# Extracting Physiological Data for STARRRS fMRI Scans

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#### Background

- Throughout brain MRI scanning, physiological data are acquired using SA Instruments and CWE hardware and recorded by PC-SAM and LabChart software.
- SA Instruments hardware monitors respiratory effort (pad sensor pressure), pulse oximeter signal (PulseOx) and rectal temperature (fiber optic sensor "FOT1") and regulates warming air temperature with feedback from FOT1.
- PC-SAM software displays these signals, calculates respiration rate, pulse rate and SpO2 from the respiratory
  effort and pulse oximeter signals and generates trigger pulses to synchronize MRI acquisition with
  respiration, reducing blurring artifacts in the images.
- PC-SAM logs "slow" data (rates, SpO2 and temperature) but does not store signals. PC-SAM log data is not available until after scanning.
- To circumvent these limitations, we added SA Instruments "breakout boxes", which convert the PC-SAM signals and slow data to analog voltages, which are digitized by a AD Instruments PowerLab 16/35 data acquisition system and recorded and displayed in real time by ADI LabChart software.
- In addition to these data, PowerLab digitizes and LabChart records and displays:
  - Logic pulses output by the scanner marking the beginning of each fMRI dynamic (or other event programmed in the MRI code)
  - Logic pulses corresponding to the radio-frequency (RF) pulses transmitted to excite the nuclear spins in the sample (rat brain). For 2D fMRI, for each dynamic, one pulse is generated just prior to scanning each slice.
  - Analog signals from a CWE GEMINI O2/CO2 analyzer, which monitors the gas exhaled by the anesthetized rat. The CO2 concentration (recorded in percent by volume) can be used to calculate end-tidal CO2 (EtCO2).
  - Analog signal from a potentiometer (variable resistor) attached to the dose adjustment knob of the isoflurane
    vaporizer supplying anesthesia gas to the rat in the magnet. This signal is calibrated to the isoflurane dose setting
    using a point-by-point interpolation in LabChart.
- All of these data are recorded and displayed synchronously by LabChart, so that physiological data can be matched to each MRI scan by identifying the block of logic pulses corresponding to that scan and selecting the physiological data acquired during that block.

#### Post-processing in LabChart

- During scanning, LabChart records both the signal waveforms and "slow" data output from PC-SAM but does not process these data.
- Sometimes, if the quality of the respiratory effort or pulse oximeter signal is poor, PC-SAM will output erroneous data for respiratory rate or pulse rate, respectively.
- Most often, this occurs when the respiratory effort signal is too small, e.g. due to improper placement of the pad pressure sensor.
- LabChart may be able to recover the missing respiration or pulse rate data by analyzing the digitized signal after scanning.
- This is possible because LabChart allows the user to adjust many parameters of its "Cyclic Measurements" function to achieve the best fit. PC-SAM has no such user-adjustable fit parameters.
- The user may also insert comments in the LabChart record, either during or after scanning. For example, after identifying the beginning and ending of a particular fMRI scan, the user can add comments marking these times.

# Challenges to Matching Physiological to MRI Data

- Unless the operator inserted comments into LabChart each time a scan started or ended, locating the time interval to extract must be achieved indirectly.
- Even though we know the MRI scan numbers for the data to be extracted, we can't assume that the scans were acquired in numerical order, e.g. E9, E10, E11,...
  - Although ParaVision starts each study with a template of empty, consecutively-numbered scans, the operator can skip, duplicate, or delete these scans during data acquisition.
  - Duplicated scans are assigned new scan numbers that succeed those loaded from the template.
- Fortunately, the approximate time at which each scan was completed is stored in that scan's method file.
- Subtracting the known duration of each scan from its end time, we can identify its approximate starting time.
- With the approximate start and end times for each scan, we can find the appropriate block of logic pulses in the LabChart record.
- We can then use the timing of those pulses to precisely determine the beginning and end of each scan and therefore which physiological data should be extracted for that scan.

### Locating the Beginning and End of a Scan

#### Step 1: Look up the scan numbers in the Scan Record spreadsheet for the desired cohort and time point.

Example: Z:\STARRRS\STARRRS\_inhouse\TempTransfer\_01192023\C28\_E\_fMRI files & data\C28\_E\_fMRI Scan Record.xlsx

The fMRI scan numbers for Cohort 28 rat STM0654 at its early time point are E9, E10, E11, E20. These scans were acquired on 10/24/2024.

	Α	В	Т	U	V	W	Х	Υ
1	Animal ID	Scan Date	Reverse EPI blips 300	Reverse EPI blips 300 (scan 2)	Reverse EPI 300 (no blips)	Reverse EPI 300 (no blips) (scan 2)	DTI EPI 30dir	Scan E Tim
2	STM0651	10/21/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	15:4
3	STM0652	10/22/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	10:3
4	STF0641	10/22/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	13:3
5	STM0653	10/23/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	10:4
6	STF0642	10/23/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	14:3
7	STM0654	10/24/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	11:0
8	STF0643	10/24/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	13:3
9	STM0655	10/25/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	11:1
10	STF0644	10/25/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	13:4
11	STM0656	10/28/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	10:2
12	STF0645	10/28/2024	e9	e10	e11	e12	e13	15:0

The data for these scans will be in a folder named:

#### 20241024\_HHMMSS\_STM0654\_STM0654\_C28\_E\*

Where **HHMMSS** is the time the study was created and \* reflects the fact that a study may be repeated at the same time point. The first study for this rat will be C28\_E\_1\_1 and a repeat study would be C28\_E\_1\_2. The later time points will be C28\_M\_1\_2 and C28\_O\_1\_3.

#### Step 2: Locate the **method** parameter file for the scan of interest.

Go to the folder containing the study (rat-timepoint) data:

```
20241024_090446_STM0654_STM0654_C28_E_1_1
```

 Go to the subfolder for the scan of interest and open the method file for that scan, e.g. for scan 9:

```
20241024_090446_STM0654_STM0654_C28_E_1_1\9\method
```

- Near the top, find the end time for this scan:
- ##TITLE=Parameter List, ParaVision 360 V3.3
- ##JCAMPDX=4.24
- ##DATATYPE=Parameter Values
- ##ORIGIN=Bruker BioSpin MRI GmbH
- ##OWNER=starrrs
- \$\$ Write Options: Symbolic Enums, RLE encoded arrays, symbol visibility
- \$\$ <mark>2024-10-24 10:36:56.920 -</mark>0400 starrrs@starrrs mri
- \$\$ /opt/nmrdata/PV- 360.3.3/data/starrrs/20241024\_090446\_STM0654\_STM0654\_C28\_E\_1\_1/9/method
- \$\$ process /opt/PV-360.3.3/prog/bin/parxserver
- ##\$Method=<User:reversed\_EPI>

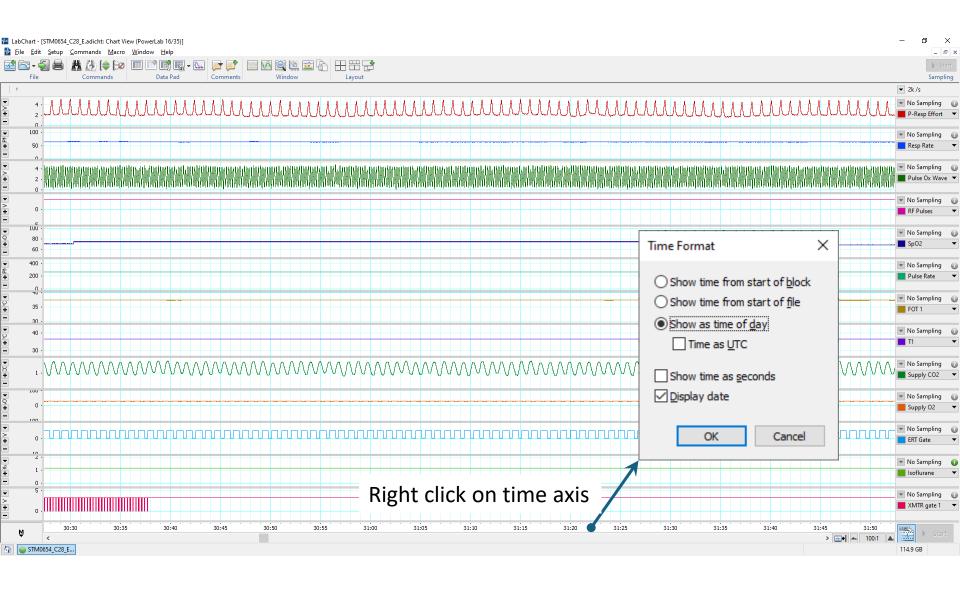
#### Step 3: In the LabChart record, locate the end of the scan of interest.

