

REAL-TIME IMPLEMENTATION OF TWELVE-LEAD AUTOMATED
ELECTROCARDIOGRAM SYSTEM MEASUREMENT FOR QT DISPERSION
ANALYSIS

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To my beloved mother, father, wife and son for their great patience

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ABSTRACT

Research and study of the electrocardiogram evolves with the advancement of digital signal processing and artificial intelligence. Unfortunately, readily available electrocardiogram machines in the market do not provide automated measurement of the QT dispersion. Therefore, a twelve-lead electrocardiogram system is developed in order to assist the cardiologists in carrying out their research on the cardiac diseases. The development of the system consists of several phases. The first phase includes the construction of a real-time twelve channels data acquisition unit with the universal serial bus (USB) interface. The following phase includes the study and development of the electrocardiogram signal conditioning circuits. The third phase is the study of the designed anti-aliasing filters and its effect to the electrocardiogram distortion. The Butterworth and the Bessel filters, each with orders of two four and eight are compared and the 8th order Bessel low pass filter appears to be the best candidate. The subsequent phase is the implementation of the time-domain subtraction technique to remove the power line noise in the electrocardiogram signal with minimal distortion. The filter is compared to a notch Twin-T filter, and results showed that not only the time-domain subtraction technique suppresses noise, it also preserves the original signal with minimal distortion. The automated QT interval measurement algorithm is validated upon an annotated standard database, the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) Diagnostic Electrocardiogram database which is being the focused for the International QT Interval Challenge 2006. Result shows that 28.53% of the database is correctly identified for the QRS onset and T offset locations due to the dissimilar morphologies of the electrocardiogram signal.

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan dalam bidang elektrokardiogram berubah dengan perkembangan teknologi pemrosesan isyarat digital dan kepintaran buatan. Malangnya, mesin elektrokardiogram yang berada di pasaran tidak menyediakan pengukuran nilai percambahan QT secara automatik. Oleh itu, sebuah system elektrokardiogram dua belas elektrod dibangunkan bagi memudahkan tugas-tugas pakar-pakar jantung dalam melaksanakan penyelidikan mereka berkenaan penyakit-penyakit jantung. Pembangunan sistem ini terdiri daripada beberapa fasa. Fasa pertama melibatkan pembangunan unit perolehan isyarat dua belas elektrod melalui pengantaramukaan bas sesiri sejagat (USB). Fasa seterusnya terdiri daripada kerja-kerja pembangunan sistem pengkondisi isyarat analog bagi elektrokardiogram. Fasa ketiga adalah pengkajian dalam menentukan penapis jalur tinggi dan kesannya terhadap isyarat elektrokardiogram. Penapis Butterworth dan Bessel dua, empat dan lapan tingkat dibandingkan dan didapati penapis Bessel tingkat lapan merupakan penapis yang terbaik. Fasa seterusnya adalah implementasi teknik *time-domain subtraction* dalam menyahkan hingar talian kuasa dengan kadar herotan yang minima. Teknik ini dibandingkan dengan penapis takuk *Twin-T* dan keputusan menunjukkan teknik *time-domain subtraction* berjaya menapis hingar dengan keadaan yang hampir tiada herotan. Algoritma pengukuran sela QT diuji akan keberkesanannya dengan menggunakan pangkalan data elektrokardiogram *Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) Diagnostic* yang mana menjadi tumpuan dalam pertandingan *International QT Interval Challenge 2006*. Keputusan menunjukkan 28.53% daripada isyarat elektrokardiogram tersebut berjaya ditentukan kedudukan Q dan T dengan tepat. Ini adalah disebabkan morfologi isyarat elektrokardiogram yang berlainan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	DECLARATION	ii
	DEDICATION	iii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
	ABSTRACT	v
	ABSTRAK	vi
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
	LIST OF TABLES	x
	LIST OF FIGURES	xi
	LIST OF SYMBOLS	xv
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xvi
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xviii
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.0 Introduction	1
	1.1 Background of Research Problem	2
	1.2 Objectives	3
	1.3 Scopes	4
	1.4 Thesis Organization	5
2	ELECTROCARDIOGRAM SIGNAL CONDITIONING	7
	2.0 Introduction	7

