

# EL5823/BE6203 -- Medical Imaging - I

## Physics of Radiography

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Based on J. L. Prince and J. M. Links, Medical Imaging Signals and Systems, and lecture notes by Prince. Figures are from the textbook.

# Lecture Outline

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- Atomic structure and ionization
- Particulate Radiation
  - Focusing on energetic electron interaction
- EM Radiation
  - Photoelectric
  - Compton scattering
  - Likelihood of each
  - EM radiation measurement
  - Attenuation of radiation
- Radiation Dosimetry
  - Exposure, dose

# Atomic Structure

- An atom={a nucleus, electrons}
- nucleons = {protons; neutrons}
- mass number  $A = \#$  nucleons
- atomic number  $Z = \#$  protons =  $\#$  electrons
  - Define an element with a particular symbol: H, C, etc.
  - An element is denoted by its  $A$  and  $Z$
  - Ex:  ${}^{12}_6\text{C}$  or C-12

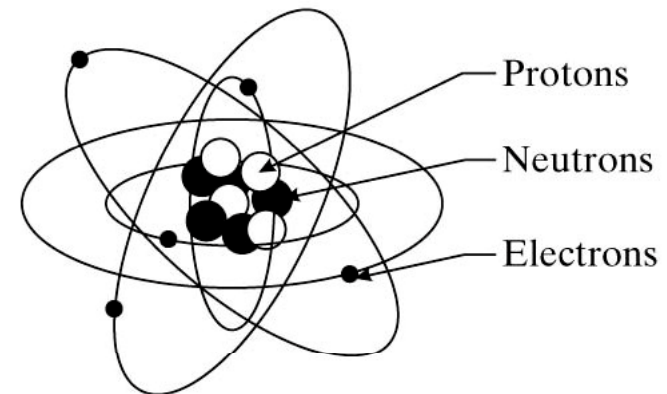


Figure 4.1

# Stable vs. Unstable States

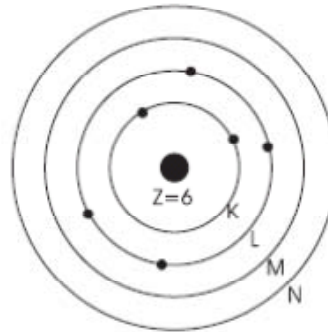
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- Stable nuclides:
  - # neutrons  $\approx$  # protons ( $A \approx 2Z$ )
- Unstable nuclides (radionuclides, radioactive atoms)
  - Likely to undergo radioactive decay, which gives off energy and results in a more stable nucleus

# Orbits of Electrons

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Shell Number $n$	Shell Label	# Electrons $2n^2$
1	K	$\leq 2$
2	L	$\leq 8$
3	M	$\leq 18$
4	N	$\leq 32$



Ground state: electrons are in the lowest orbital shells and within the lowest energy quantum states within each shell

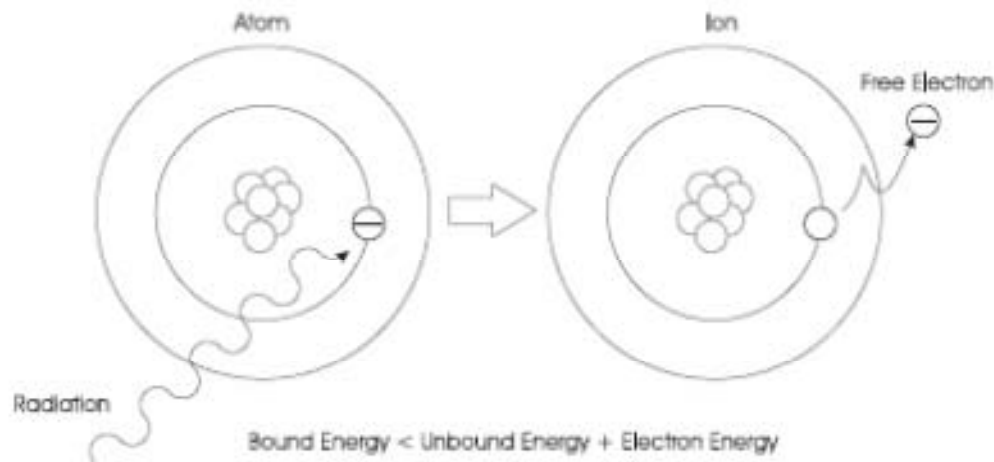
# Electron Binding Energy

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- A free electron has higher energy than when it is bounded to an nucleus in an atom
- Binding energy = energy required to free electrons from their atomic orbits
  - Depends on the element to which the electron is bound and the shell within which it resides in ground state
  - Sufficient to consider “average” binding energy of a given atom
- One electron volt (eV) = kinetic energy gained by an electron when accelerated across one volt potential
  - $1 \text{ eV} = 1.6 \times 10^{-19} \text{ Joule}$
- Binding energies of typical elements:
  - hydrogen = 13.6 eV, Smallest among all light atoms
  - Air: 29 eV
  - Lead: 1 KeV
  - Tungsten: 4 KeV (considered “heavy” elements)

# Ionization and Excitation

- Ionization is “knocking” an electron out of an atom
  - Creates a free electron + ion (an atom with +1 charge)
  - Occurs when radiated with energy above the electron binding energy
- Excitation is “knocking” an electron to a higher orbit
  - When the radiation energy is lower than the binding energy
- After either ionization or excitation, an atom has higher energy



# Characteristic Radiation

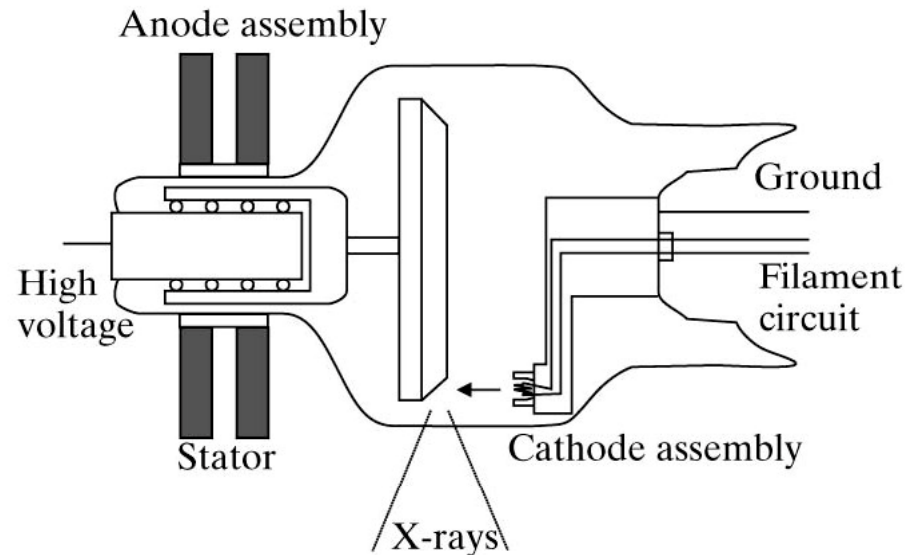
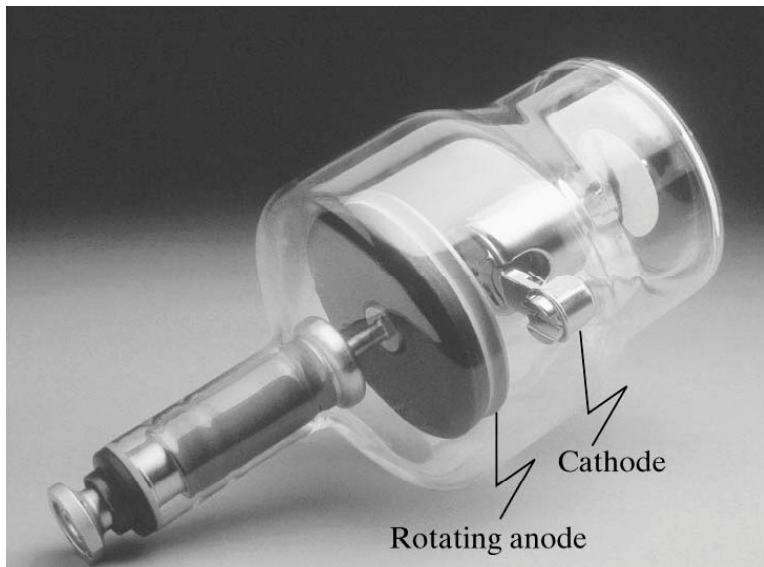
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- What happens to ionized or excited atom?
  - Return to ground state by rearrangement of electrons
  - Causes atom to give off energy
  - Energy given off as characteristic radiation
    - infrared
    - light
    - x-rays



