**HITOMI CONSTRAINTS ON THE 3.5 KEV LINE IN THE PERSEUS GALAXY CLUSTER**

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**ABSTRACT**

High-resolution X-ray spectroscopy with Hitomi was expected to resolve the origin of the faint unidentified \(E \approx 3.5\) keV emission line reported in several low-resolution studies of various massive systems, such as galaxies and clusters, including the Perseus cluster. We have analyzed the Hitomi first-light observation of the Perseus cluster. The emission line expected for Perseus based on the XMM-Newton signal from the large cluster sample under the dark matter decay scenario too faint to be detectable in the Hitomi data. However, the previously reported 3.5 keV flux from Perseus was anomalously high compared to the sample-based prediction. We find no unidentified line at the reported high flux level. Taking into account the XMM measurement uncertainties for this region, the inconsistency with Hitomi is at a 99% significance for a broad dark-matter line and at 99.7% for a narrow line from the gas. We do not find anomalously high fluxes of the nearby faint K line or the Ar satellite line that were proposed as explanations for the earlier 3.5 keV detections. We do find a hint of a broader absence of the energies of high-\(n\) transitions in \(S_{\text{XVI}} (E \approx 3.44\) keV rest-frame) — a possible signature of charge exchange in the molecular nebula and another proposed explanation for the unidentified line. While its energy is consistent with \(XMM\) pn detections, it is unlikely to explain the MOS signal. A confirmation of this interesting feature has to wait for a more sensitive observation with a future calorimeter experiment.

**Subject headings:** Dark matter — galaxies: clusters: individual (A426) — galaxies: clusters: intracluster medium — X-rays: galaxies: clusters

1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of dark matter (DM) is one of the fundamental unsolved problems in physics and astronomy. Direct particle searches in laboratories as well as searches for electromagnetic signal from celestial objects have been conducted with no unambiguous detection so far. X-ray observations of DM concentrations in such objects and clusters, prove a probe for a particular DM candidate, a sterile neutrino, which is predicted to decay and emit an X-ray line (Dodelson & Widrow 1994; Abazajian et al. 2001). Early searches that provided upper limits on line flux (and thus the particle decay rate) as a function of line energy (which gives the particle mass) are reviewed, e.g., in Abazajian et al. (2012) and Boyarsky et al. (2012).

A possible detection was reported by Bulbul et al. (2014, hereafter B14), who found an unidentified line at \(E \approx 3.55\) keV in the stacked spectrum of a large sample of galaxy clusters using \(XMM-Newton\) EPIC MOS and pn. Within their sample was the Perseus cluster (its central region), whose signal was particularly strong. B14 also reported a detection from Perseus with \(Chandra\) at the same energy. Boyarsky et al. (2014) reported an \(XMM\) detection in the outer region of Perseus. Urban et al. (2015) and Franse et al. (2016, hereafter F16) detected the line in several regions of Perseus with \(Suzaku\); however, Tamura et al. (2015) did not detect it in the same \(Suzaku\) data. The 3.5 keV line was also reported from other objects, such as the Galactic Center (Boyarsky et
al. 2015) and M31 (Boyarsky et al. 2014). Other sensitive searches did not detect a significant line signal (e.g., from the Milky Way halo, Sekiya et al. 2016; Draco dwarf, Ruchayskiy et al. 2016; stacked Suzaku clusters, Bulbul et al. 2016). Some of the nondetections were inconsistent with other detections under the decaying DM hypothesis (in which the line flux must be proportional to the projected DM mass), most significantly, in a sample of galaxies (Anderson et al. 2015). We also note here that the signal from Perseus reported by XMM, Chandra and Suzaku was higher than expected given the signal from the rest of the cluster sample (B14). Astrophysical explanations of the reported line, in addition to those considered by B14, have also been proposed; a critical review can be found in F16. An extensive review of the recent observations is given, e.g., by Jakubovsky (2015).

As recognized in all previous studies, the above line detections were near the capability for CCD detectors — for a \( \sim 100 \) eV resolution, the line reported from clusters with a \( \sim 1 \) eV equivalent width (EW) is a 1% bump above the continuum, easily affected by errors in modeling the nearby atomic lines and in instrument calibration. A confirmation with a much better spectral resolution was considered essential. Hitomi, launched in February 2016 and lost in March (Takahashi et al. 2014, 2016) after having returned a groundbreaking spectrum (H16), offered us such a possibility. We present results from this dataset below.

