We consider two methods to find the effective parameters of the pion traversing a nuclear medium. One is the first order chiral perturbation theoretic evaluation of the pion pole contribution to the two-point function of the axial-vector current. The other is the exact, first order virial expansion of the pion self-energy. We find that, although the results of chiral perturbation theory are not valid at normal nuclear density, those from the virial expansion may be reliable at such density. The latter predicts both the mass-shift and the in-medium decay width of the pion to be small, of about a few MeV.

I. INTRODUCTION

A considerable amount of work at finite temperature and chemical potential has been devoted to determining the effective parameters of strongly interacting particles in different media [1–6]. The results obtained are useful not only in analyzing the heavy ion collision experiments and properties of the early universe at different epochs, but also in extracting indications of an eventual phase transition.

The case of pion appears to be the simplest to study. Being the Goldstone boson of the spontaneously broken chiral symmetry of QCD, its interactions with itself and other particles are highly restricted by this symmetry, leading to the effective theory of QCD, called chiral perturbation theory (\( \chi PT \)) [7,8]. At finite temperature, one has the further advantage of having again only pions dominating the heat bath. Thus \( \chi PT \) provides a reliable method to calculate the pion parameters at finite temperature [1–3].

It is natural to apply \( \chi PT \) to calculate the pion parameters in nuclear medium [9,10]. Although the method parallels that followed for the case in a heat bath, the results calculated here to leading order may have restricted validity, due to the presence of baryonic resonances close to the \( \pi N \) threshold. Similar difficulties also appear in determining the nucleon parameters at finite temperature [4].

In this work we compare the \( \chi PT \) result with that of the (first order) virial expansion of the pion self-energy [4,11,12]. The latter gives the shifted pole position in terms of an integral over the product of the density distribution function times the \( \pi N \) scattering amplitude obtainable from experiment. It is thus free from the difficulty encountered in calculating the amplitude and is valid as long as the nucleon ‘gas’ is dilute enough.

The virial formula has also been employed earlier to the same problem, but only in an approximated version [13–15]. If, however, the amplitude varies appreciably in the range of integration, in particular, if it changes sign – as is the case here – this version is not justified.

We first rederive the results of \( \chi PT \) by evaluating the axial-vector current correlation function to one loop, using the in-medium Feynman rules for the original chiral Lagrangian in presence of external fields. Besides completeness, its purpose is to show that this conventional framework is quite simple, without requiring functional integration over the nucleon field to produce a ‘new’ effective Lagrangian [10]. We then derive the exact, first order virial expansion for the pion self-energy and evaluate it with experimental data.

Sec. II reviews briefly \( \chi PT \), constructing the Lagrangian for the \( \pi N \) system [16,17]. In sec. III we work out the shift in the mass and the decay constant of the pion using this Lagrangian. Next we derive the virial formula and evaluate the pole shift in sec. IV. In sec. V we discuss the limitations of these methods.

II. CHIRAL PERTURBATION THEORY

The Lagrangian of QCD with two massless quark flavors is

\[
\text{In } \chi PT \text{ one derives the transformation rules for the observed Goldstone and non-Goldstone fields from the above symmetry of the underlying QCD theory. It turns out that the Goldstone fields } \pi^i(x), \ i = 1, 2, 3 \text{ are collected in the}
\]
There are two Noether currents following from the symmetry of $L^{(0)}_{QCD}$, namely the vector and axial vector currents,

The presence of the external fields in the underlying theory and the associated gauge invariance can be readily incorporated in the effective theory. All we have to do is to replace the ordinary derivatives by the covariant derivatives [18]. Thus we have for $U$,

A simplification in the construction of the effective Lagrangian emerges by noting that the variables $(U, D_{\mu}U)$ transform under the full group $G$, while $(\psi, D_{\mu}\psi)$ transform only under the unbroken subgroup $H$. We may take advantage of the mixed transformation property of $u$ to redefine the former type of variables so as to transform under $H$ only. Thus one introduces the variable [16],

We now write the effective Lagrangian of $\chi PT$ for the $\pi N$ system as

\[ L_{\text{eff}} = L_{\pi} + L_{N}, \]

where $L_{\pi}$ is the well-known pion Lagrangian [8], which to leading order is given by