# Example

- Consider an electron accelerated through an X-ray tube where the anode is made of tungsten. If the anode is held at 120 KV, what is the maximum number of tungsten atoms that can be ionized?
- Solution:
  - The electron will have 120 KeV kinetic energy when reaching the anode, by definition of eV
  - The average binding energy of tungsten = 4 KeV
  - # ionized atoms =  $120/4=30$



# Ionizing Radiation

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- Radiation with energy  $> 13.6 \text{ eV}$  is ionizing
- Energy required to ionize:
  - air  $\approx 34 \text{ eV}$
  - lead  $\approx 1 \text{ keV}$
  - tungsten  $\approx 4 \text{ keV}$

These are average binding energies.

- Radiation energies in medical imaging  
30 keV–511 keV  
can ionize 10–40,000 atoms

# Two Types of Ionizing Radiation

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- Particulate
- Electro-magnetic (EM)

# Particulate Radiation

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- Radiation by any particle (proton, neutron or electron) if it possesses enough kinetic energy to ionize an atom

Kinetic Energy = the energy gained due to motion

$$\text{Mass of a moving particle : } m = \frac{m_0}{\sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2}}$$

$$\text{Energy vs. mass : } E = mc^2$$

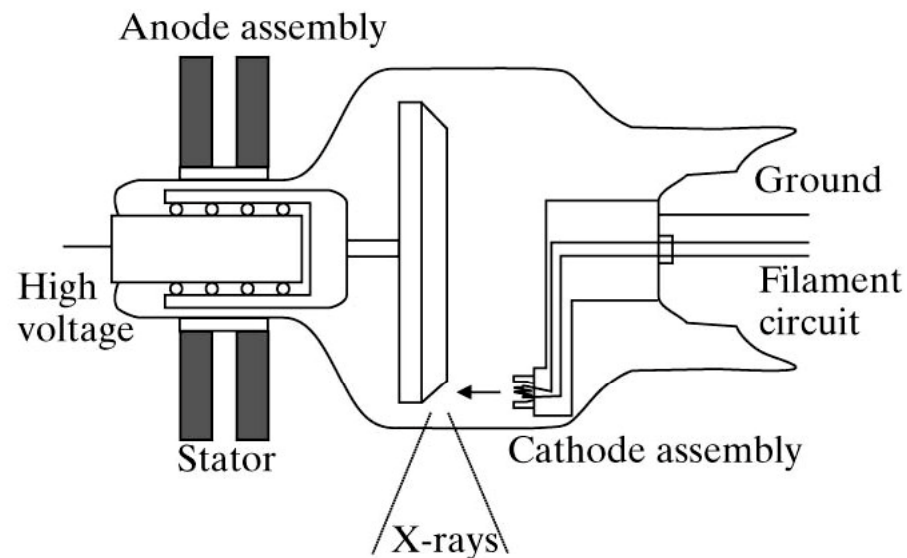
$$\text{Kinetic Energy : } KE = E - E_0 = (m - m_0)c^2$$

$$\text{When } v \ll c, \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2}} \approx 1 + \frac{1}{2}v^2/c^2, KE = \frac{1}{2}m_0v^2$$

# Particulate Radiation by Energetic Electrons

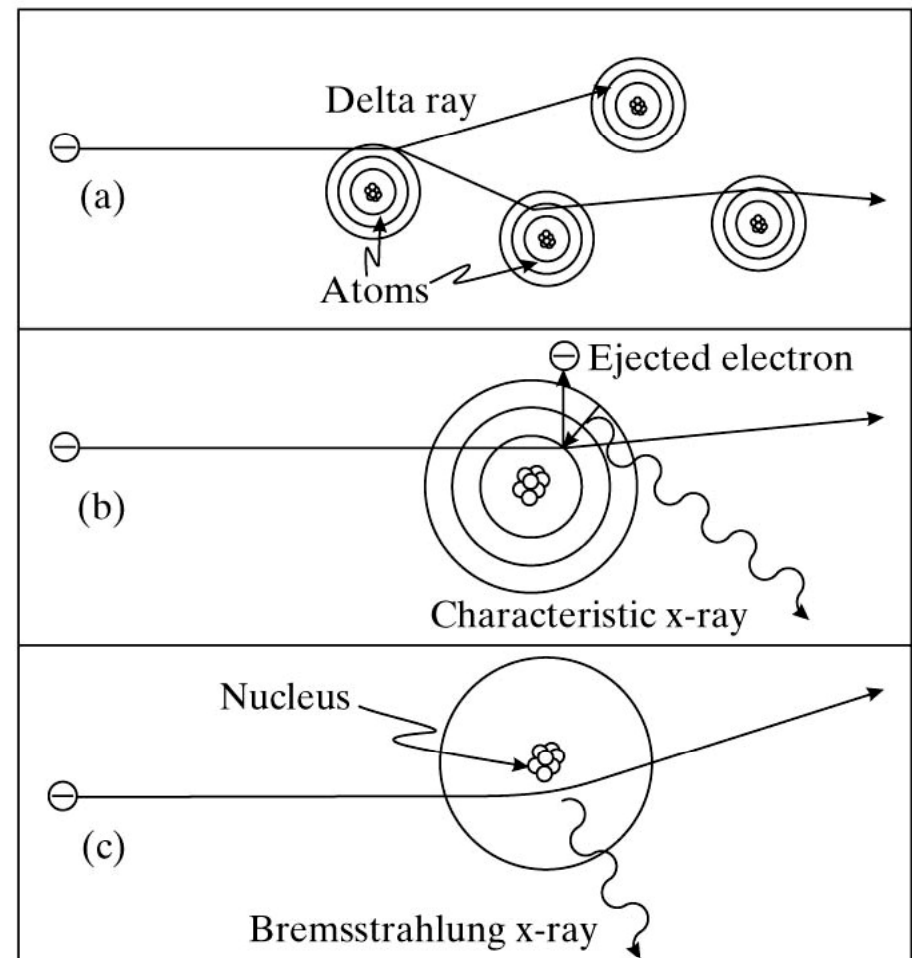
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- We are only concerned with the electron accelerated in a X-ray tube here
  - An electron accelerated across a tube with 100 KV potential possesses 100 KeV kinetic energy