We use \( h = 0.7, \Omega_m = 0.3 \) and \( \Omega_L = 0.7 \) cosmology. The cluster heliocentric redshift (average for member galaxies) is 0.0179 (Strubble & Rood 1999) and the redshift in the CMB frame is 0.01737, which gives \( d_L = 75.4 \) Mpc and a scale of 21.2 kpc per 1’. We use the 68% (1σ) confidence level for errors unless stated otherwise.

2. DATA

The Perseus cluster was the first-light target for Hitomi, observed early in the instrument activation phase with the Soft X-ray Spectrometer (SXS; Kelley et al. 2016). SXS is an array of 35 calorimeter pixels with a 4.9 eV FWHM energy resolution (H16), covering a 3’ × 3’ field of view (FOV) at the focus of a Soft X-Ray Telescope (SXT; Soong et al. 2016). To maximize statistics, here we coadd the 230 ks Perseus dataset used in H16 and a later 45 ks pointing for a total exposure of 275 ks. The former dataset is a combination of observations in H16 and a later 45 ks pointing for a total exposure of 275 ks. However, as reported in H16, the gas velocity dispersion (\( \sigma_v \)) of that in the normal energy resolution of the individual pixels. Its uncertainty is discussed in H16 and is negligible for this work. We bin the spectrum by 2 eV (which is close to optimal binning, Kaasstra & Bleeker 2016) and fit using the C statistic (Cash 1979). The number of counts per 2 eV bin is around 200 in this band, i.e., the statistics is nearly a Gaussian distribution with \( \sigma = \sqrt{N} \). The instrumental background is negligible.

3.1. Systematic uncertainties

The SXT has a 1.2’ angular resolution (half-power diameter). For our analysis of the spectrum from the whole 3’ × 3’ FOV, we do not attempt to account for PSF scattering in and out of the FOV, and use the instrument response for an on-axis point source. We estimate the effect of this simplification on the model normalization to be \( \sim 10\% \).

The uncertainty of the Be layer thickness in the GV window, ±10 µm, corresponds to a ±2.5% uncertainty for the flux at \( E = 3.5 \) keV.

A more insidious effect may be caused by uncertainty in modeling the SXT effective area (Kurashima et al. 2016). The SXT reflectivity around the Au M edges was measured on the ground and combined with values from Henke (1993) for other energies. The ground measurements show \( \sim 1\% \) systematic deviations from Henke, one of which is in the 3.43–3.68 keV interval above the Au M1 edge — at our energies of interest. Given the finite accuracy of the ground measurements, we consider the possibility that the Henke values are more accurate. To quantify the effect of this uncertainty, below we will derive some of the results using both the default area curve (which uses the Hitomi mirror measured reflectivities) and one in which the Henke values were used above the Au M1 edge. Similar deviations may be seen at other Au M edges, but the next one (M2 at 3.15 keV) is well outside our interval of interest and we will not consider it.

4. RESULTS

4.1. The ICM model

We fit the full-FOV Perseus spectrum with a WABS thermal plasma model (AtomDB 3.0.3beta2, Foster et al. 2012) with elemental abundances relative to Lodders (2003). We fix 2 heasarc.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/hitomi/calib/hitomi_caldb/docs.html
Fig. 1.— SXS spectrum from the whole field of view, combining 3 pointings. Energy is in the observer frame; bins are 4 eV for clarity (2 eV bins were used for fitting). Vertical error bars are 1σ Poisson uncertainties in each bin, horizontal error bars denote the bins. Red curve is a best-fit \texttt{bpec} model with $kT = 3.5$ keV, abundances of 0.54 solar (same for all elements), l.o.s. velocity dispersion of 180 km/s, and a power-law component as required by a fit in a broader band (see text). Prominent atomic lines seen in the model (identified using AtomDB) are marked, along with the interesting Ar XIX satellite line (B14) that’s too faint to be seen in the model. Brackets show 90% confidence intervals on the unidentified 3.5 keV line energy for the most-restrictive \texttt{XMM} MOS stacked-clusters sample in B14 (red) and for the \texttt{XMM} MOS Perseus spectrum from the region covered by the SXS (blue).