Open the LabChart \*.adicht file for the study of interest, e.g.:

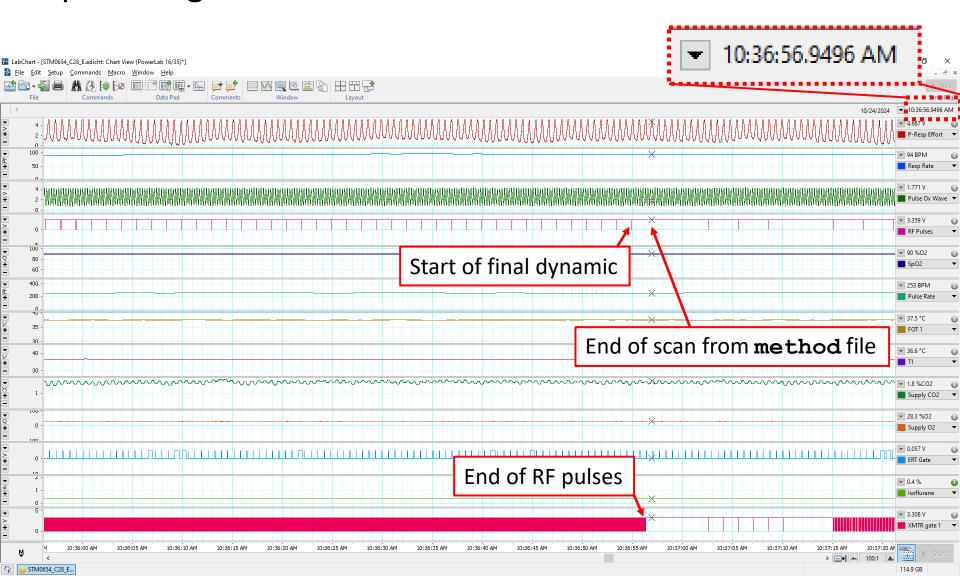
```
C28_E_fMRI files & data\STM0654_C28_E\STM0654_C28_E.adicht
```

- At the bottom of the LabChart window, right click on the X axis (time line) and select "Time Mode...". Select "Show as time of day"
- Scroll the timeline to locate the approximate end of the scan. In this example, it's 10:36:56.920.
- Place the mouse on the "RF Pulses" trace (Channel 4) and observe the exact cursor time in the top right corner of the LabChart window.
- Move the mouse left and right until the exact cursor time matches the end-of-scan time from the method file as closely as possible.
   Right-click and choose "Set Marker".

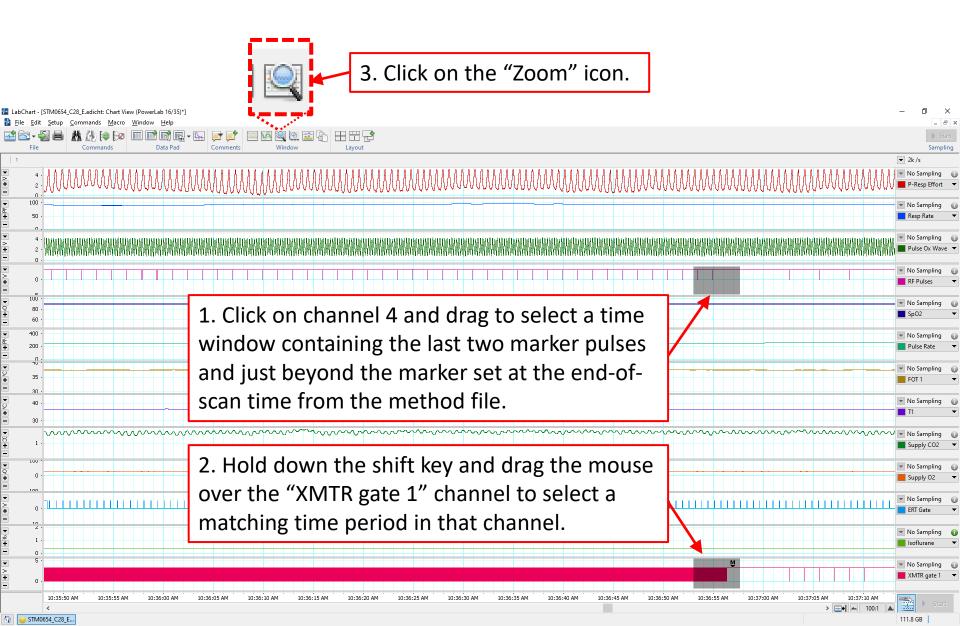
#### In LabChart, set X axis to time of day



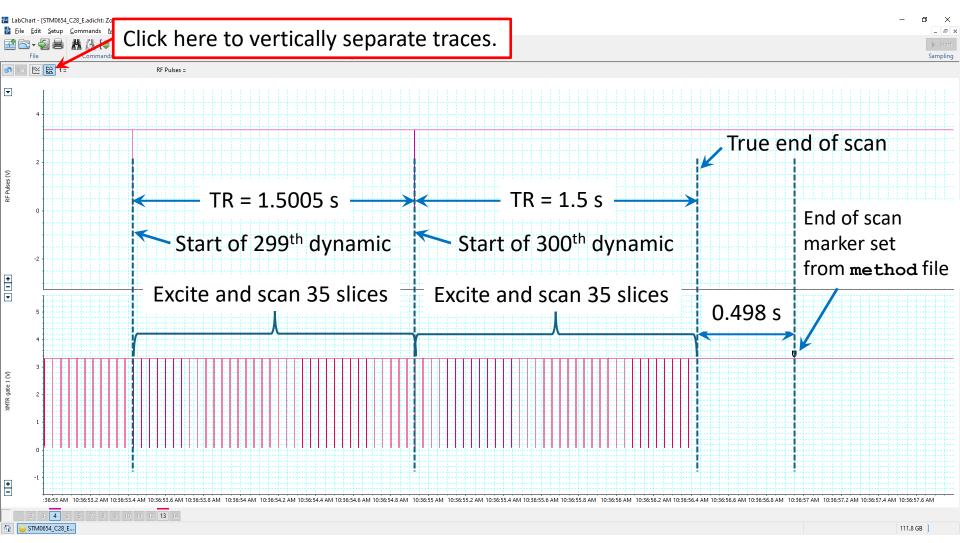
Scroll to approximate end-of-scan time from method file, then move mouse in data window to display exact time at top left. Right click and select "Set Marker".