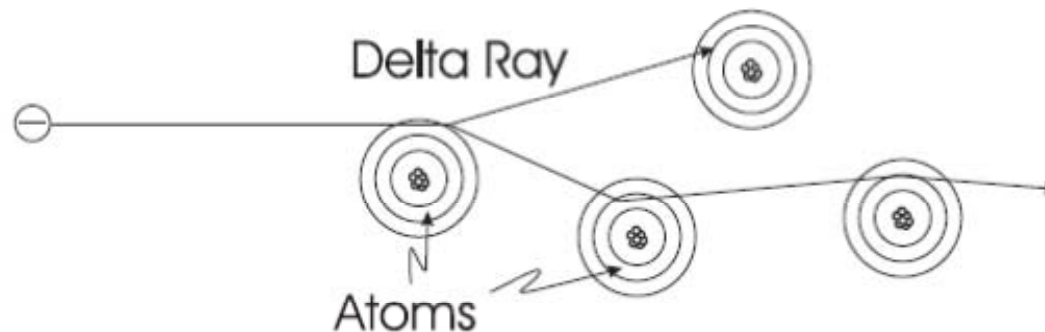
# Energetic Electron Interactions

- Two primary interactions
  - Collisional transfer
    - Most common
    - Produces heat
  - Radiative transfer
    - Produces x-ray
    - Characteristic radiation
      - Collide with K-shell
    - Bremsstrahlung radiation
      - Collide with nucleus
      - More common than characteristic radiation



# Collisional Transfer

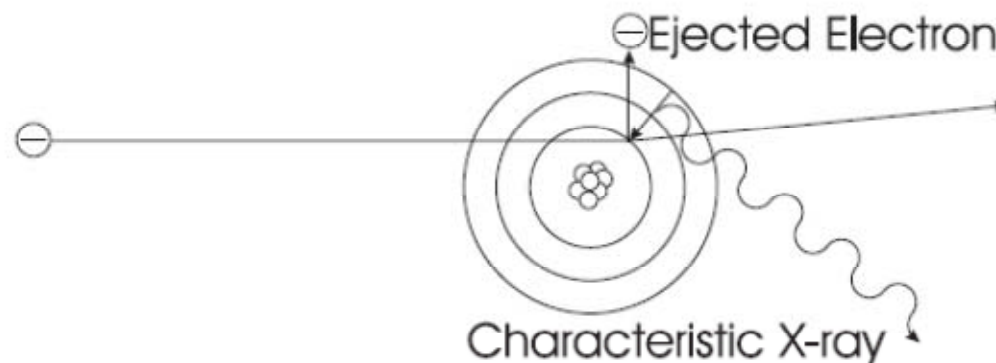
- The energetic electron collides with an atom in the target
- Typically, a small fraction of the kinetic energy of the electron is transferred to another electron in the atom
  - As the affected atom returns to its original state, infrared radiation (heat) is generated
- Occasionally, a large fraction of the incident energy is transferred to another electron, the newly freed electron may form a delta ray
- The incident electron's path may be redirected, and many other subsequent interactions may occur, until the kinetic energy of the incident electron is exhausted



# Characteristic X-Ray

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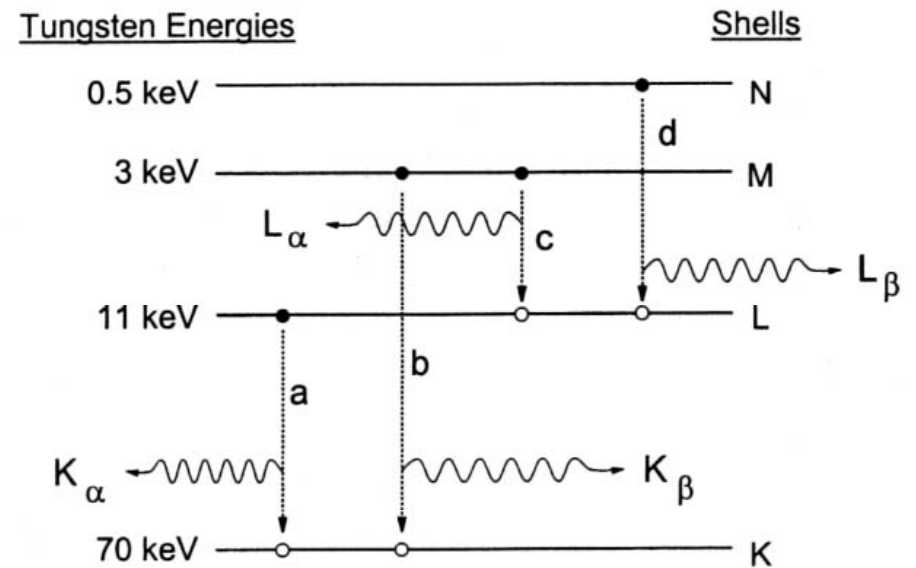
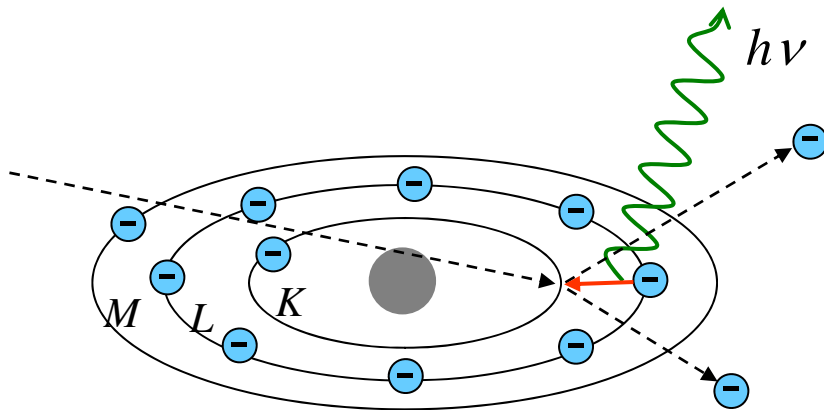
- The incident electron collides with a K-shell electron, exciting or ionizing the atom, leaving a hole in that shell.
  - As the atom returns to its ground state, the k-shell hole is filled by a higher shell electron
  - The loss of energy creates an EM photon, known as Characteristic x-ray
  - The energy of the x-ray photon = difference between the energy of the two shells (element dependent)