Importantly for this work, the continuum model at the energy of interest (3.5 keV) differs by only 1% between the above fits. We further checked its robustness by fitting a simple power law in the interval 3.30–3.75 keV between the bright Ar and Ca lines, excluding intervals with all the weak model lines between, and obtained a continuum flux only 0.4% different from our default \texttt{bpec} model. As a further check, we also compared the best-fit normalization of our \texttt{bpec} model to that from \textit{Chandra} for the same region of the cluster, excluding the AGN. Our normalization is 10% below \textit{Chandra}’s, which is a good agreement, given the preliminary calibration and the simplified accounting for the PSF.

As seen in Fig. 1, lines from all elements are fit surprisingly well, with the closest of the best-fit temperatures, even though they are statistically inconsistent, suggests that the shape of the effective area curve over the 3–7 keV band is reasonably correct. The parameters obtained from a fit in this narrow interval are qualitatively similar to those from a broader 3–7 keV band with the power-law slope fixed at $\alpha = -1.8$ (defined as $S_X \propto E^{\alpha}$) and an absorption column (Galactic plus intrinsic) of $3.3 \times 10^{21}$ cm$^{-2}$. We included a component of this shape along with the thermal model and fit the SXS spectrum in the 3–7 keV band, obtaining a normalization for the AGN component of $9.0 \times 10^{-3}$ phct s$^{-1}$ keV$^{-1}$ at $E = 1$ keV. We fix it in the subsequent fits and leave further discussion of the AGN spectrum for future work. Its contribution to the 3–4 keV flux is 15% and it does not affect our results.

The 2.85–4.1 keV spectrum with the best-fit model is shown in Fig. 1. This energy interval is chosen to include all the interesting lines but avoid the effective area uncertainty sharply increasing at lower energies. The \texttt{bpec} model parameters for a fit in this band are $kT = 3.48 \pm 0.07$ keV, an abundance of $0.54 \pm 0.03$ Solar, and the line-of-sight (l.o.s.) velocity dispersion of $179 \pm 16$ km/s (which becomes $197 \pm 16$ km s$^{-1}$ without the pixel energy alignment). The fit is formally good with a C-statistic of 603 ($\chi^2 = 611$) for 619 d.o.f. If the power-law component is omitted, the temperature changes to $3.70 \pm 0.07$ keV and abundance to $0.48 \pm 0.02$.

The parameters obtained from a fit in this narrow interval are qualitatively similar to those from a broader 3–7 keV band with the power-law slope fixed at $\alpha = -1.8$, which gives $kT = 3.84 \pm 0.02$ keV (though with a considerably higher abundance, $0.68 \pm 0.01$, now dominated by Fe lines). The closeness of the best-fit temperatures, even though they are statistically inconsistent, suggests that the shape of the effective area curve over the 3–7 keV band is reasonably correct. Importantly for this work, the continuum model at the energy of interest (3.5 keV) differs by only 1% between the above fits. We further checked its robustness by fitting a simple power law in the interval 3.30–3.75 keV between the bright Ar and Ca lines, excluding intervals with all the weak model lines between, and obtained a continuum flux only 0.4% different from our default \texttt{bpec} model. As a further check, we also compared the best-fit normalization of our \texttt{bpec} model to that from \textit{Chandra} for the same region of the cluster, excluding the AGN. Our normalization is 10% below \textit{Chandra}’s, which is a good agreement, given the preliminary calibration and the simplified accounting for the PSF.
well with a simple single-temperature, single-abundance model. Some possible faint lines (K xvi Heα, Ar xvi Heβ, K xix Lyα) may show problems with line energies, but none of these lines is a significant detection. Line identifications and individual abundances will be addressed in a future work.