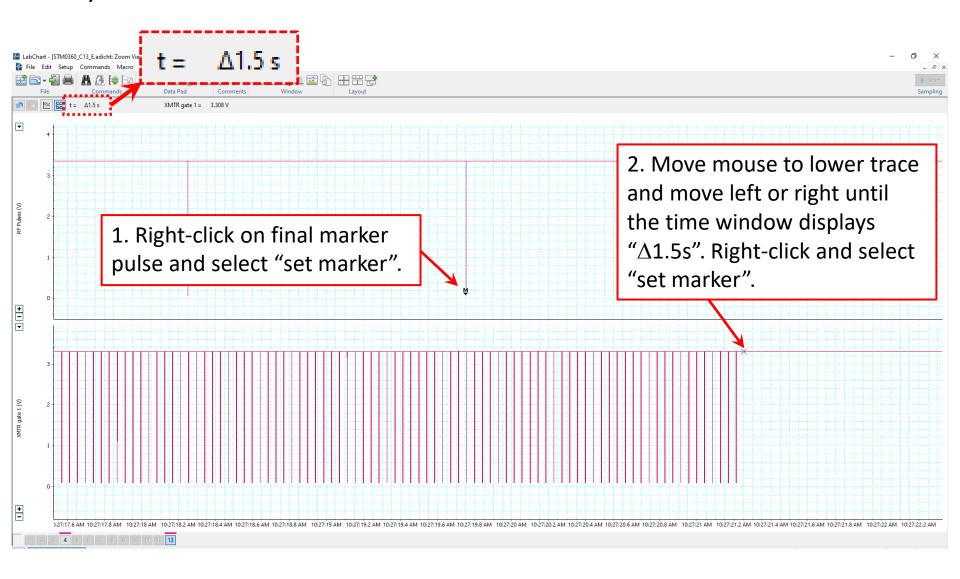
#### Let's zoom in around the end of scan 9.



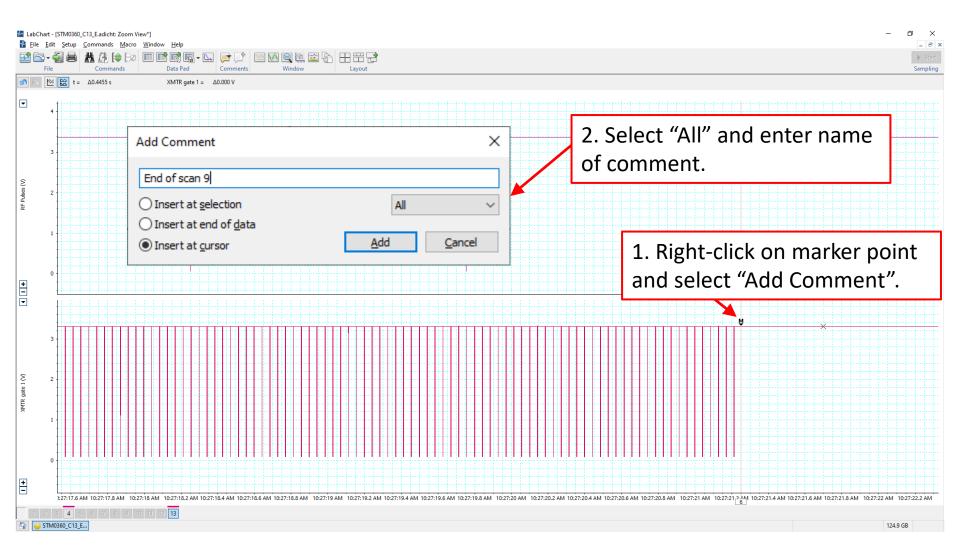
Now we can see the logic pulses for each slice. The end-of-scan time from the method file is 0.524 s after true end-of-scan. Unfortunately, this is not an exactly reproducible delay (0.498, 0.5185, 0.586, 0.595 s...). This variability may arise from variable latency in writing data to disk.



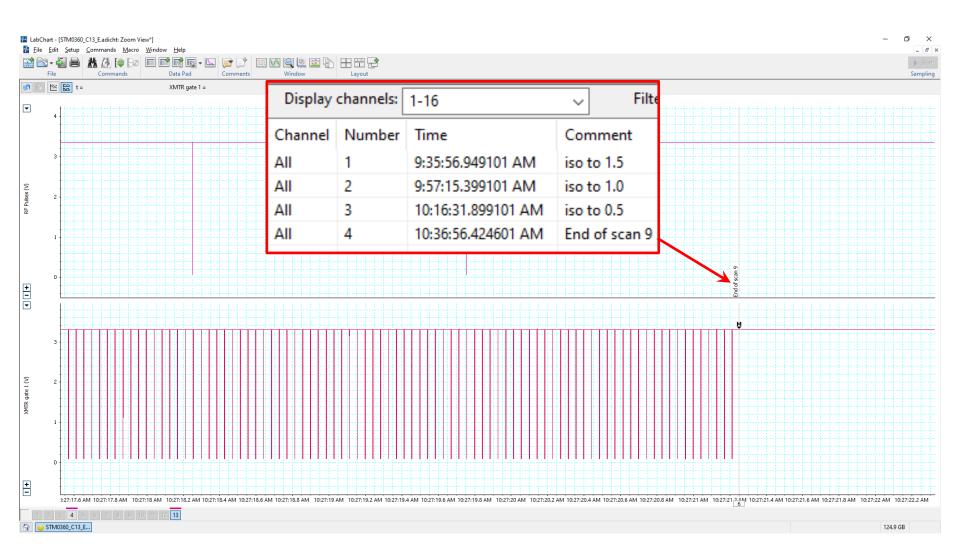
So the end-of-scan time from method is just approximate, but good for identifying the correct block. In the zoomed view, mark the actual end-of-scan.



#### Mark the true end-of-scan with a comment. The exact time is saved by LabChart.



# Press Ctrl-L or choose "Window -> Comments" to display comments.



### Step 4: Locate the beginning of the block of data to export.

- Close the "Zoom" window and return to the main Chart window: "Window -> 1 STM0654\_C28\_E.adicht: Chart View".
- From the marker you placed at the end of the scan, scroll to the left until the top right window shows "- $\Delta$ 7:30". This <u>should</u> correspond to the beginning of the first dynamic: 300 dynamics × 1.5 s

Note: The data were acquired at a very high speed (0.5 ms/point), so there a very large number of points and scrolling can be slow and jumpy!

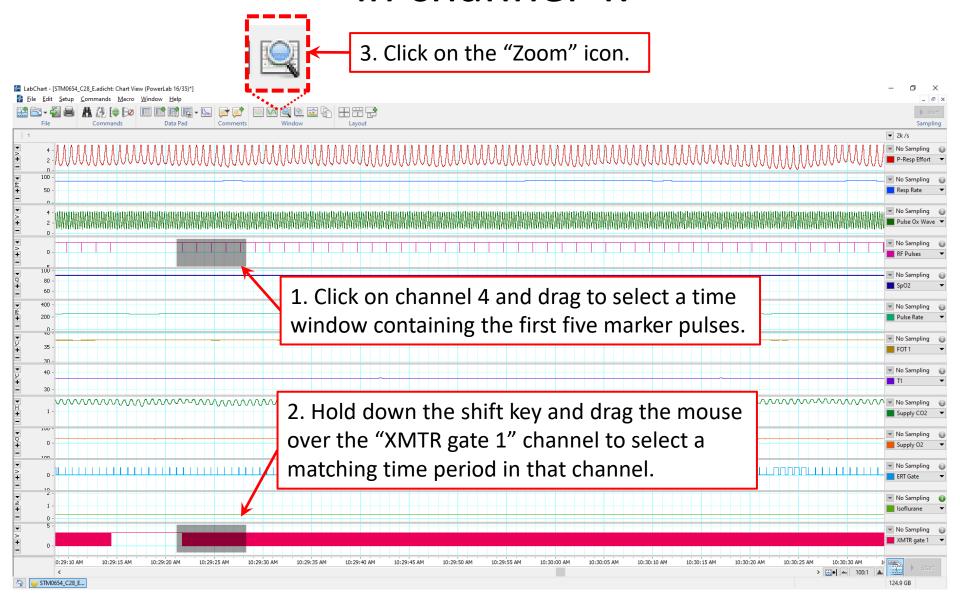
If you get lost, you can always go to the Comments window, select "End scan 9" and "Go To" (bottom right corner of window).

Rather than concentrating on the time display, you can just scroll to the beginning of the red bar ("XMTR gate 1"), but it's easy to get lost and up in a different scan!