# Characteristic radiation

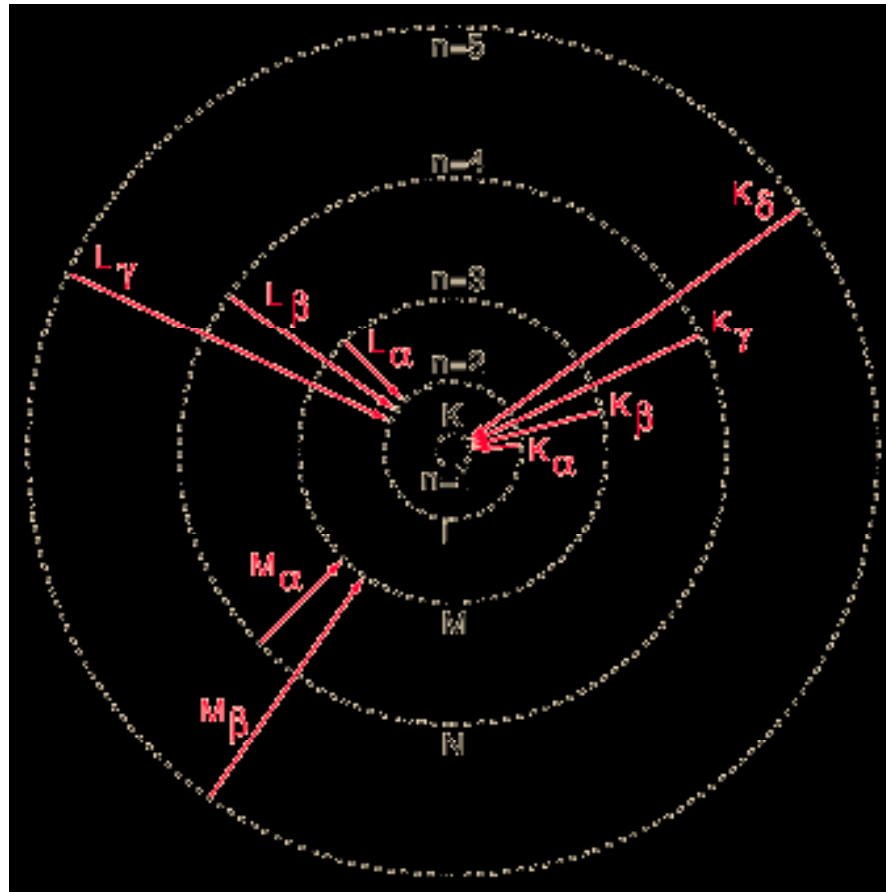
- Caused by removal of inner shell electrons and subsequent filling of hole with electrons from higher shell. The shell-energy difference determines the energy of characteristic rays
- Lines are named after the lower shell involved in the process; the upper shell involved is denoted by Greek letters:  
 $\Delta n = 1 \rightarrow \alpha$ -transitions,  $\Delta n = 2 \rightarrow \beta$ -transitions, ...



[From Graber, Lecture Note for BMI1-FS05]

# Different types of characteristics rays

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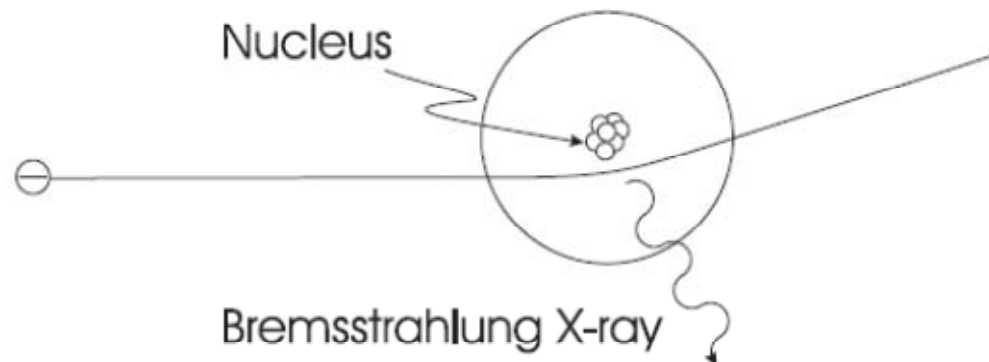


From <http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/Hbase/quantum/xterm.html#c1>