Expanding out in the pion field and setting $v_\mu = 0$, we bring out explicitly the vertices, contributing to the pion pole diagrams to one loop [19],

\[
L_{\pi} = L^{(0)}_{\pi} - F_\pi \partial_\mu \pi \cdot a^\mu, \\
L^{(1)}_{N} = L^{(0)}_{N} - \frac{gA}{2F_\pi} \bar{\psi} \gamma^\mu \gamma_5 \partial_\mu \pi \cdot \tau \psi + \frac{gA}{2} \bar{\psi} \gamma^\mu \gamma_5 a_\mu \cdot \tau \psi, \\
L^{(2)}_{N} = -\frac{2m_\pi^2 c_1}{F_\pi} \bar{\pi} \cdot \pi \bar{\psi} \psi - \frac{c_2}{m_N^2} \left( \frac{1}{F_\pi} \partial_\mu \pi \cdot \partial_\nu \pi - \frac{2}{F_\pi} \partial_\mu \pi \cdot a_\nu \right) \bar{\psi} \partial^\mu \partial^\nu \psi + c_3 \left( \frac{1}{F_\pi} \partial_\mu \pi \cdot \partial^\mu \pi - \frac{2}{F_\pi} \partial_\mu \pi \cdot a_\mu \right) \bar{\psi} \psi. \tag{2.1}
\]

where the superscript ‘0’ indicates free Lagrangian densities.

III. MASS AND COUPLING SHIFTS

The two point correlation function of the axial vector current in a medium is given by the ensemble average,

We shall work in the real time formulation of the field theory in medium [21]. Here the perturbation expansion proceeds as in the conventional (vacuum) field theory, except that the propagators assume the form of $2 \times 2$ matrices. For the pole term to one loop, it however suffices to work as in the vacuum field theory, only replacing the vacuum propagators by the 11-component of the corresponding propagators in medium.

So we first calculate the vacuum correlation function

2
Fig. 1 shows the free pion pole diagram (a) giving the amplitude,

To calculate the self-energy function $\Pi(q)$ of the pion in the nuclear medium, we first write it in vacuum,

It is now simple to calculate the remaining self-energy and vertex diagrams. A special feature is presented, however, by the constant vertex diagrams (f, g) arising from the vertex proportional to $c_2$: While all other contributions are proportional to $q_\lambda q_\sigma$, this one is not, being given by

The results of calculating all the diagrams of Fig. 1 with vertices given by (2.1) may now be expressed in terms of the effective parameters,

**IV. VIRIAL EXPANSION**

We next turn to a different approach to the problem, namely the virial expansion for the self-energy of the particle in question [4,11,12]. The resulting (first order) formula is valid, if the medium is sufficiently dilute. As we shall discuss below, its range of validity is, in general, different from that calculated above using $\chi PT$.

Let us derive the formula for the case at hand. A simple derivation follows, if we recognize that the self-energy function is an $S$-matrix element [12]. Consider first the process in vacuum. Just as the amplitude $T$ for the two body $\pi N$ scattering,

$$\pi(k, i) + N(p, s) \to \pi(k', i') + N(p', s'),$$

is given by the $S$-matrix element,

$$i(2\pi)^4 \delta^4(p + k - p' - k') T_{i' i; s' s} = \langle k', i'; p', s' | S - 1 | k; i; p, s \rangle = \langle 0 | a(k', i') b(p', s') (S - 1) b^\dagger(p, s) a^\dagger(k, i) | 0 \rangle ,$$

we may express the self-energy $\Pi^{(0)}$ of the pion (in vacuum) by the one-body matrix element,

The corresponding self-energy $\Pi(k)$ in nuclear medium is obtained simply by replacing the vacuum expectation value in Eq. (4.2) by the ensemble average defined in Eq. (??),
Eq. (??) is the desired first order virial expansion formula for the pion self-energy. Although such formulae have been used to find the mass shifts in different cases, its application to pion in nuclear medium does not exist in the literature. What has been utilised earlier is an approximation to the above formula [14].