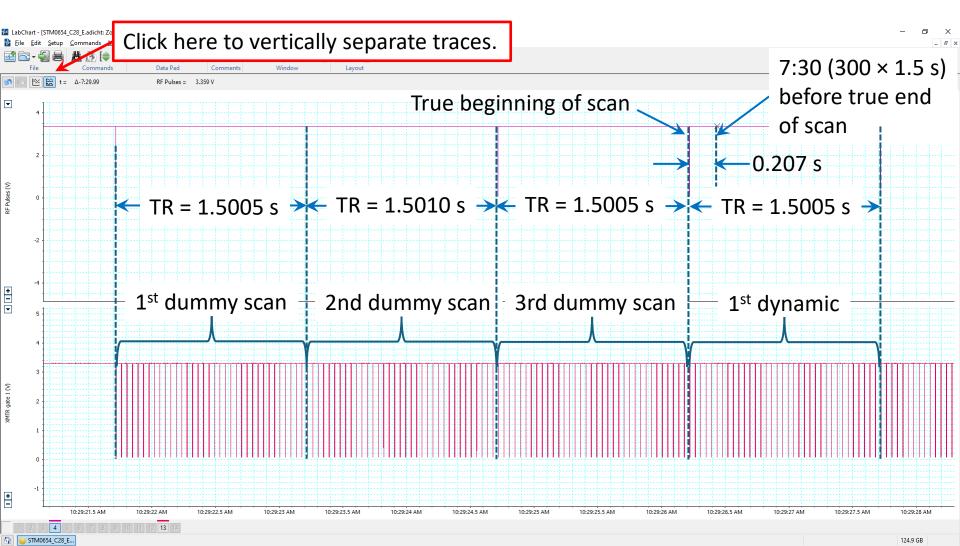
### Step 4: Locate the beginning of the block of data to export.

- At the beginning of a fMRI EPI scan, there are three "dummy" dynamics. These are used to reach steady-state magnetization and should not be exported.
- From the marker you placed at the end of the scan, scroll to the left until the top right window shows "- $\Delta$ 7:30". This is the expected beginning of dynamic 1, since 300 dynamics × 1.5 s = 450 s = 7 min 30 s.

#### Zoom in on the first five marker pulses in channel 4.



Again, we can see the logic pulses for each slice. The actual time between marker pulses is not 1.5 s but longer by 0.5-1.0 ms (digitization rate of 0.5 ms/point). This difference accumulates so that the true beginning of scan is more than 450 s before true end of scan. **This difference of 207 ms seems to be consistent.** 



#### Conclusions: Locating ends of data block

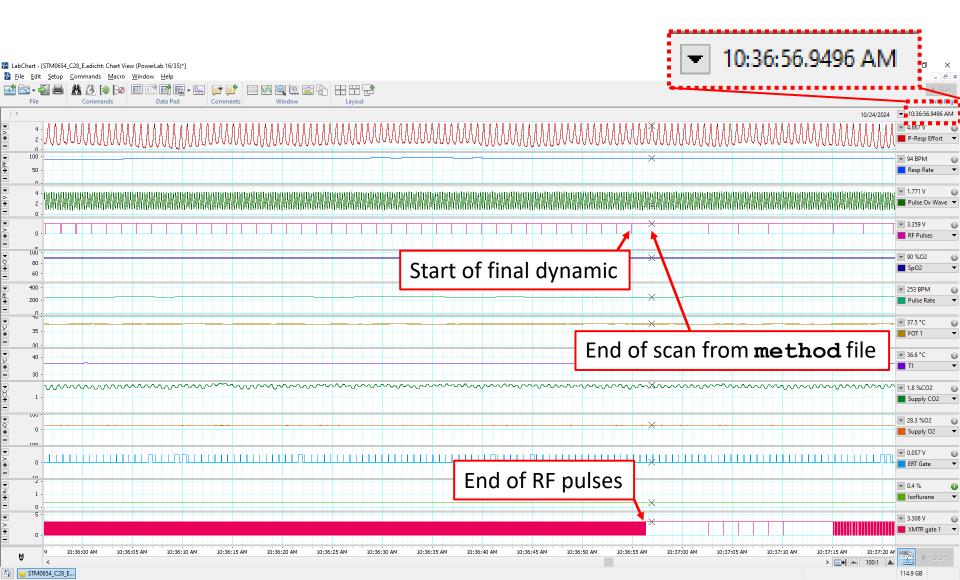
- 1. The header time from a scan's ParaVision method file is later than the actual end-of-scan by a variable amount. The method time can be used to find the correct block of data to analyze, distinguishing it from other scans.
- 2. The true end-of-scan can be marked by counting 1.5 s after the beginning of the final marker pulse.
- 3. The true beginning-of-scan is actually 450.207 s before the true end-of-scan. The beginning of the scan can easily be marked by skipping the first 3 (dummy) pulses and zooming in on the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> marker pulse.

#### Recommended Procedure for Marking Beginning and End of Scan

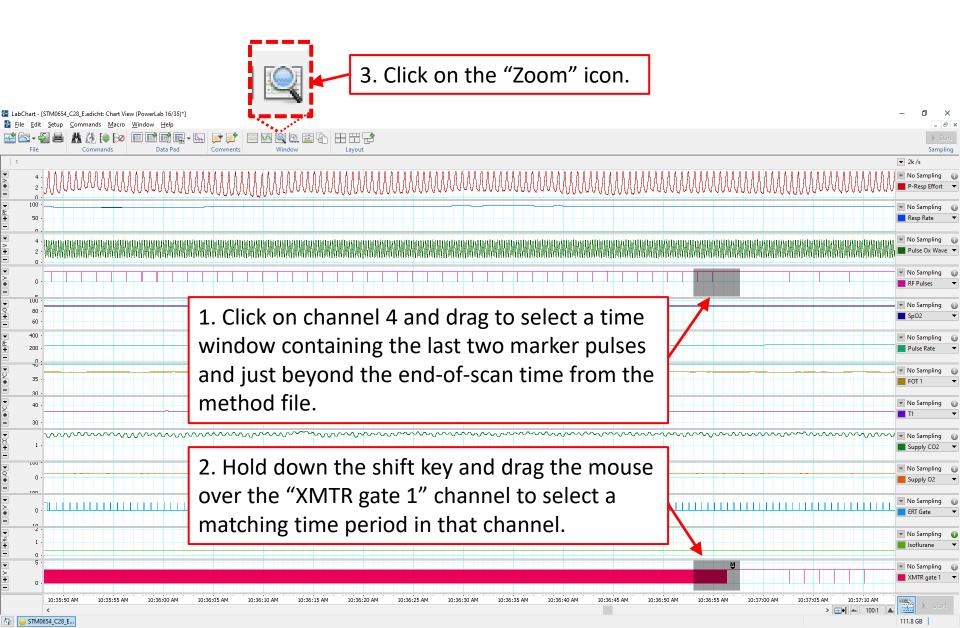
#### Recommended procedure to find true end-of-scan

- 1. Use the time in the header of the scan's method file to approximately locate the end of the scan in LabChart.
- 2. Zoom in from just before the last marker pulse (marking the beginning of the final dynamic) to a time well beyond the end of the XMTR gate 1 pulses.
- 3. Zoom in closely around the last marker pulse and set a marker.
- 4. Zoom out, then zoom in around the end of the XMTR gate 1 pulses and set the marker to 1.5 s after the previous marker. Enter a comment "End of scan" at this point. This should be one more "slice interval" after the last XMTR pulse.

Scroll to approximate end-of-scan time from method file. This will be just after the block of physiological data for that scan.