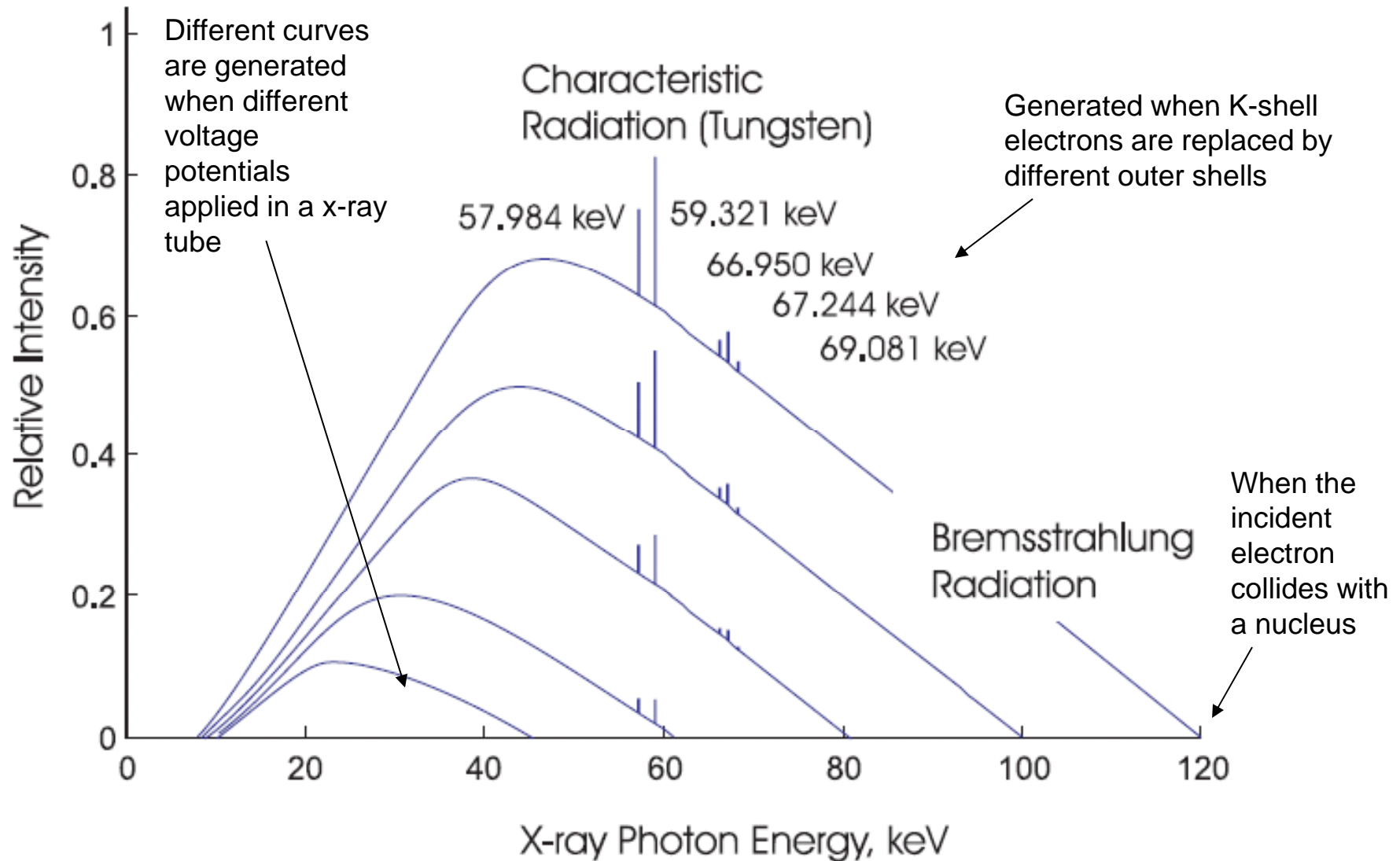
# Bremsstrahlung Ray

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- As the incident electron approaches the nucleus of an atom, the positive charge of the nucleus causes the incident electron to bend around the nucleus and decelerates
  - The loss of energy leads to the Bremsstrahlung x-ray (energy vary over a continuous range, depending on the speed loss)
- Occasionally when the incident electron collides with the nucleus, the electron is annihilated, emitting a photon with an energy equal to the kinetic energy of the incident electron (highest possible energy)
- Primary source of x-rays from an x-ray tube



# Spectrum of X-Ray



# EM Radiation

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- EM radiation comprises an electric wave and a magnetic wave traveling at right angles to each other
- Typical EM waves:
  - Non ionizing: radio, microwaves, infrared, visible light, ultraviolet
  - Ionizing: X-rays, gamma rays
- Energy of a photon of an EM wave with frequency  $\nu$ :

$$E = h\nu$$

Planck's constant  $h = 4.14 \times 10^{-15}$  eV-sec

# EM Waves for Medical Imaging

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- X-rays and Gamma rays:
  - Have energy in the KeVs to MeVs -> Ionizing Radiation
  - used in X-ray/CT and nuclear medicine respectively
  - X-rays are created in the electron cloud of atoms due to ionizing radiation
  - Gamma rays are created in the nuclei of atoms due to radioactive decay or characteristic radiation
- Radio waves
  - Used to stimulate nuclei in MRI to generate EM radiation
- Visible light
  - Used in radiography to improve the efficiency of photographic film to detect X-rays
- See Table 4.2 for more details

# EM Radiation Interactions

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- Two main interactions
  - Photoelectric effect
    - The incoming photon is completely absorbed and ejecting K-shell or L-shell electrons, producing characteristic x-ray
  - Compton scattering
    - The incoming photon changes its direction

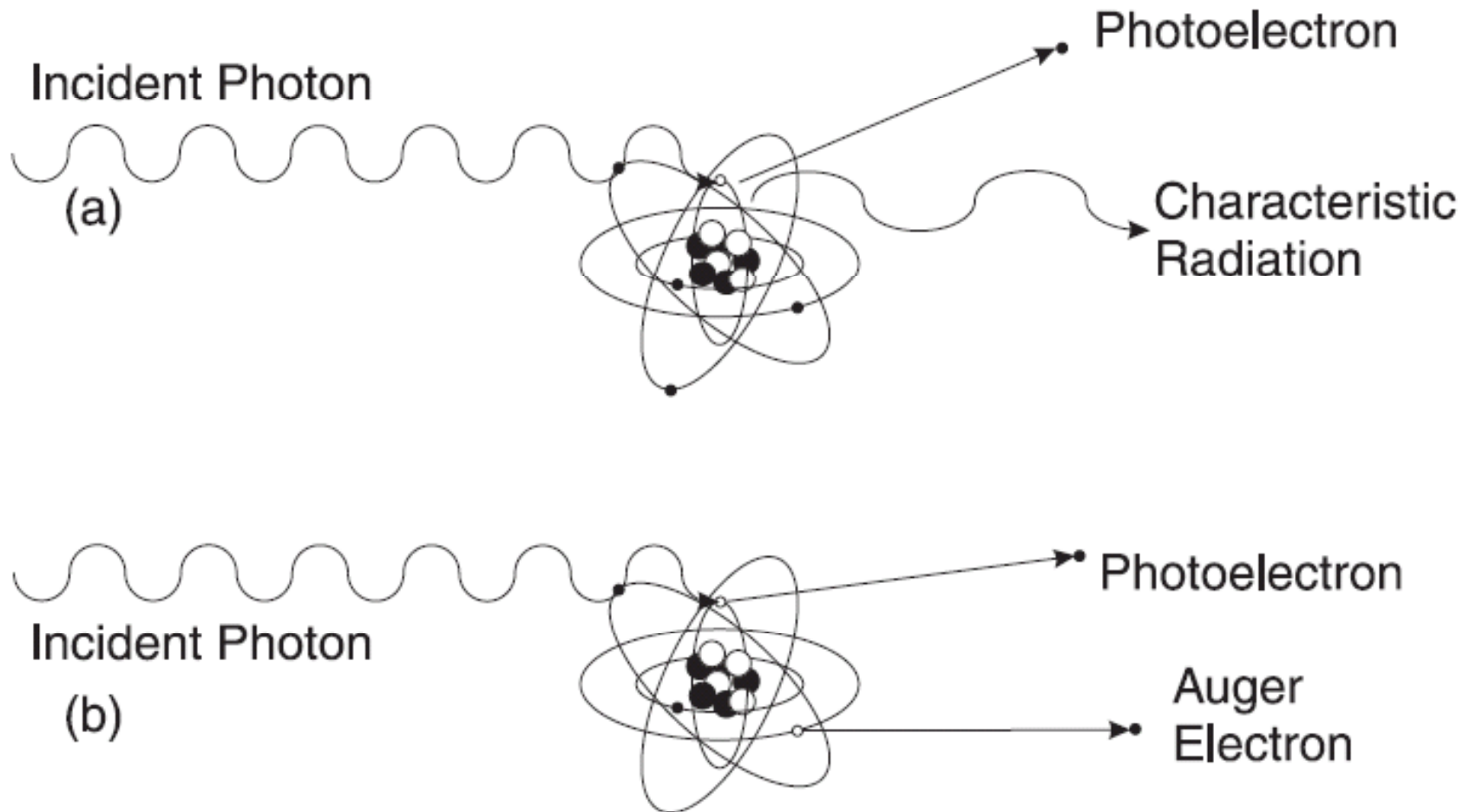
# Photoelectric Effect

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- An incoming photon interacts with the nucleus of an atom, causing ejection of a K-shell or L-shell electron (photoelectron)
  - Atom completely absorbs incident photon and all energy is transferred
  - The photoelectron propagates away with energy  $E_{e^-} = h\nu - E_B$
  - The affected atom produces characteristic x-ray, while outer electrons fill the K-shell.
  - Sometimes the characteristic x-ray transfers its energy to an outer electron (called Auger electron)
- Both photo electron and Auger electron are energetic electrons that can interact with the matter as discussed before