To sum over the forward amplitudes, we begin with the kinematics for the process in general. The matrix structure of $T$ in nucleon isospin space may be written as

We now evaluate $\Pi^{(n)}$ using the experimental data for the $\pi N$ scattering amplitude [22]. As given by Eq.(4.6), it is an integral over the 3-momentum of the nucleon in the pion rest frame ($\vec{k} = 0$), while the data is given as a function of the pion energy $\omega_k = \sqrt{\vec{k}^2 + m^2_{\pi}}$ in the nucleon rest (lab) frame. The two variables are related by the equation, $m_{\pi}E_p = m_N\omega_k$. We thus have finally the complex pole position in the pion propagator as

The numerical evaluations are shown in Figs. 2 and 3, where the pion mass shift and its imaginary part are plotted as a function of the nucleon number density in units of the normal density $n_0=(110\,\text{MeV})^3$. Our result for the pion mass shift in nuclear medium may be compared with that for the nucleon mass shift in pionic medium, calculated in [4]. It will be observed that while both the shifts are given essentially by integrals over the same $\pi N$ amplitude times the corresponding distribution functions, the curves bend in opposite directions. The reason is that as the pion energy increases, there is a change in sign in the real part of the amplitude, which is weighted differently by the distribution functions in the two cases.

![FIG. 2. Shift in pion mass in nuclear medium. The solid curve results from the virial formula. The three straight lines follow from $\chi PT$: the dotted, the dashed and the dash-dotted curves correspond to the central value, the upper and the lower limits of the constants in Eq.(??).]
V. DISCUSSION

Having derived the effective parameters of the pion in nuclear medium by two different methods, we now discuss the validity of the results. Considering $\chi$PT, the region in which the leading correction term may represent a meaningful approximation to a quantity depends on the proximity of the resonances in the relevant channel. In the present case, a number of resonances, particularly the $\Delta(1232)$, lie close to the threshold, making the values of the coupling constants $c_1$, $c_2$ and $c_3$ in the effective Lagrangian rather large. Then the region of nuclear density in which the results may be valid, is expected to shrink considerably.

The calculated results follow this expectation. In the expression for the effective mass, there is, however, a large cancellation among the contributions of the different vertices, making the mass shift to be only a few MeV at $n = n_0$, the normal nuclear density. But in the expression for $F_{s\pi}$ the contributions of the vertices add up, making the "correction" at this density overwhelm the unit term. Clearly, the first order $\chi$PT results for the pion traversing nuclear matter at normal density are unacceptable.

On the other hand, in the virial expansion formula we may avoid any inaccuracy in calculating the scattering amplitude by taking it from experiment. However, the nuclear medium must be dilute enough for an expansion of the self-energy function in powers of nuclear density to be valid. At normal nuclear density $n_0 = (110 \text{ MeV})^3$, the mean distance between the nucleons is about 2 fm. Thus our first order virial formula, where the pion propagation is perturbed by a single interaction with one of the nucleons in the medium, should be a reasonable approximation up to about this density. We point out that we use the exact formula, rather than the approximate version used so long by different authors in this context. Unfortunately, the virial expansion does not say anything about the residues, $F_{t\pi}$ and $F_{s\pi}$. At normal nuclear density, its prediction for the mass-shift and the decay width of the pion is that both are negligible, being only a few MeV.

We conclude with a comment on determining the mass shift in the more interesting case of the nucleon in nuclear medium. Here the simple chiral Lagrangian for the $NN$ system [25] is not expected to apply, as it does not take properly into account the presence of bound or virtual two nucleon states close to the $NN$ threshold. In fact, it produces an absurdly large value for the nucleon mass shift [26]. But the virial expansion formula for the nucleon self-energy should apply here, at least in the neighbourhood of the nuclear saturation density [27].

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There is also the field strength corresponding to the external fields, but they will not appear in the leading order we shall work here.

[19] There are other vertices having the nucleon fields in the form $\bar{\psi}(x) \tau^i \psi(x)$. When the two fields in such vertices are contracted to form a loop, it produces $\langle \tau^i \rangle$ as a factor, which is zero.


[24] As a simple check on the virial formula (4.6), we may insert in it the $\pi N$ scattering amplitude calculated to leading order in $\chi PT$. The self-energy $\Pi^{(\omega)}$ so obtained reproduces the mass-shift (3.18).