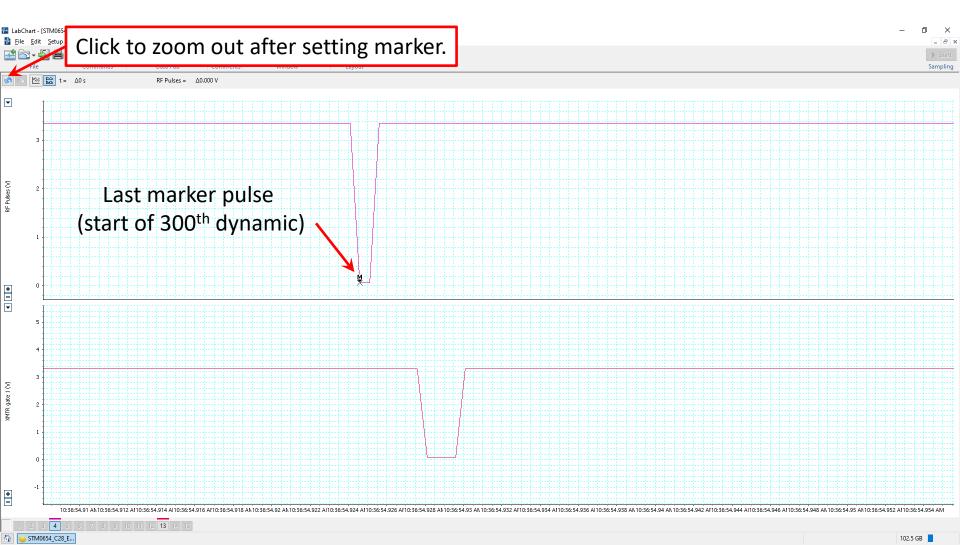
#### Zoom in around the end of the scan.



#### Zoom in closely around the last marker pulse.



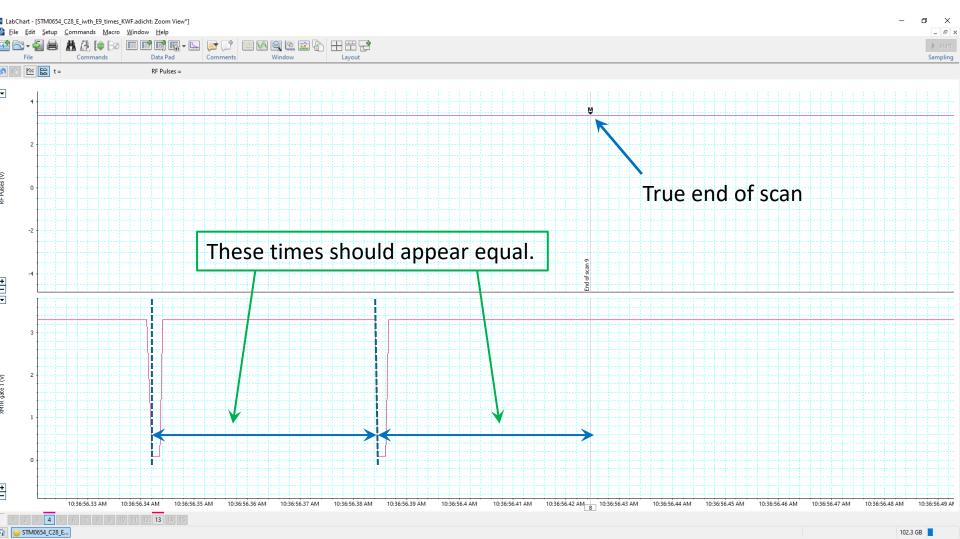
Now, we can see each data point. Move the cursor to the first data point of the marker pulse, right-click and choose "Set Marker".



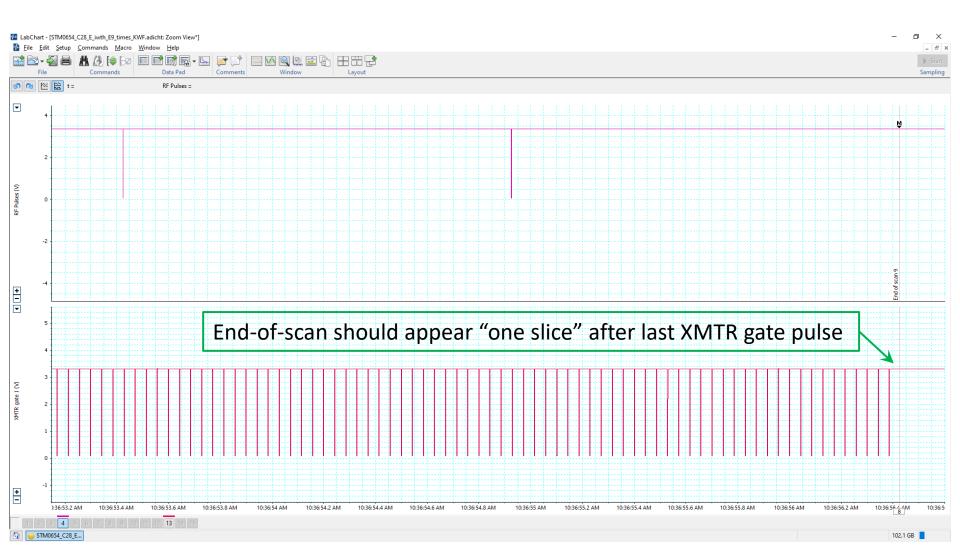
Zoom out, then move the cursor until the time display (top left) reads  $\Delta 1.5s$ . Draw a box just a little to the left and right of this point to zoom in. Include the last two or more XMTR gate 1 pulses .



# Now move the cursor to exactly $\Delta 1.5s$ , right click and set a marker and a comment: "End of scan".



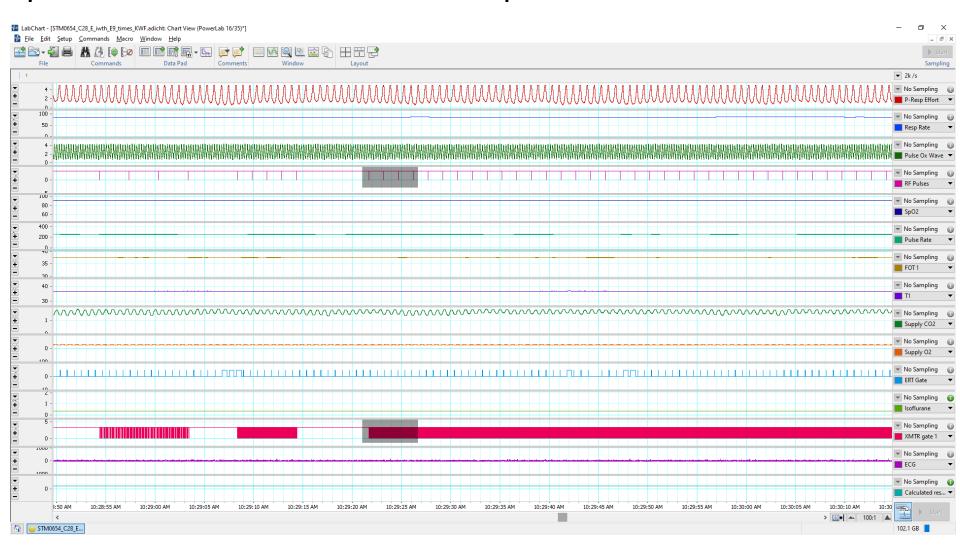
# Zoom out and you should see something like this:



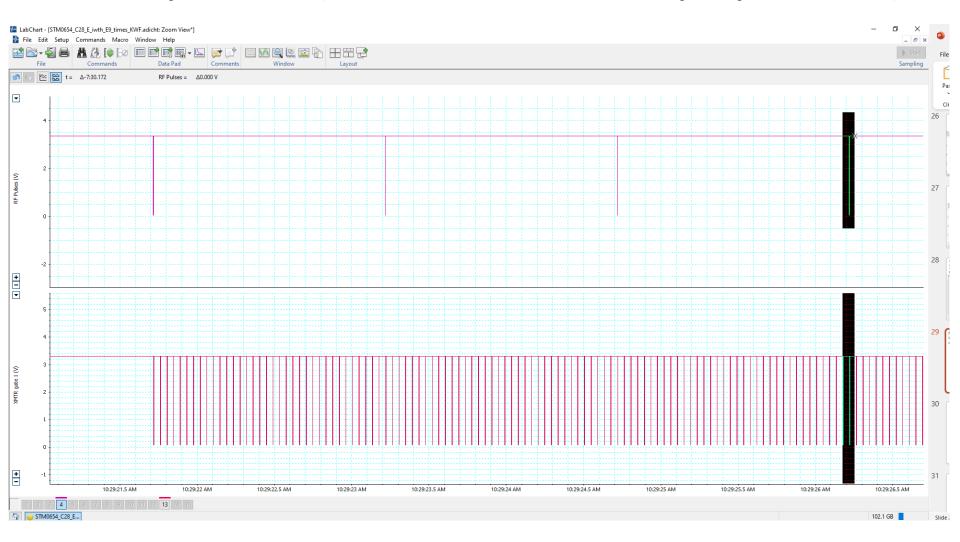
### Recommended procedure to find true beginning-of-scan