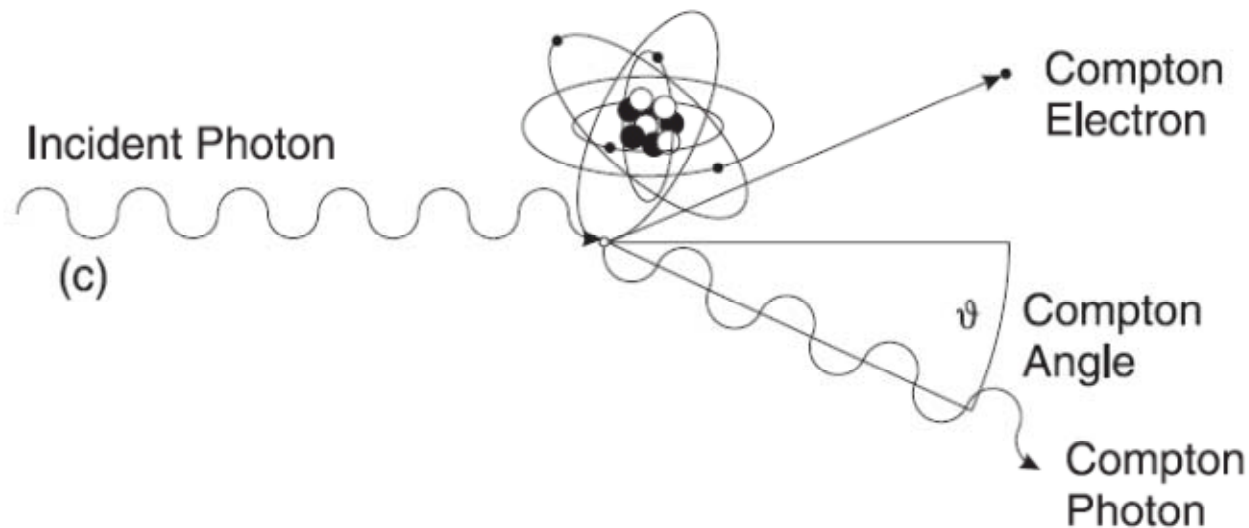


# Photoelectric Effect



# Compton Scattering

- An incoming photon ejects an outer shell electron, yielding a Compton electron
- The incident photon loses its energy and changes its direction (Not completely absorbed by the atom!)
- The scattered photon is called Compton photon



- 
- The energy of the scattered photon depends on the scatter angle

$$E' = \frac{E}{1 + E(1 - \cos \theta)/(m_0c^2)}$$

- $m_0$  is rest mass of electron
  - $m_0c^2 = 511 \text{ keV}$
- The maximum energy loss occurs when the photon is deflected backward ( $\theta=180^\circ$ )
  - When  $E$  is higher, more photons scatter forward
  - The kinetic energy of the Compton electron =  $E-E'$

# Which interaction is better?

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- Photoelectric effect helps to differentiate different human tissues/organs
- Compton scattering causes incident photons to deviate from straight path, and causes unnecessary exposure of x-ray to untargeted areas
- In medical imaging, we want to increase the likelihood of photoelectric events, while minimizing Compton scattering

# Probability of Photoelectric Effect

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- Recall that photoelectric event happens when incident photons interact with the coulomb field of the nucleus of an atom
- More likely when colliding with an atom with more protons (higher Z number)
- Less likely when incident photons have higher energy (higher frequency)

$$\text{Prob}[\text{photoelectric event}] \propto \frac{Z_{\text{eff}}^4}{(h\nu)^3}$$

- The probability increases abruptly when the photon energy rises above the binding energy of L-shell or K-shell electrons (so as to eject the electrons), then begins to diminish
- Rationale behind the use of “contrast agent”

# Probability of Compton Scattering

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- Recall that Compton scattering occurs when an incident photon collides with outer shell electrons
- Likelihood proportional to the number of electrons per kilogram of the material (the electron density or ED)
- Relatively independent of incident photon energy in the biological material

$$\text{Prob}[\text{Compton event}] \propto \text{ED}$$

$$\text{ED} = \frac{N_A Z}{W_m}$$

$N_A$  : Avogadro's number (atoms/mole)

$Z$  : atomic number (electrons/atom)

$W_m$  : molecular weight (grams/mole)

- ED is approximately constant for various biological material,  $\sim 3\text{E}26$ , except for Hydrogen ( $6\text{E}26$ )

# Relative Likelihood

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- Compton scattering is equally likely in various materials and invariant of incident energy
- Photoelectric effect is more likely in high Z material and less likely with high incident energy
- Overall, Compton scattering is more dominant with higher incident energy in the same material
- But the percent of energy deposited due to photoelectric event is larger because all incident energy is absorbed.

# Measures of X-ray Beam: Photon Count

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- Photon fluence:

$$\Phi = \frac{N}{A}$$

- Photon fluence rate:

$$\phi = \frac{N}{A\Delta t}$$



# Measures of X-ray Beam: Energy Flow

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- Energy fluence:

$$\Psi = \frac{N h \nu}{A}$$

- Energy fluence rate:

$$\psi = \frac{N h \nu}{A \Delta t}$$

- Intensity: (=  $\psi$ )

$$I(E) = \frac{N E}{A \Delta t}$$

# Spectrum of X-Ray

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- The x-ray beam produced by an x-ray tube (mainly Bremsstrahlung) is polyenergetic (consisting photons with different energies or frequencies)
- X-ray spectrum  $S(E)$ :
  - The number of photons with energy  $E$  per unit area per unit time