4.2. Constraint on the previously reported 3.5 keV line

The red and blue brackets in Fig. 1 show 90% confidence intervals for the 3.5 keV line energy for the most sensitive measurement of B14, that of the XMM MOS stacked-cluster sample, and for the XMM MOS spectrum of the Perseus region covered by Hitomi. For a quantitative comparison, we extracted a MOS 1+2 spectrum from a circular region approximating the SXS FOV (both offset and solid angle) in observations 2 and 3 that give most of the exposure, ignoring a small offset for observation 4. We then modeled the 3.5 keV line in that spectrum reproducing the procedure in B14. In particular, we fit the MOS spectrum in the 2.4–6 keV band using a line-free single-temperature apec model and a set of Gaussian lines at energies of the known atomic lines (with energies allowed to vary slightly), in order to model the continuum and lines in a model-independent way as possible given a CCD detector. The faint atomic lines near the energy of interest that could not be directly detected by the CCD, namely, K xvi Heα at 3.51 keV (rest-frame) and Ar xvii Heβ satellite at 3.62 keV, were constrained in the fit using the bright lines of S xv Heα (2.46 keV rest) and S xvi Lyα (2.62 keV), which are good temperature diagnostics. The measured S xv and S xvi fluxes are $(9.0 \pm 1.2) \times 10^{-5}$ and $(2.15 \pm 0.05) \times 10^{-4}$ ph $s^{-1} cm^{-2}$, respectively. A ratio of these lines corresponds to a temperature of 2.9 keV. We predicted the K line flux using this temperature (which is the relevant one, since K and Ar are likely to come from the same gas phase that dominates the S lines) and the S line fluxes, assuming the same abundances. The K xvi is a triplet (3.47, 3.49, 3.51 keV) with a known flux ratio for its components (1:0.5:2.3). This resulted in an estimate for the K xvi line at 3.51 keV of $2.0 \times 10^{-6}$ ph $s^{-1} cm^{-2}$. We then allowed this flux to vary during the fit in the range 0.1–3 times the estimated flux, capping at $6 \times 10^{-6}$ ph $s^{-1} cm^{-2}$, to account for possible temperature and abundance variations. The Ar xvii satellite line is estimated from the measured Ar xvii Heα line at 3.12 keV, $(6.0 \pm 0.3) \times 10^{-5}$ ph $s^{-1} cm^{-2}$, and the Ar xvii resonant/satellite line ratio for the above-determined temperature; the predicted Ar satellite line flux was $2.1 \times 10^{-7}$ ph $s^{-1} cm^{-2}$, and we again allowed this flux to vary by factor 0.1–3 in the fit, capping at $6.3 \times 10^{-7}$ ph $s^{-1} cm^{-2}$.

For the unidentified line, we obtained $f = (9.0 \pm 2.9) \times 10^{-6}$ ph $s^{-1} cm^{-2}$ and $E = 3.54_{-0.03}^{+0.03}$ keV (similar for the different assumed line widths from the interesting range). This is very close to the flux shown in Fig. 15 of B14, which gives their Astro-H prediction, and is consistent with (but has a much smaller error than) the difference between the whole-Perseus flux and the one with the central $r = 1'$ region excised, given in their Table 5.

We first check how the flux caps for the K xvi and Ar xvii satellite lines estimated for the MOS fit compare with the actual fluxes of those lines in the SXS spectrum. None of the lines is significantly detected; the flux of the possible blend of K xvi Heα and Clxvi Lyβ at (3.45 keV observed) is $(4.6 \pm 2.6) \times 10^{-6}$ ph $s^{-1} cm^{-2}$— under the K xvi cap used for the MOS fit. The Ar xvii satellite flux (3.56 keV observed) is $(1.5 \pm 1.4) \times 10^{-6}$ ph $s^{-1} cm^{-2}$, consistent with the cap. The above MOS flux of the 3.5 keV feature is in excess of these caps, but even if these faint lines were completely ignored in the MOS fit, neither of them approaches the derived 3.5 keV flux, excluding one of the astrophysical explanations proposed in B14.

The MOS fluxes of the S xv Heα and S xvi Lyα lines, used to derive the K cap, are consistent with the Hitomi fluxes, once the relatively small contribution of Si xiv Lyγ blending with S xv Heα is added. The Ar xvii Heα-MOS-derived flux is consistent with the blend of this line and a $\sim 2x$ stronger S xvi Lyβ line, resolved in the Hitomi spectrum (Fig. 1); this blending was ignored in the MOS analysis (as in B14) and resulted in a conservatively high cap on the Ar satellite line. A more detailed comparison of the XMM and Hitomi line fluxes will be given in a future paper.

