has been studied via semileptonic-decay electrons and muons, as well as fully reconstructed D mesons, at the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider (RHIC) and the Large Hadron Collider [1,2]. In $p+p$ collisions, heavy-quark production tests perturbative quantum chromodynamics and provides a baseline for the results from heavy-ion collisions [3-5]. In central Au+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200$ GeV, strong suppression of high-transverse-momentum ($p_T$) electrons from semileptonic decay of open heavy-flavor hadrons has been observed at midrapidity [6,7]. At forward rapidity, a similar level of suppression has been measured for the production of heavy-flavor muons in central Cu+Cu collisions [8]. Although suppression of high-$p_T$ particles was predicted as an effect of partonic energy loss in the dense medium created in heavy-ion collisions [9-11], the observed suppression is difficult to explain solely with hot-nuclear-matter effects [8,12]. To interpret such measurements, it is essential to probe the underlying cold-nuclear-matter (CNM) effects, which may also be present.

Control experiments with $d+Au$ collisions allow us to probe those CNM effects, including modifications of the parton distribution functions (PDF) and nuclear-$p_T$ broadening, with minimal impact from the hot nuclear medium. Because heavy quarks are produced primarily by gluon fusion at RHIC, modification of the gluon density in the nucleus can be observed in the charm and bottom production rates [13,14]. Based on PYTHIA [15] calculations, the average parton momentum fraction $x$ in the Au nucleus leading to heavy-flavor muons with $1 < p_T^\mu < 6$ GeV/c at backward rapidity ($-2.0 < y < -1.4$, Au-going direction) and forward rapidity ($1.4 < y < 2.0$, $d$-going direction) is $\approx 8 \times 10^{-2}$ and $\approx 5 \times 10^{-3}$, respectively. Parton energy loss and multiple scattering in the nucleus can change the resulting heavy-flavor hadron momentum spectrum [16]. Previous results in $d+Au$ collisions at midrapidity show a significant enhancement of heavy-flavor electrons at moderate $p_T$ [17]. In this Letter, we present measurements of the $p_T$ spectra and the nuclear-modification factor ($R_{dA}$) of
negatively charged muons from open heavy flavor at forward and backward rapidity in $d + Au$ collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200$ GeV.

The $d + Au$ and $p + p$ data presented here were recorded with the PHENIX detector during the 2008 and 2009 RHIC running periods, respectively. Minimum-bias collisions are selected by using the beam-beam counter (BBC) [18], and this selection covers 88 ± 4% (55 ± 5%) of the total $d + Au$ ($p + p$) inelastic cross section [19]. The integrated luminosity, sampled using single muon triggers [8] in coincidence with the minimum-bias trigger, used for this analysis of $d + Au$ ($p + p$) collisions is 50 nb$^{-1}$ (10 pb$^{-1}$). The $d + Au$ collisions are categorized into four centrality classes: 0% - 20%, 20% - 40%, 40% - 60%, and 60% - 88%, where 0% - 20% represents the 20% highest multiplicity events, as determined by the amount of total charge deposited in the BBC on the Au-going side. For each centrality class, the average number of binary nucleon-nucleon collisions $\langle N_{coll}\rangle$ is calculated from the BBC charge in a Glauber model [20]. The values of $\langle N_{coll}\rangle$ for the $d + Au$ centrality classes specified above are 15.1 ± 1.0, 10.2 ± 0.7, 6.6 ± 0.4, and 3.2 ± 0.2, respectively. A correction for the underlying event correlation and the efficiency of the BBC trigger is applied, as in [21,22]. Unbiased collisions (0% - 100%, $\langle N_{coll}\rangle = 7.6 ± 0.4$) are also analyzed.

Two muon spectrometers [23] provide full azimuthal coverage in the pseudorapidity range $-2.2 < \eta < -1.2$ (backward rapidity) and 1.2 < $\eta$ < 2.4 (forward rapidity). Each muon arm, located behind copper (19 cm) and iron (60 cm) absorbers, comprises a muon tracker (MuTr) followed by a muon identifier (MuID). The MuTr comprises three stations of cathode strip chambers surrounded by a radial magnetic field, and the MuID comprises five interleaved layers of steel absorber and Iarocci tube planes. The MuTr provides the momentum measurement for charged tracks in the magnetic field. The momentum information for each charged track is then combined with its penetration depth reported by the MuID to provide effective discrimination between muons and hadrons (pion rejection rate: $\sim 10^{-3}$) [24].