2.1	The Sources and Representations of the ECG	8
2.2	Obtaining and Deriving the Standard Twelve ECG Leads	10
2.3	ECG Circuits Review	15
2.4	ECG Systems	20
2.5	Performance Standards and Measures	24
3	POWER-LINE NOISE REMOVAL, AND QRS ONSET AND T OFFSET POINTS DETECTION	27
3.0	Introduction	27
3.1	Power-Line Noise Removal in ECG	28
3.1.1	Power Line Noise Removal Summary	33
3.2	QRS Onset and T Offset Points Detection	34
4	TWELVE-LEAD ECG SYSTEM DESIGN	39
4.0	Introduction	39
4.1	The Twelve Channels Data Acquisition Unit	41
4.1.1	Analogue Multiplexer and Analogue-to-Digital Converter	42
4.1.2	Universal Serial Bus PC Interface	45
4.1.3	The Data Acquisition Unit System Design	47
4.1.4	Firmware Programming and Data Formats	48
4.1.5	Acquiring USB Data in PC Software	51
4.2	Twelve-lead Analogue Electrocardiogram Signal Conditioning System	54
4.2.1	Instrumentation Amplifier	54
4.2.2	DC Restore Circuit	56
4.2.3	Isolation Amplifier	57
4.2.4	Anti-aliasing Filter	58

4.2.5	Wilson and Goldberger Resistor Network	62
4.2.6	Driven Right Leg Circuit	63
4.2.7	The Integration	64
4.2.8	Power-Line Noise Removal	67
	4.2.8.1 Twin-T Analogue Notch Filter	67
	4.2.8.2 Time Domain Subtraction	69
4.3	Validation of the QT Interval Algorithm	71
5	RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS	73
5.0	Introduction	73
5.1	Mean Absolute Error and Mean Square Error	73
5.2	The Anti-aliasing Filter	74
5.3	The Power-line Noise Removal	76
5.4	Validation of the QT Points Detection	78
6	CONCLUSIONS	88
6.0	Introduction	88
6.1	Conclusions	89
6.2	Future Works	90
	6.2.1 Low Power Analogue Front End (AFE)	91
	6.2.2 ECG Morphology Detection Algorithm	91
	6.2.3 QT Measurement Algorithm for Non- Typical ECG	92
	6.2.4 Malaysian ECG Database	92
	REFERENCES	93
	Appendices A – D	97–126

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Technical Specifications of the PC-ECG Card, Hovenga et. al. (1996)	20
2.2	ANSI-AAMI EC11-1991 Performance Requirements for ECG	25
2.3	IEC Safety Standards for ECG Equipment IEC601-2-25	26
3.1	The PTB ECG Database Subjects According to the Diagnostic Class	37
4.1	Different Low Pass Filter Configuration for the Experiment	61
4.2	Various Clean Simulated Signals from 217A Patient Simulator	62
4.3	List of R3 and R4 values for Varying Depth of Twin-T Notch Filter	68
5.1	Averaged Mean Absolute Error for Anti-Aliasing Filter Design	75
5.2	Averaged Mean Square Error for Anti-Aliasing Filter Design	75
5.3	High Cut-Off Frequency Rejection in dB	75
5.4	MAE, MSE and Rejection (dB) of Notch Filter and TDS	77
5.5	Errors from the Q and T Detection Algorithm	79
5.6	Accuracy of Q and T Detection Algorithm	80

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Typical Electrocardiogram on a Strip Paper	8
2.2	Atrial Flutter	9
2.3	Atrial Fibrillation	9
2.4	Premature Ventricular Contraction	10
2.5	Right Bundle-Branch Block	10
2.6	Einthoven Limb Leads and Einthoven's Triangle, Malmivuo and Plonsey (1995)	11
2.7	The Electrocardiogram and Vectorcardiogram in the Einthoven Limb Leads, Malmivuo and Plonsey (1995)	12
2.8	Wilson Central Terminal Representing Average of the Limb potentials, Malmivuo and Plonsey (1995)	13
2.9	Circuit of the Goldberger Augmented Limb Leads, Malmivuo and Plonsey (1995)	13
2.10	Precordial Chest Leads Electrodes Locations, Malmivuo and Plonsey (1995)	14
2.11	Schematic of Single Supply Biopotential Amplifier, Spinelli et. al. (2001)	17
2.12	AC-Coupled Front End for a Single Supply ECG Amplifier, Spinelli et. al. (2003)	18
2.13	Automated Gain Adaption for Enhancing Interference Rejection, Degen and Jackel (2004)	19