We start checking the consistency of the MOS-derived 3.5 keV emission line with the SXS spectrum by adding a Gaussian line with this flux at a range of energies to the SXS model. We consider an astrophysical line broadened by turbulence or thermal broadening would correspond to 100 km s$^{-1}$. Added in quadrature with turbulent broadening of 180 km s$^{-1}$, this results in an intrinsic Gaussian $\sigma = 2.4$ eV at these energies (in addition to the instrumental $\sigma = 2.1$ eV, or 4.9 eV FWHM, modeled by the RMF). For a DM line, we try 1300 km s$^{-1}$ ($\sigma = 15$ eV), which is the l.o.s. velocity dispersion of the cluster galaxies (Kent & Sargent 1983). An arbitrary intermediate case of 800 km s$^{-1}$ corresponds to a lower dispersion in the region of the cD galaxy projected onto the cluster dispersion. The additional broadening for a putative DM line caused by our energy alignment is negligible for such widths, and it would not apply to the narrow line originating in the gas.
Figure 2 shows the value of $\Delta C$ (which has the same interpretation and normalization as $\Delta \sigma^2$) for the addition of a line at the best-fit MOS flux, compared to the best-fit SXS line flux at that energy (allowing for negative line flux to avoid distorting the probability distribution, as advised by Protassov et al. 2002). For the broad line, we also show $\Delta C$ for a reference model with zero line flux rather than the best-fit SXS flux. B14’s most restrictive 90% MOS energy interval for the stacked sample is shown, since we are assuming that this is a DM line and it has the same energy in all objects. For narrow and broad lines, the best-fit XMM MOS flux value is inconsistent with the SXS spectrum; the weakest constraint is for the broad line and the discrepancy is at least $\Delta C = 12$. Using only observations 2+3 (excluding the better-centered, but short observation 4) reduced $\Delta C$ for the broad line compared to the zero-flux model by about 4, commensurate with the reduction in the number of photons. The effective area uncertainty described in §3.3 is illustrated by error bars for the broad line; the alternative area curve reduces the model values at these energies slightly, thereby reducing the significance of the exclusion of the XMM flux to at least $\Delta C = 9$. Its effect on the narrower lines is weaker.

4.2.1. The statistical question

To interpret the above $\Delta C$ (or $\Delta \sigma^2$) in terms of a confidence level for the line exclusion, we should note that the statistical question we are asking — what is the confidence level of excluding the previously-detected line — is different from a blind line search employed for detecting the line. If a spectral line is detected in a blind search and it corresponds, e.g., to a $3\sigma$ deviation, one has to estimate the probability of a false detection under the hypothesis of no line, caused by a positive random fluctuation. Because a $+3\sigma$ deviation appearing at any spectral bin would be detected as a line, such a probability is the probability of a $+3\sigma$ deviation in one bin times the number of bins where the line could be found within the searched interval (the “look-elsewhere” effect, e.g., Gross & Vitells 2010; this factor was applied in B14). However, here we must estimate the probability of a null hypothesis in which the line exists and we falsely reject it because of a random negative deviation at the position of the line. While $-3\sigma$ deviations can appear at any spectral bin, only one of them, that happens in the bin with the line, would result in false rejection, while all others would be dismissed as mere random deviations. Thus, even though we do not know where within the XMM interval the line is, the probability of false rejection is the probability of a $-3\sigma$ deviation in one bin — there is no look-elsewhere effect in our statistical problem. A $\Delta C = 9$ or $\Delta \sigma^2 = 9$ corresponds to the standard one-parameter $1-(1-0.997)^2/2 \approx 99.9\%$ confidence level. Because $\Delta C$ is not constant across the interval in Fig. 2 we can take its minimum for a conservative limit for rejecting a certain line flux.

The above $\Delta C$ gives only the *Hitomi* statistical constraint and does not take into account the fact that the XMM SXS FOV detection itself is only $3\sigma$ significant (and thus cannot be ruled out with $\Delta C < 3\sigma$ significance). To answer a narrower question of how inconsistent the *Hitomi* and XMM MOS results for the same region are, we ran a simple Monte-Carlo simulation with the line energy and flux randomly drawn from the XMM one-parameter intervals assuming Gaussian distributions, and the *Hitomi* line flux at that energy randomly drawn using the *Hitomi* statistical uncertainty. For a broad (1300 km $s^{-1}$) line, the SXS line flux was below the XMM flux in 99.2% of the trials for the default effective area, in 98.9% of the trials if we use the alternative area curve, or in 97.2% of the trials if we force the SXS line flux to be zero but use the same statistical errors. For a narrow (180 km $s^{-1}$) line, for which the *Hitomi* error is smaller, the discrepancy is at 99.7% for all three cases.