Despite the large hadron rejection power of the muon arms and strict selection criteria, most of the tracks reaching the last MuID layer are not heavy-flavor muons. Simulation studies show that the majority of these background tracks for $p_{T} < 3$ GeV/$c$ originate from the decays of light-flavor mesons (mostly $\pi^{\pm}$ and $K^{\pm}$) into muons before reaching the absorber material. Another source of background, called “punch-through hadrons,” are the hadrons produced at the collision vertex, which penetrate all MuID layers. Other, less significant sources of background include muons from hadrons that decay inside the MuTr which are misreconstructed with erroneously high $p_{T}$, muons from heavy-flavor resonances ($J/\psi$, $\psi'$, and $\Upsilon$), and muons from light vector mesons ($\rho$, $\phi$, and $\omega$). The $J/\psi$ is the most significant of these lesser sources, contributing less than 5% at high $p_{T}$ [8,25]. The backgrounds are subtracted as follows.

For each data set, we measure the double differential heavy-flavor muon invariant yield, defined as

$$\frac{d^{2}N^{H}_{\mu}}{2\pi p_{T} d\mathbf{p_{T}} dy} = \frac{1}{2\pi p_{T} \Delta p_{T} \Delta y} \frac{N_{I} - N_{C} - N_{F} - N_{J/\psi}}{(N_{\text{evt}}/\epsilon_{\text{BBC}}) \epsilon} ,$$

where $\Delta p_{T}$ and $\Delta y$ are the bin widths in $p_{T}$ and $y$, $N_{I}$ is the number of inclusive muon candidates, $N_{C}$ is the number of decay and punch-through hadron background tracks determined using a hadron cocktail method (described below), $N_{F}$ is the estimated number of fake tracks that pass the selection criteria, $N_{J/\psi}$ is the number of muons from $J/\psi$ decays, $N_{\text{evt}}$ is the number of sampled events, $\epsilon$ is the detector acceptance and efficiency correction, and $\epsilon_{\text{BBC}}$ is the BBC bias-correction factor for the trigger efficiency and centrality determination of events containing a heavy-flavor muon. Only negative muons are used because the signal-to-background ratio is better than for positive muons [8]. The typical signal-to-background ratio, $N^{H}/(N_{C} + N_{F} + N_{J/\psi})$, increases from 0.3 at $p_{T} = 1$ GeV/$c$ to 0.6 at $p_{T} = 6$ GeV/$c$. The hadron-cocktail method estimates the overall background owing to light-hadron sources using a GEANT simulation based on measured $p_{T}$ spectra. Details on the background-estimation procedure and associated systematic uncertainty are described in [3,8,25].

Figure 1 shows the invariant yield of heavy-flavor muons as a function of $p_{T}$ in $d + Au$ collisions at backward and forward rapidity along with the invariant yield in $p + p$ collisions. The vertical bars represent statistical uncertainties, while boxes are systematic uncertainties in the acceptance and efficiency correction, background estimate, and trigger bias correction for each centrality class. The main source of the systematic uncertainty is the background estimate including initial hadron production ($\sim 10\%$) and interactions of hadrons with the absorber material ($\sim 10\%$). All components of the systematic uncertainty are added in quadrature. Solid lines show a modified Kaplan function $A(1 + [p_{T}/8.3(\text{GeV}/c)]^{2})^{-3.9}$ [26], fit to the $p_{T}$ spectrum in $p + p$ collisions, and then scaled by $\langle N_{coll}\rangle$ for each $d + Au$ centrality class. The $p + p$ results are consistent with previous PHENIX measurements [8].