2.14	Schematic Block Diagram of the PC-ECG Card, Hovenga et. al. (1996)	21
2.15	Portable PC-based System with USB Interface, Zoric and Ilic (2005)	22
2.16	Block Diagram of Analogue Front-End System for Neural Signal, Obeid et. al. (2003)	23
2.17	Schematic of Analogue Signal Conditioning Circuit, Obeid et. al. (2003)	23
2.18	IEC Symbols for Patient Safety. a) Body protected. Class BF. b) Cardiac Protected. Class CF. Ability to withstand defibrillation without damage	26
3.1	Capacitance Developed Allows Induction of Power Line Frequency	28
3.2	Twin-T Notch Filter and its Frequency Response, Bai et. al. (2003)	29
3.3	Average Error Rate versus R/2 Resistor Plot, Bai et. al. (2003)	29
3.4	Magnitude response of a) FIR Notch Filter, b) FIR Comb Filter and c) FIR Equiripple Filter, Bai et al (2004)	30
3.5	Distortion Caused by Notch Filter with filtered signal shifted up for better separation, Hejjel (2003)	32
3.6	Power Line Filter Proposed by Ziarani et al (2002)	33
3.7	QRS onset and T Offset Detection. a) Zero Crossing Between AR and BR Determine the R Peak Location. b) The T Offset Threshold and the Search Window Base on the Concurrent Average Heart Rate, Malarvili (2004)	36
4.1	Flowchart of Research Methodology	41
4.2	MPC506 Multiplexer Functional Block Diagram	43
4.3	ADS7806 Interface Diagram	44
4.4	ADS7806 Timing Diagram	45

4.5	DLP-USB245M Functional Block Diagram	47
4.6	Block Diagram of Developed Data Acquisition Unit	48
4.7	Flowchart for Programming of PIC16F84A-20/P Microcontroller	49
4.8	Data Packet of 24 Bytes for Transfer to PC via USB interface	49
4.9	Timing Distribution of Firmware Program	50
4.10	Time Setting to Achieve Equal Sampling Rate of 500 Samples per Second for each channel	51
4.11	Flowchart for Receiving Data Packet at the PC USB Buffer	53
4.12	Internal Structure of Instrumentation Amplifier INA118	55
4.13	The Instrumentation Amplifier and the DC-Restore Circuit	57
4.14	Isolation Amplifier Block Diagram	58
4.15	FilterPro By Texas Instrument. (a) Butterworth Filter Implementation (b) Bessel Filter with Flat Group Delay in the Pass Band	60
4.16	Experiment Setup for Selection of Optimal Anti-Aliasing Filter	61
4.17	Front-end Circuit Prior to the Signal Conditioning. a) Buffer Amplifiers with Current Limiting Resistors. b) Wilson and Goldberger Resistor Network	63
4.18	Driven Right Leg and Cable Shielding	64
4.19	Twelve-lead Electrocardiogram Front-end	65
4.20	The Electrocardiogram Signal Conditioning Core. (a) the limb and augmented limb leads derived from the Goldberger resistors network. (b) the pre-cordial leads derived from the Wilson Central Terminal and the chest electrodes	66
4.21	Twin-T Notch Filter Circuit	68