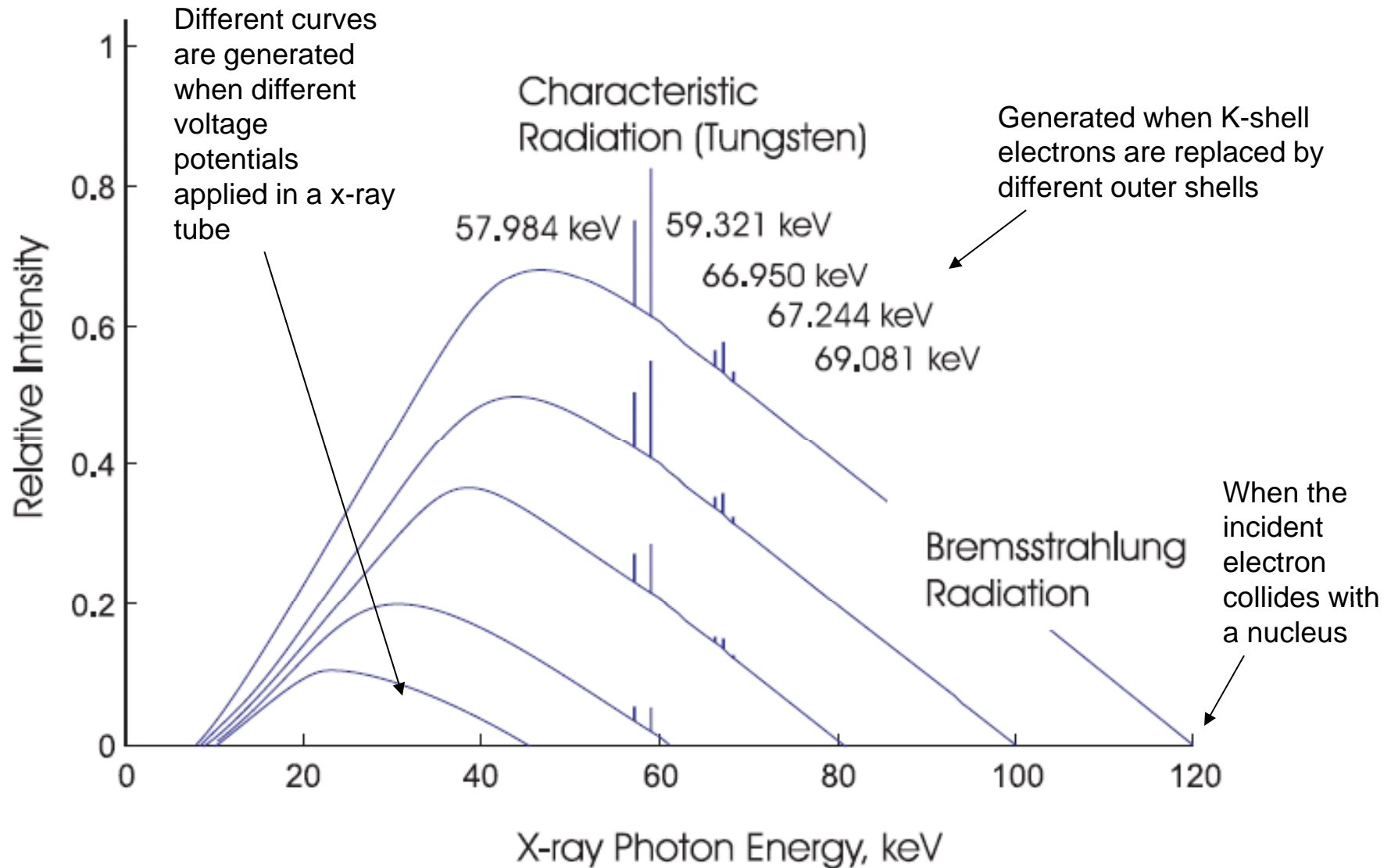
- Photon fluence rate from spectrum:

$$\phi = \int_0^{\infty} S(E') dE'$$

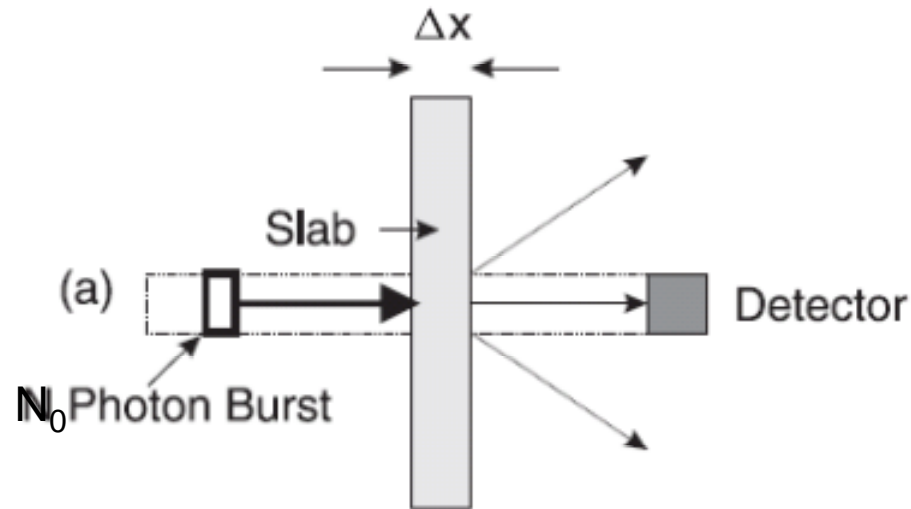
- Intensity from spectrum:

$$I = \int_0^{\infty} E' S(E') dE'$$

# Spectrum of X-Ray



# Attenuation of X-ray Radiation: Homogeneous Slab



Photons will be absorbed/deflected through the slab

Let # of photons at  $x = N(x)$

# photons lost from position  $x$  to  $x+dx$  can be approximated by  $dN=N(x+dx)-N(x) = -\mu N(x)dx$ , when  $dx$  is very small

**linear attenuation coefficient:**  $\mu$

$\mu$  is the fraction of photons that are lost per unit length

The above can be rewritten as

$dN/N = -\mu dx$ . Integrate this from  $x=0$  to  $\Delta x$  yields

**$N(x) = N_0 \exp\{-\mu \Delta x\}$**  ← The fundamental photon attenuation law

# Linear Attenuation Coefficients of Biological Tissues

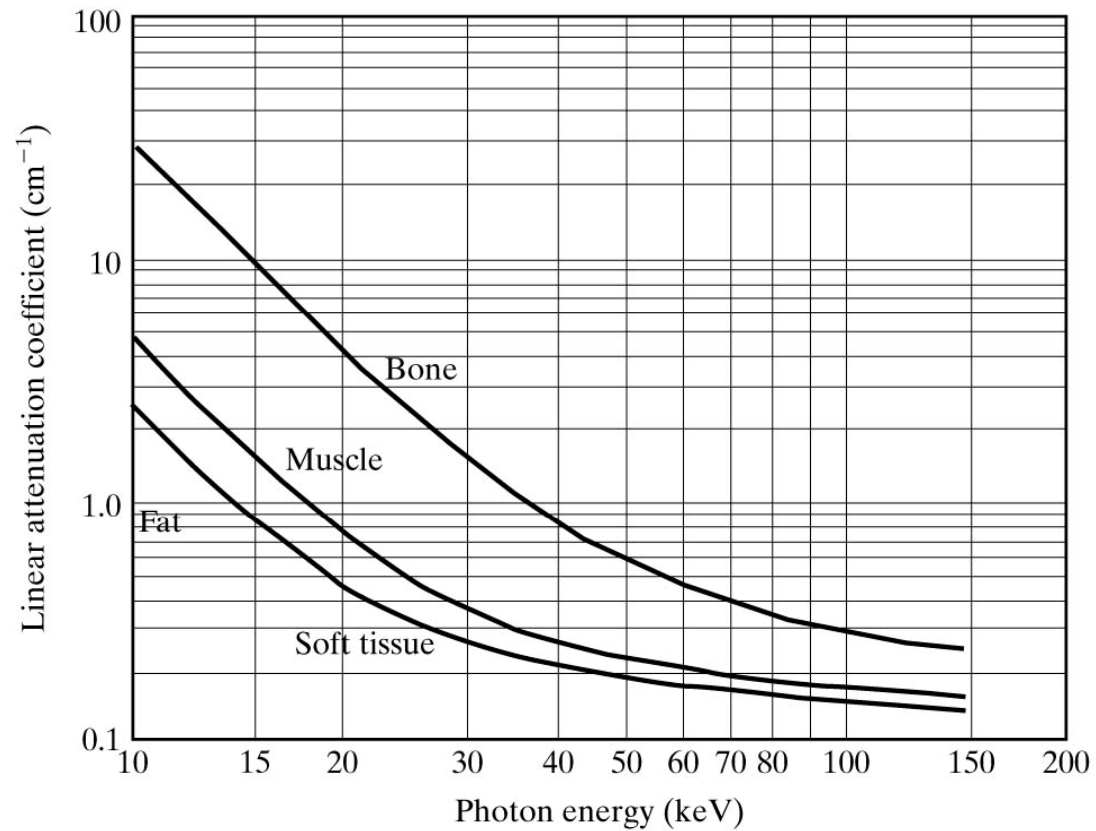


Figure 4.8

*Medical Imaging Signals and Systems*, by Jerry L. Prince and Jonathan Links.  
ISBN 0-13-065353-5. © 2006 Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ. All rights reserved.