To quantify nuclear effects in $d + Au$ collisions, we calculate the ratio of heavy-flavor muon yields in $d + Au$ to $p + p$ collisions scaled by the average number of binary collisions for a given centrality bin,

$$R_{dA} = \frac{dN^{H}_{\mu}}{d\mathbf{p_{T}}}{d\mathbf{p_{T}}}.$$
For the most peripheral collisions in both rapidity ranges, 
$R_{dA}$ shows no overall modification. For the most central collisions, a clear enhancement is observed at backward rapidity. This enhancement suggests nuclear-$p_T$ broadening at moderate $p_T$, which is similar to that seen at midrapidity [17], and gluon antishadowing. In the 0%–20% of most central collisions, the forward rapidity $R_{dA}$ shows a global suppression, presumably caused by gluon shadowing and/or partonic energy loss, which becomes stronger at low $p_T$ and is probably a sign of nuclear-$p_T$ broadening.

The dotted line in Fig. 2(c) is a prediction of $R_{dA}$ for muons from $D$ and $B$ mesons at forward rapidity, $y = 1.7$ [16,27]. This prediction, including CNM effects such as shadowing, initial-state energy loss, and nuclear-$p_T$ broadening, is consistent with the data at forward rapidity for the 0%–100% centrality class. The same model, with additional energy loss in deconfined hot nuclear matter, also describes the forward heavy-flavor muon results in central Cu + Cu collisions within uncertainties [8].
agreement and the suppression at forward rapidity in central \(d + Au\) collisions suggest that CNM effects are important for the interpretation of the suppression of heavy-flavor muon production at forward rapidity at RHIC [8] and the Large Hadron Collider [28].

We use the EPS09s leading-order (LO) nuclear PDF (nPDF) set [14] to calculate \(R_{dA}\) for muons from \(D\) mesons at backward (solid lines) and forward (dashed lines) rapidity based solely on initial parton density modifications. As described in [29], the input parameters for the EPS09s calculation [14], which incorporates a spatial dependence within the nucleus based on the previous nPDF EPS09 model [13], are the parton momentum fraction \(x\), momentum transfer \((Q^2)\) of charm production generated by PYTHIA [15], and transverse radial positions of binary collisions in the nucleus for each centrality class. The uncertainty bands are calculated as described in [13].

In central collisions, shown in Fig. 2(b), the EPS09s-nPDF-based calculation does not reproduce the data at backward rapidity (Au-going direction), particularly in the moderate \(p_T\) region. At forward rapidity (d-going direction), \(R_{dA}\) calculated with the EPS09s nPDF is consistent with the data over the entire \(p_T\) range within the uncertainties of the data and calculation. The same EPS09s-nPDF-based calculations with a nuclear-multiple-scattering broadening \((k_T^2) = 2.25\ \text{GeV}^2/c^2\) (dot-dashed lines), when selected to match the backward rapidity data, overshoot the data at forward rapidity. There is no consistent combination of nuclear-\(p_T\) broadening and modified nPDF that can describe the entire rapidity dependence of the data. A model incorporating scattering and recombination with soft and hard final-state gluons [30] explains the enhancement of hadrons at the higher-parton-density backward rapidity and no enhancement at the lower-parton-density forward rapidity [30], noting the larger particle production resulting from higher parton density [31,32]. It would be interesting to see if this model, once extended to charm hadrons, accommodates the entire rapidity of the data presented here.

Figure 3 shows the heavy-flavor muon and electron [17] \(R_{dA}\) as a function of \(\langle N_{\text{coll}}\rangle\) for (a) \(1 < p_T < 3\ \text{GeV}/c\) and (b) \(3 < p_T < 5\ \text{GeV}/c\). Bars (boxes) around the data points represent the statistical (total) uncertainties determined as the quadratic sum of statistical (total) uncertainties on \(R_{dA}\) for each centrality class. The global uncertainty reflects the BBC efficiency for \(p + p\) collisions. For more central \(d + Au\) collisions, the \(R_{dA}\) at midrapidity and backward rapidity show a similar enhancement \((R_{dA} > 1)\) in both \(p_T\) ranges. The low-and high-\(p_T\) bins show comparable suppression patterns as a function of centrality. The EPS09s-nPDF-based calculations are qualitatively consistent with the data.