- 1. Close Zoom window and return to Chart view.
- 2. Scroll to beginning of scan (block of continuous pulses in XMTR gate 1 trace), then zoom in around first four marker pulses.
- 3. Zoom in around the fourth marker pulse and enter comment "Beginning of scan" at the beginning of that pulse. The time counter should read  $\Delta = -7:30.207$ .

Return to Chart View and scroll until the time display reads approximately  $\Delta 7:30$ . This is close to the beginning of the scan. Zoom in on an interval a little before the first marker pulse to a little after the fourth pulse.



Now zoom in closely around the fourth marker pulse, which marks the beginning of the first fMRI dynamic (after three dummy dynamics).



Move the cursor to the beginning of the fourth marker pulse, right click and add comment: "Beginning of scan". Time display should read  $\Delta$ -7:30.207 at this point.



#### **Quality Control Procedures**

# Checking data quality before exporting

- The "Resp Rate" and "Pulse Rate" (as well as SpO2 and FOT)
  data are calculated by PC-SAM, converted to analog signals,
  and digitized by PowerLab.
- Sometimes, especially if the respiratory effort or pulse signal becomes weak or changes suddenly in baseline, amplitude or phase, PC-SAM may make an error in calculating the rate.
- PC-SAM reports the running average respiration or pulse rate over several cycles, so an error in calculating the instantaneous rate may persist for several seconds.
- Scroll through the data from beginning to end, checking for continuous, smoothly varying respiration and pulse rate within a sensible physiological range (respiration 30-100 BPM and pulse 250-400 BPM for rats).

# Looking at the entire duration of scan 9, all seems OK!



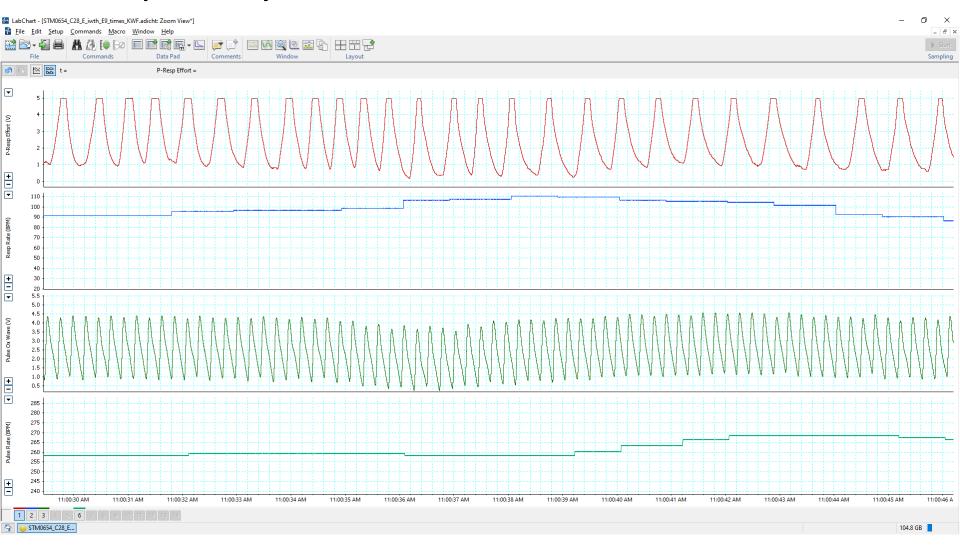
### In scan 10, there were some anomalies worth checking out.



Here, there was a single irregular breath, which caused the calculated respiration rate to dip for about 10 s. The pulse signal and pulse rate also dipped, so this looks like a real physiological event. No recalculation needed.



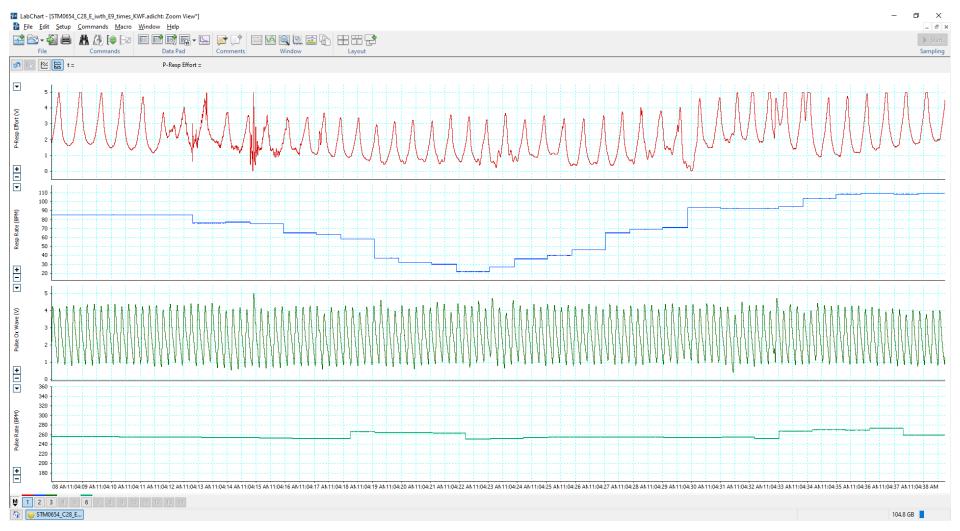
Here, there was a brief acceleration in breathing, but due to the moving time average, it isn't evident in the respiratory rate trace until several seconds later.



This is a similar example, but here, the pulse oximeter signal decreased briefly. This is due to automatic gain adjustment of the pulse signal by PC-SAM and is not a physiological anomaly.

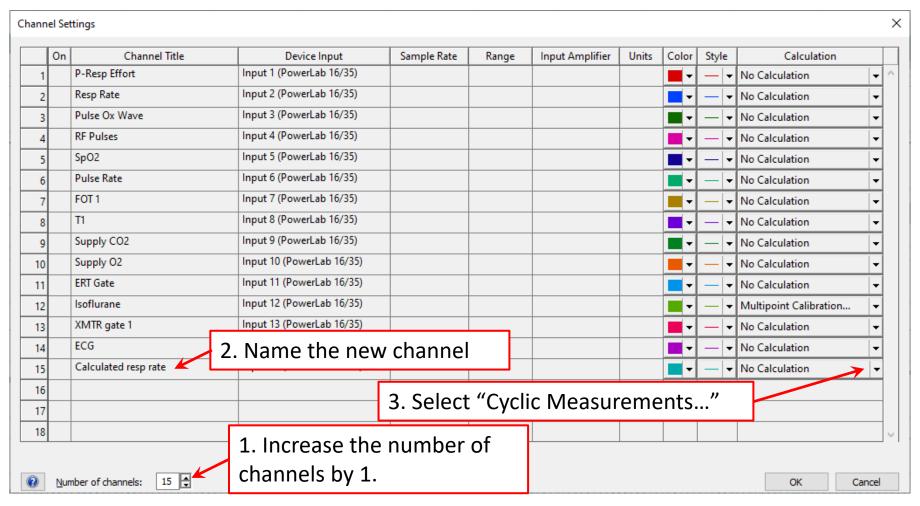


Here, as the respiratory effort signal gets smaller and its baseline drifts, PC-SAM underestimates the respiration rate. LabChart may be able to calculate the correct rates here, after the fact.