4.22	Experiment Setup for Study of the Effect of the Twin-T Notch Filter	69
4.23	Experiment Setup for Time-Domain Subtraction Power Line Removal Analysis	71
5.1	Typical ECG for Normal Subject from file 497	81
5.2	ECG for Normal Subject with Another form of Q wave. File 337 with Q Error of 16ms	81
5.3	Accurate Detection of T Offset on file 491	82
5.4	Misdetection of T Offset on file 478 due to Threshold Setting	83
5.5	ECG File 337 with Motion Artifact	84
5.6	ECG File 48 with MI with noise and different morphology	85
5.7	ECG File 1 with another different morphology	85
5.8	ECG File 86 of MI Patient with 'Bad' QRS Complex	86

LIST OF SYMBOLS

V	-	Volt
A	-	Ampere
Hz	-	Hertz
dB	-	Decibel
V/V	-	Volt/Volt
s	-	second
τ	-	Time Constant
π	-	Pi
Ω	-	Ohm
Φ_L	-	Left Arm Potential
Φ_R	-	Right Arm Potential
Φ_F	-	Left Foot Potential
F	-	Farad

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAMI	-	Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation
AC	-	Alternating Current
ADC	-	Analogue to Digital Converter
AFE	-	Analog Front-End
AHA	-	American Heart Association
ANSI	-	American National Standards Institute
bps	-	Bit per second
CinC	-	Computers In Cardiology
CMRR	-	Common Mode Rejection Ratio
DC	-	Direct Current
DLL	-	Dynamic Link Library
DRL	-	Driven Right Leg
ECG	-	Electrocardiogram
EEG	-	Electroencephalogram
EMG	-	Electromyogram
EMI	-	Electromagnetic Interference
EOG	-	Electrooculogram
FIR	-	Finite Impulse Response
GUI	-	Graphical User Interface

HRV	-	Heart Rate Variability
HUKM	-	Hospital Kebangsaan Malaysia
IC	-	Integrated Chip
IEC	-	International Electrotechnical Commission
LSB	-	Least Significant Bit
MAE	-	Mean Absolute Error
MI	-	Myocardium Infarction
MIT-BIH	-	Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Beth Israel Hospital
MSE	-	Mean Square Error
PC	-	Personal Computer
PCB	-	Printed Circuit Board
QTc	-	QT Corrected
QTd	-	QT Dispersion
TDS	-	Time Domain Subtraction
USB	-	Universal Serial Bus
WCT	-	Wilson Central Terminal

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
A	Schematic/Pin Assignments Of USB Data Acquisition Unit And Source Code	97
B	ADS7806 and DLP-USB245M Timing Diagram	102
C	Complete Listing of Q and T Points Detection Errors	111
D	Conference Paper	119

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Electrocardiogram (ECG) is a popular non-invasive method of accessing the electrical activity of the heart. It is recorded from body surfaces particularly at the limbs and chest of a subject. Numerous arrhythmias can be studied and identified by means of interpreting the ECG. By interpreting the ECG, cardiologists are able to examine the electrical cycle of the heart and therefore they are able to understand the condition of the heart. The Myocardium Infarction (MI) or commonly known as the “heart attack” is one of the fatal cardiac arrhythmias at which the cardiologists are putting their attention to.

Recently, research has shown that MI has close relations with the QT dispersion index. Even though the QT dispersion has been identified as not being able to relate to the MI a few years ago due to unreliable and imprecise manual T offset detection, the measurement has been brought back with a new breathe using the digital computer system which measurements are repetitive and reliable. Therefore, an algorithm needs to be develop where it detects the Q onset and T offset

with validation from the cardiologists and in which the deviation between automated and manual measurement is minimized.

1.1 Background of Research Problem

Currently, cardiologists particularly in Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (HUKM) are manually measuring the QT intervals of patients from strip paper recorded by ECG machines. It is from the twelve QT intervals from twelve ECG leads that the cardiologists derived the QT dispersion index. Since QT has the potential to indicate or predict upcoming MI event in a patient, it is almost impractical for the cardiologists to do manual measurement of the QT intervals of a large number of patients repetitively from time to time.

Therefore, there is a need for a device that monitors continuously the QT dispersion reliably in order to look out for the Myocardial Infarction. Various algorithms can be implemented ranging from simple R peak detection to complex artificial intelligence in diagnosing cardiac disorders from the ECG. In order to develop a system, an annotated database is crucial as a reference for the algorithm in development which will later serve to automatically detect the P, Q, R, S, T points and other important parameters as well as aiding the cardiologists in determining the cardiac disorders within a short period as compared with doing it manually.