Quarkonia and open heavy-flavor hadrons are sensitive to the same effects on heavy-quark production. However, quarkonium states are additionally influenced by breakup in nuclear matter. Therefore, open heavy-flavor production can provide a baseline for interpreting the nuclear breakup of quarkonia. Previous measurements suggest that nuclear breakup has a significant effect on quarkonium production in \(p\)-nucleus and nucleus-nucleus collisions [21,29,33–37].

Figure 4 shows a comparison of \(R_{dA}\) between heavy-flavor muons and \(J/\psi\) [21] for central collisions. A similar behavior across the entire \(p_T\) range is observed at forward rapidity, within the total uncertainties, whereas a distinct difference is seen at backward rapidity, particularly for \(p_T < 2.5\ \text{GeV}/c\), where charm contributions dominate over those from the bottom [38]. The larger difference of the \(R_{dA}\) between \(J/\psi\) and open charm at backward rapidity compared to forward rapidity could be related to the longer time this \(c\bar{c}\) state requires to traverse the nuclear matter or the larger density of comoving particles after the initial collision at backward rapidity [39]. This comparison suggests that an additional CNM effect, nuclear breakup, significantly affects \(J/\psi\) production both at backward rapidity and, as seen earlier [17,21], at midrapidity. This measurement provides a key additional constraint on theoretical models attempting to describe quarkonia yields in nuclear collisions.
rapidity in heavy-flavor muons produced at forward and backward as well as the possibility of final-state interaction in combination of additional nuclear-calculation with the EPS09s nPDF sets nor with the FIG. 4 (color online). The nuclear modification factor $R_{dA}$ for $J/\psi$ [21] and heavy-flavor muons for the 0%-20% centrality class. The global systematic uncertainty on each distribution is shown as a percentage in the legend.

We have presented a measurement of negatively charged heavy-flavor muons produced at forward and backward rapidity in $d + Au$ collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200$ GeV, for several centrality classes. We observe no significant modification in the most peripheral $d + Au$ collisions. However, in central $d + Au$ collisions, suppression (enhancement) of heavy-flavor muons is observed at forward (backward) rapidity. The large difference between forward and backward rapidity, which cannot be reproduced by PYTHIA calculations with the EPS09s nPDF sets nor with the combination of additional nuclear- $p_T$ broadening, suggests the importance of CNM effects beyond nPDF modification, as well as the possibility of final-state interaction in $d + Au$ collisions. A model including some of these effects successfully reproduces an enhanced hadron production in a higher-parton-density system. A comparison between the measured nuclear modification factors for $J/\psi$ and open heavy-flavor production provides a strong indication that nuclear breakup significantly affects quarkonium production.

We thank the staff of the Collider-Accelerator and Physics Departments at Brookhaven National Laboratory and the staff of the other PHENIX participating institutions for their vital contributions. We acknowledge support from the Office of Nuclear Physics in the Office of Science of the Department of Energy, the National Science Foundation, Abilene Christian University Research Council, Research Foundation of SUNY, and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Vanderbilt University (U.S.A), Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (Japan), Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico and Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (Brazil), Natural Science Foundation of China (P. R. China), Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Czech Republic), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Commissariat à l’Energie Atomique, and Institut National de Physique Nucléaire et de Physique des Particules (France), Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst, and Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung (Germany), Hungarian National Science Fund, OTKA (Hungary), Department of Atomic Energy and Department of Science and Technology (India), Israel Science Foundation (Israel), National Research Foundation and WCU program of the Ministry Education Science and Technology (Korea), Physics Department, Lahore University of Management Sciences (Pakistan), Ministry of Education and Science, Russian Academy of Sciences, Federal Agency of Atomic Energy (Russia), VR and Wallenberg Foundation (Sweden), the U.S. Civilian Research and Development Foundation for the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union, the Hungarian American Enterprise Scholarship Fund, the US-Hungarian Fulbright Foundation for Educational Exchange, and the US-Israel Binational Science Foundation.

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\[ mstp(32) = 4 \ (Q^2 = \bar{s}), \ mstp(33) = 1, \ \text{parp}(91) = 0 \ \text{and} \ 1.5 \ \text{((kT)i}). \]