4.3. Broader search

Figure 3 shows the best-fit SXS flux for the additional line as a function of energy, with upper and lower limits at $\Delta C = 9$ ($\pm 3\sigma$ for Gaussian distribution), for a narrow and broad line, as well as the conservative $+3\sigma$ limit selected from among the different line widths in this range. The figure shows a wider interval of possible interest that combines XMM MOS and pn $3\sigma$ line energy intervals. One notable feature is a broad negative “dip” in residuals at $E \approx 3.50$ keV (observed) of about 3–4%, also noticeable in residuals in Figs. 2 and 4. The model lines with different widths overlaid in Fig. 4 show that a broad line may be affected but not a narrow line, as indeed seen in Fig. 2. This deviation has a relatively low statistical significance ($\approx 2.3\sigma$). We have checked the SXS spectra of Crab and G21.5–0.9 (Fig. 4 details will be given in forthcoming papers), both continuum sources well-fit with a simple power law model in the energy range of interest. Neither source shows any comparable deviations at this energy.
The Crab spectrum (shown binned to 32 eV, which roughly corresponds to the expected DM line width) has 1.5 times more counts at these energies than the Perseus spectrum, and has sufficient statistics to exclude any effective area artifact around 3.5 keV of much more than 1% (the size of the error bars). The area systematic uncertainty ($\sigma$) shown in the lower panel of Fig. 4 is also a smaller (1%) effect. The fine structure of the Au M1 edge (same panel), measured with high energy resolution during ground calibration, occurs on energy scales smaller than the "dip".

We have also checked if this dip may be caused by some time-dependent instrumental effect. For this, we divided the full Perseus dataset into the early and late subsets — observations 2 and 3+4, respectively, separated by a week ($\pm 2$). Results from these subsets for the broadened line, analogous to those shown by red line in Fig. 4 for the full exposure, are shown in Fig. 5. The dip appears in the early subset but not in the late one. However, the subsets are only $\sim 2\sigma$ apart at 3.5 keV, so the statistics are insufficient to determine if this is a systematic time-dependent change. The Crab observation (Fig. 4) was performed later than our late subset and thus does not help in ruling out a transient instrumental artifact in earlier data; however, we can not think of a physical explanation for such effect. Given the available data, we have to conclude that the dip is most likely an unfortunate statistical fluctuation, and base our results on the whole dataset in order to avoid statistical biases.

4.3.1. A possible excess at 3.44 keV (rest frame)

The only positive deviation in Fig. 3 is a broad excess above the best-fit thermal model at $E = 3.38 - 3.39$ keV (observed). The statistical significance of this feature is only $1.5\sigma$ and it would not be worth mentioning, if not for the fact that it is located at the energy of the high-$n$ to $n = 1$ transitions of S xvi. Excess flux in these transitions can be interpreted as a signature of charge exchange between heavy nuclei coming in contact with neutral gas — possibly the molecular nebula observed in the Perseus core. These particular transitions were proposed as a possible explanation for the 3.5 keV line in clusters by Gu et al. (2015). A detection of charge exchange in the ICM would be of great astrophysical importance, but it should be confirmed with other elements (to be addressed in future work) and eventually with a longer exposure.

5. DISCUSSION

Our analysis of the Hitomi spectrum of the Perseus cluster core reveals no unidentified emission line around the energy expected by B14. It is inconsistent with the presence of a line at the flux reported by B14 using XMM MOS (as rederived for the approximate SXS FOV). Taking into account the uncertainties of the XMM MOS measurement in this region, which itself is only $3\sigma$ significant, the inconsistency with Hitomi for a broad line (that would be emitted by DM) is at the 99% confidence level, and 99.7% for a narrow line from the ICM. The broad line exclusion level is 97% if we force the SXS line flux to be zero, assuming in effect that the mild “dip” in the residuals ($\pm 3\sigma$) is not statistical as we concluded, but some instrumental artifact present only in Perseus and not in other
SXs data. We note here that F16, using Suzaku data for a similar Perseus region, reported a line flux and its uncertainty similar to that from the XMM SXs-FOV measurement, but given the lack of consensus between different Suzaku analyses (cf. Tamura et al.), we leave a comparison with Suzaku for a later work.