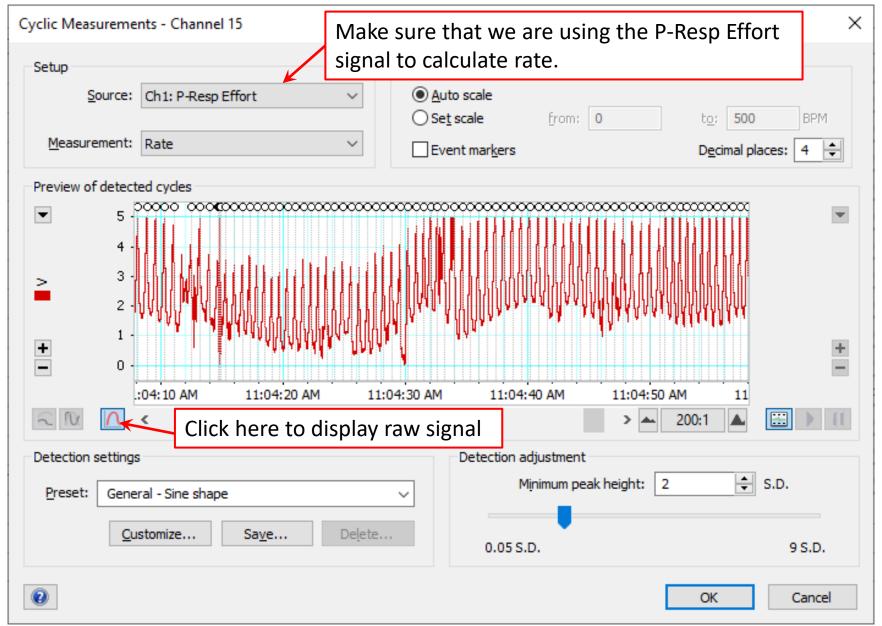


### Calculating rate data in LabChart

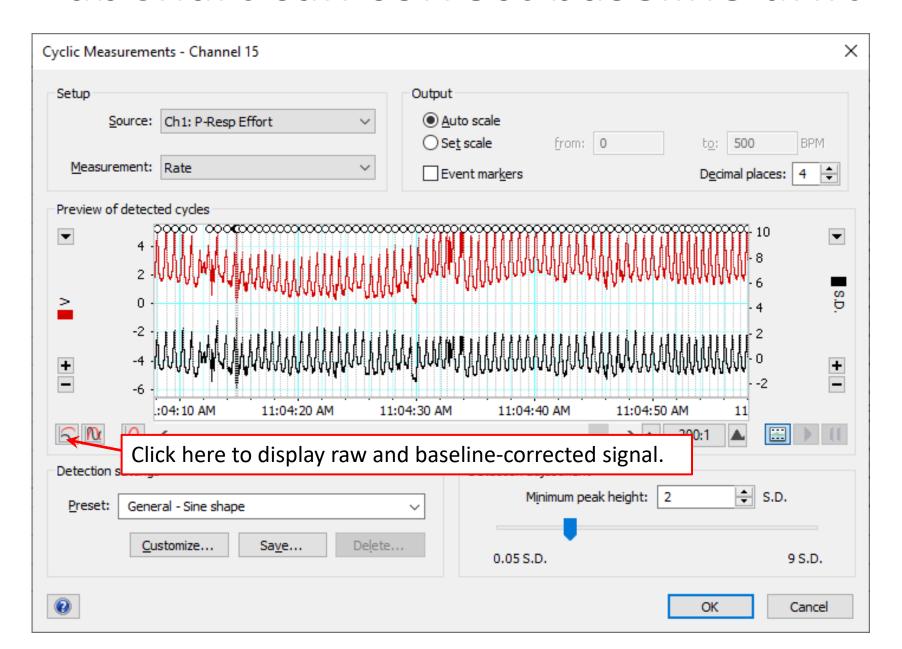
 First, create a new channel to store the calculated rate data: Setup -> Channel Settings



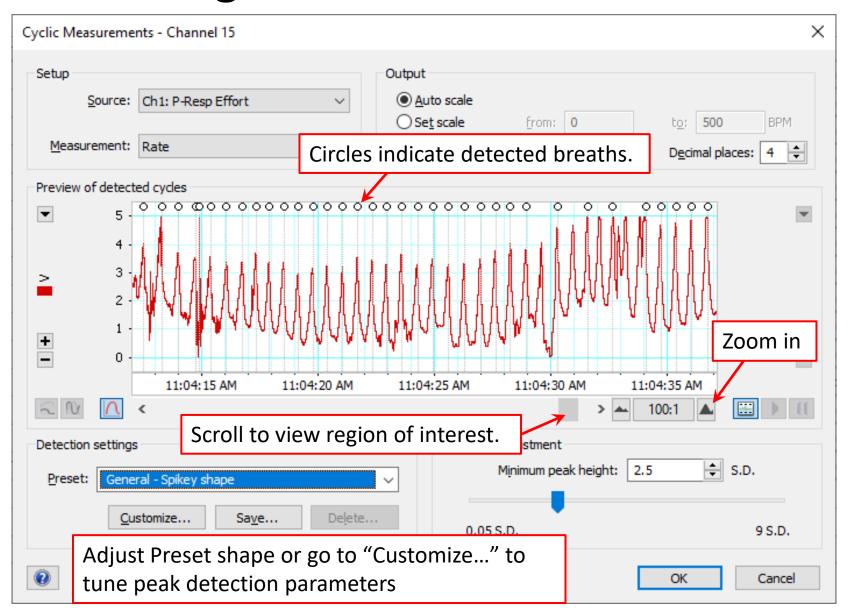
#### Cyclic Measurements Window



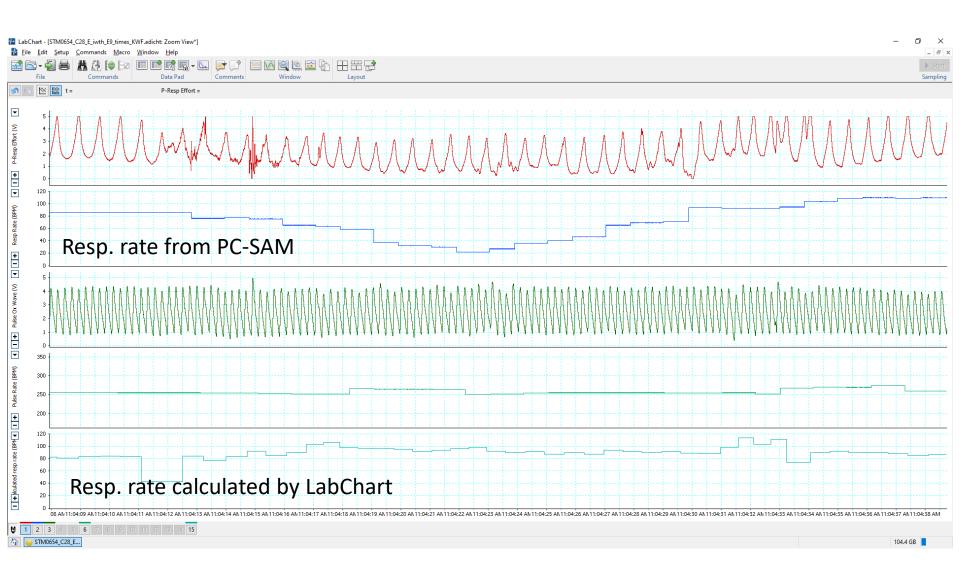
#### LabChart can correct baseline drift



### Use the zoom control and slider to locate a region with bad rate data



On closing the "Cyclic Measurements" and "Chart Settings..." windows, the calculated respiration rate is shown in the new, bottom trace.