# Homogeneous Slab

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- Homogeneous slab: the attenuation rate is the same over the entire slab
  - Homogeneous slab thickness  $\Delta x$
  - Fundamental photon attenuation law

$$N = N_0 e^{-\mu \Delta x}$$

- $\mu$  is linear attenuation coefficient
- In terms of intensity:

$$I = I_0 e^{-\mu \Delta x}$$

This is known as Beer's Law

# Half-Value Layer (HVL)

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- Homogeneous slab (shielding)
- HVL = thickness that will stop half the photons

$$\frac{1}{2} = \exp\{-\mu \text{ HVL}\}$$

- Relation to  $\mu$

$$\text{HVL} = \frac{0.693}{\mu}$$

# Example

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- Consider the image taken of a bar phantom uniformly irradiated by monoenergetic x-ray photons
  - Assuming the bars are made of material that has a HVL of 0.2cm, and bars have thickness of 0.4 cm
  - Assuming x-ray photons pass through the space between bars w/o attenuation
  - Assuming the intensity of the image is proportional to the number of detected photons in a unit area
  - What is the contrast of the resulting image?
- Go through in the class



# Non-Homogeneous Slab

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- The attenuation coefficient depends on  $x$ 
  - Non-homogeneous slab:

$$\frac{dN}{N} = -\mu(x)dx$$

- Integration yields:

$$N(x) = N_0 \exp\left\{-\int_0^x \mu(x')dx'\right\}$$

- For intensity:

$$I(x) = I_0 \exp\left\{-\int_0^x \mu(x')dx'\right\}$$

# Example: Two Layer Slab

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- A slab with two homogeneous layers, with thickness  $d_1$ ,  $d_2$ , and attenuation coefficients  $\mu_1$ ,  $\mu_2$

# Polyenergetic Photons

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- The linear attenuation coefficient depends on the medium property as well the energy of incident photon ( $E$ )
- For a given material,  $\mu$  can be denoted by  $\mu(x;E)$
- When the incident photons are polyenergetic, with spectrum  $S(E)$ , the outgoing photon spectrum is

$$S(x; E) = S_0(E) \exp\left\{-\int_0^x \mu(x'; E) dx'\right\}$$

- In terms of intensity

$$I = \int_0^{\infty} E' S(E') dE'$$

$$I(x) = \int_0^{\infty} S_0(E') E' \exp\left\{-\int_0^x \mu(x'; E') dx'\right\} dE'$$

# Radiation Dosimetry

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- Previous topics deal with the production of radiation and measurement of radiation wave
- Radiation dosimetry considers the effect of radiation to the interacting media
  - Exposure
  - Dose
  - Kerma
  - Effective dose

# Exposure (Creation of Ions)

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- Exposure ( $X$ ) is measured in terms of the number of ions produced in a specific volume of air by EM radiation
- SI unit: C/kg
- Common unit: Roentgen (R)
  - 1 C/kg = 3876 R
  - Wilhelm Roentgen: Discovered X-ray, 1895, Nobel Prize 1901
- Exposure decreases with distance from source ( $d$ ) following an inverse square law

$$X(d) = X(0) / d^2$$

# Dose (the deposition of energy)

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- How much energy is deposited into material?
- Dose,  $D$ , the energy deposited per unit volume
- SI unit: Gray (Gy)  $1 \text{ Gy} = 1 \text{ J/kg}$
- Common unit: rad

$$1 \text{ Gy} = 100 \text{ rads}$$

- When  $X = 1 \text{ R}$  soft tissue incurs 1 rad absorbed dose.

# Kerma

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- How much energy is deposited into the *electrons*?
- Kerma,  $K$ , is the energy deposited into the electrons of a material
- SI units: Gray (Gy) = 1 J/kg = 100 rads
- At diagnostic energies in the body,  $K = D$
- (In general,  $K \geq D$ . Some electrons can cause bremsstrahlung and their energy irradiated away  $\rightarrow$  no dose. Not likely in body.)

# Dose vs. Exposure

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$$D = fX$$

$f$  - factor depends on material :

$$f = 0.87 \frac{\left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_{material}}{\left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_{air}}$$

$\left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)$ : mass attenuation coefficient

$f = 0.87$  for air

$f \approx 1$  for soft - tissue

See Table 4.6 for the mass attenuation coefficient of typical materials



# Equivalent Dose

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- Dose equivalent
  - The effect of radiation depends on the source of radiation (energy)
  - Dose equivalent:  $H = D Q$
  - $Q$ : quality factor
    - $Q = 1$  for x-ray, gamma ray, electron, beta particle (used in medical imaging)
    - $Q = 10$  for neutrons and protons
    - $Q = 20$  for alpha particles
- Effective dose
  - Effect of a dose also depends on the tissue type
  - Effective dose measures the average effect over different tissue types

$$D_{effective} = \sum_{organs} w_j H_j$$

$w_j$  :weighting factor for organ  $j$

# Summary

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- Ionization: ejection of an orbiting electron from an atom, the affected atom produces radiation in the process of returning to ground state
- Two types of ionizing radiation
  - Particulate
  - EM
- Particulate radiation transfers energy via
  - Collisional transfer: resulting in heat
  - Radioactive transfer: resulting in characteristic x-ray and Bremsstrahlung x-ray
  - X-ray is produced by energetic electrons accelerated in a x-ray tube, consisting primarily Bremsstrahlung x-ray
- EM radiation transfers energy via
  - Photoelectric effect: incident photons completely absorbed
  - Compton scattering: incident photons are deflected

# Summary (cntd)

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- Attenuation of EM radiation:

- Linear attenuation coefficient is the fraction of photons that are lost per unit length

- Depends on material property and the incident photon energy

- Fundamental photon attenuation law

- Homogeneous slab

$$N = N_0 e^{-\mu \Delta x}$$

- Heterogeneous slab

$$N(x) = N_0 \exp\left\{-\int_0^x \mu(x') dx'\right\}$$

- Radiation dosimetry

- Exposure vs. dose:  $D=fX$

- Equivalent dose:  $H=DQ$

- Effective dose:

$$D_{effective} = \sum_{organs} w_j H_j$$

$w_j$  :weighting factor for organ  $j$

# Reference

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- Prince and Links, Medical Imaging Signals and Systems, Chap 4.

# Homework

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- Reading:
  - Prince and Links, Medical Imaging Signals and Systems, Chap 4.
- Note down all the corrections for Ch. 4 on your copy of the textbook based on the provided errata.
- Problems for Chap 4 of the text book:
  - P4.4
  - P4.5
  - P4.6
  - P4.8
  - P4.10
  - P4.11
  - P4.12
  - P4.13