We can exclude one of the 3.5 keV line astrophysical explanations proposed by B14 — namely, anomalously bright K xvi Heα or Ar xvi Heβ satellite lines. These lines are not significantly detected in the SXs spectrum, their fluxes are consistent with expectations and below the MOS 3.5 keV flux. If we consider a slightly wider energy range (Fig. 3), there is a hint of a broad excess emission feature of the right amplitude (though at very low statistical significance) at $E \approx 3.44$ keV rest-frame, where charge exchange on S xvi has been predicted (Gu et al. 2015). However, the energy of this feature is 2.6% (100 eV) away from the best-fit energy for the MOS SXs-FOV detection, and even more inconsistent with the MOS stacked-cluster sample, though it is consistent with the pn detections (B14). If confirmed with better statistics, it is an interesting feature in itself.

Given Hitomi’s much greater spectral resolution, it is likely that the inconsistency with XMM that we reported here is attributable to a systematic error in the XMM result. Possible causes will be examined in a future work, using the new accurate knowledge of the fluxes of all the nearby atomic lines from Hitomi, as well as Suzaku and Chandra spectra and models. One possible reason, mentioned among the Caveats in B14, is that with a CCD resolution, a spurious ~1% dip in the effective area curve is all that is needed to produce a false line-like residual of the observed amplitude (see Fig. 7 in B14). This is an obvious problem for detections in a single object or in local objects, even when different instruments with similar low-resolution detectors are used. Such systematic effects can be minimized by stacking objects at different redshifts. In the cluster sample of B14, the 3.5 keV rest-frame energy spans a 1.2 keV interval of detector energies, which should smear out any such instrument features. Thus this systematic error will be much smaller in the stacked-sample signal.

As noted in B14 and subsequent works, the reported line in Perseus, and especially in its core, was much brighter than expected from the signal in the larger cluster sample, scaled by mass under the decaying-DM hypothesis. Assuming that the high Perseus line flux is an artifact but the stacked-sample signal is real, we can evaluate the corresponding expected flux from the SXs FOV. To estimate the projected dark matter mass within this region, we use a total mass profile from Simionescu et al. (2011) and one from the Vikhlinin et al. (2006) $M - T$ scaling relation (the former was used in Urban et al. and the latter in B14), correcting them for the 14% baryon fraction. The projected DM mass within the SXs FOV is $(6 - 8) \times 10^{15} M_\odot$. For the sterile neutrino decay rate derived in B14 for the full cluster sample ($T \approx 2 \times 10^{-28}$ s$^{-1}$), we expect a 3.5 keV line with $f = (2.4 - 3.1) \times 10^{-4}$ photons cm$^{-2}$ (see, e.g., B14 for the equations), 30 times below the flux we ruled out above. This flux, shown by blue dashed line in Fig. 3 is below the statistical noise in the current observation. The right vertical axis in Fig. 3 shows the sterile neutrino decay rate that corresponds to the line flux on the left axis, using the median projected DM mass estimate. The Hitomi 3σ upper limits on $T$ are, unfortunately, much higher than many earlier constraints (see, e.g., B14). This is because of the high X-ray brightness of the ICM in the Perseus core, the short exposure (combined with the GV attenuation), and the small SXs FOV.

Our results from this relatively short observation illustrate the dramatic improvement in sensitivity for narrow features from that of CCD detectors. However, as expected, the improvement for a putative cluster DM line, which would have a width of 30–35 eV (FWHM), is less significant. The short Hitomi observation excluded the anomalously bright signal reported from the Perseus core. However, to test the much weaker stacked-sample detection (provided it withstands the reevaluation of the systematic uncertainties after the Hitomi result) will require the photon statistics comparable to that of the CCD stacking studies, or looking at objects where the line is easier to detect. Among clusters, such objects would be non-cool-core systems, in which the line EW should be of magnitude higher for the same line flux because of the lower ICM background. A DM line would be narrower, giving a calorimeter a greater leverage, in systems with low velocity dispersion, such as dwarf spheroidals and the Milky Way. Of course, distinguishing a DM line from an astrophysical one would require resolving the line, which only a calorimeter can do.

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HITOMI CONSTRAINTS ON THE 3.5 KEV LINE IN PERSEUS