### **Exporting Data to a Text File**

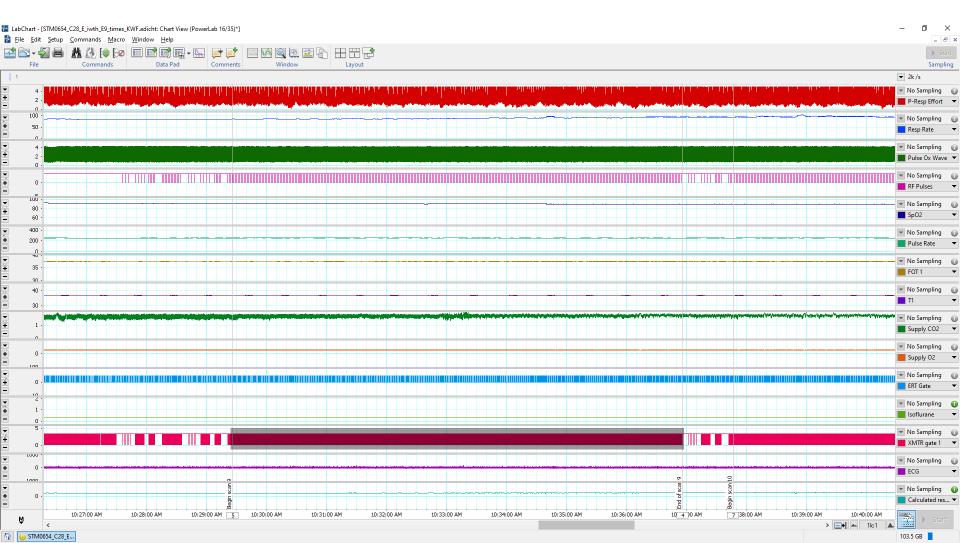
# Challenges to exporting the physiological data that exactly correspond to each MRI scan

- When selecting data to export, you can't position the cursor with sufficient accuracy to exactly match the true beginning and end of the scan.
- There doesn't seem to be a way to zoom in and out without clearing the selection.
- LabChart doesn't seem to let you type in bounds for exporting data.
- Since we do know the exact beginning and end time, we can export data from a little before to a little after the scan, then trim the data to the correct times.

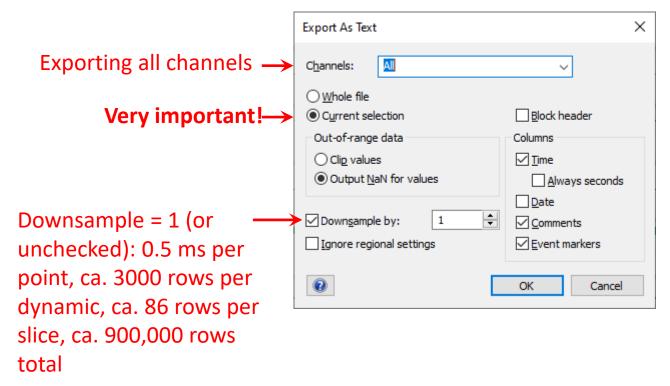
At a zoom factor of 1k:1 in LabChart, you can see the entire record for one fMRI EPI scan. At this zoom factor, the scan seems to contain a continuous block of XMTR gate 1 pulses.



On the XMTR gate 1 trace, select an interval from just before the beginning of scan 9 to just after end-of-scan, as determined earlier.



## Choose "File->Export..." and name the exported text file. Next, adjust export settings as shown below.

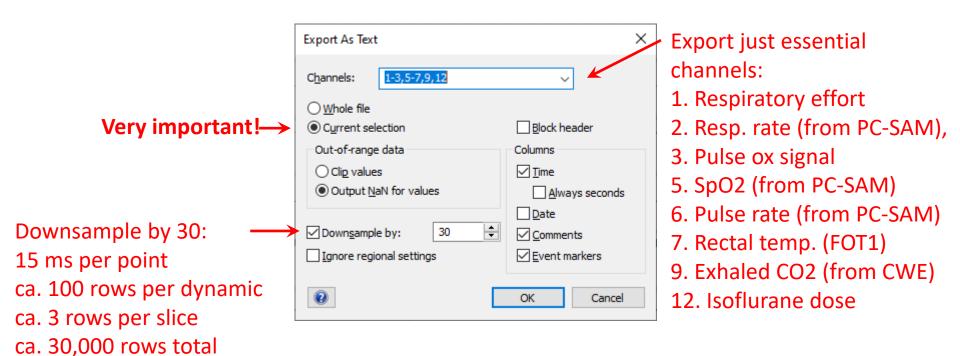


These settings export data from all channels at all sampled points in the selected interval.

<u>Pro</u>: Users can see the logic pulses on channel (one per dynamic) and channel 13 (XMTR gate 1; one per slice) to precisely locate data.

**Con**: The resulting text file takes several minutes to export and is huge (128 MB!)

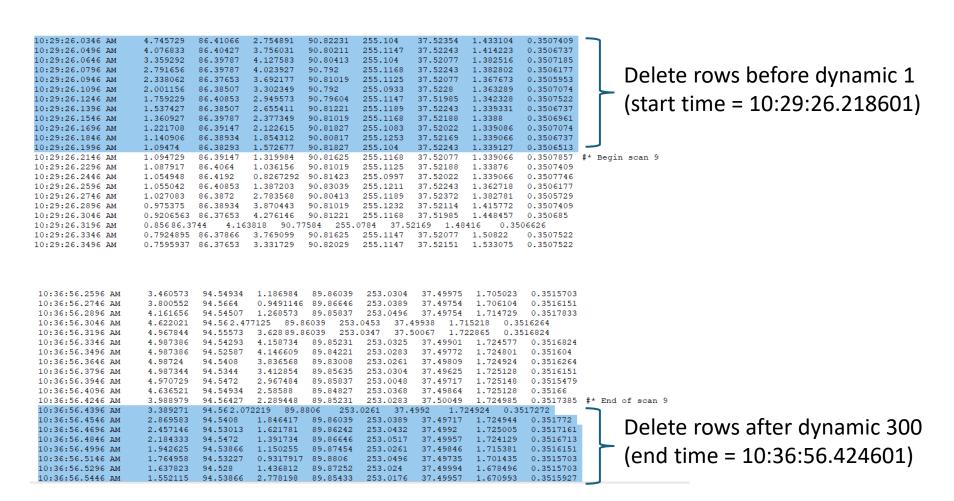
# To save time and space, data may be downsampled and only useful channels exported.



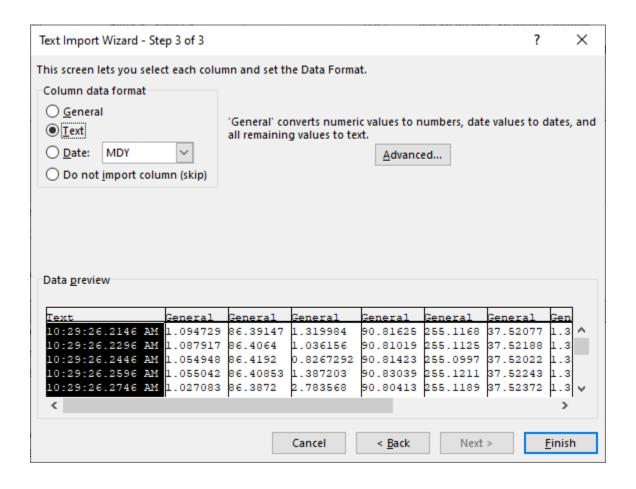
**Pro**: Export much faster and exported text file is much smaller (2.6 MB).

<u>Con</u>: The time per point is too long to reliably digitize the logic pulses, so they are not usable for locating individual dynamics or slices. However, these can be located by calculating time from the beginning or end of the scan.

## Using the start and stop times from the Comments window in LabChart, trim the exported text file to exclude data before dynamic 1 or after end-of-scan.



When importing data into Excel, specify first (time) column as text since Excel times do not show fractional seconds.



### Final result: Physiological data for E9!