ECG databases can be obtained free from online sources such as Physionet or can be bought at an extremely high cost. However, the databases are collected from and represent the cardiac disorders of patients from the sourcing country. Therefore this does not fit well in systems where they will be implemented locally. A Malaysian annotated ECG database shared amongst local biomedical system

developers will be of great assistance in gearing Malaysia towards achieving a status of becoming a competitive nation in the field of biomedical engineering.

A challenge that must be confronted in developing an ECG database is that the data collected must be reliable. The data collected must represent the actual electrical activity in the heart with minimal noise and distortion from the data collecting device. Factors introducing noise are the surrounding power line noise, electro magnetic interference from nearby devices, and also from the patients such as the baseline wander and the motion artifacts. Noises from the patients can be overcome by educating the patient and by clinically preparing the skin and electrodes prior to recording. Noises, especially the power line noise, need to be removed electronically using analogue filters and amplifiers. The filters and amplifiers have to be carefully designed and selected as they could introduce distortions to the signal of interest.

A data acquisition unit is essential when an effort to develop a database is taken into commitment. It is necessary to design a data acquisition unit is so as to achieve a low cost data collection system that can be distributed to all the local hospitals and clinics. The developed data acquisition unit will allow unlimited access in terms of customizations, modifications, and applications. The developed data acquisition PC software which usually pairs up with the data acquisition device will also allow unlimited integration of ECG parameters detection and diagnose algorithms into the system.

1.2 Objectives

In order to solve the research problems, the following objectives are identified as follows:-

1. To develop a PC-based data acquisition unit to be used as a platform to develop the ECG database.
2. To design and develop an analogue signal conditioning circuit. This is the interface between the patient and the data acquisition unit.
3. To compare the level of signal distortion in ECG signals when applying low pass filters designed using the Filter Pro software (Texas Instruments)
4. To compare the performance of the analogue notch filter and the digital power line noise removal filter.
5. To integrate the QT dispersion indexing software (Malarvili, 2004) into the developed data acquisition software.
6. To evaluate the QRS onset and T offset detection algorithm using the annotated PTB Diagnostic ECG database

At the end of this research, a platform for the development of ECG system with regard to designing portable ECG devices and algorithms for automatic cardiac diagnosis is made available for future research works. This will also make ready a system for developing a local ECG database.

1.3 Scopes

In order to achieve the above outlines, this research is carried out as follows

1. The data acquisition device is developed using the PIC16F84A assembly language and the sampling is time division multiplexed.
2. The PC software for the data acquisition device is developed using Microsoft Visual C++ 6.0 platform and function to preview, record and playback. Display of the signal during preview and record is shown in real-time scrolling state.

3. The developed signal conditioning circuit for interfacing to the patients is limited to allow only recording of the diagnostic ECG and consist of twelve ECG leads.
4. The low-pass filter for anti-aliasing purposes is designed using the FilterPro software made available by Texas Instrument Inc. The filter characteristics are designed around the Sallen-Key configuration.
5. The comparison of the performance of low-pass filters utilizes simulated ECG signals for persistency.
6. The QRS onset and T offset detection technique implemented in the data acquisition software and evaluated using the PTB Diagnostic ECG database applies the algorithm developed previously (Malarvili, 2004).

1.4 Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized into six chapters. The current chapter describes the introduction of this research, the overview of the research background and problems as well as the objectives and scopes of this research.

The second chapter brings the reader into the literature review in the field of ECG and the research works done regarding the data acquisition system, and the signal conditioning circuits design for acquiring a reliable ECG signals.

Chapter 3 highlights the research works on the ECG focusing on digital signal processing in removing power-line noise and algorithms in detecting the P, Q, R, S and T waves and peaks in the signal.

In chapter 4, the methodology of the research is discussed in detail. This includes the design of the data acquisition unit, the ECG signal conditioning system,

the experiments carried out in order to determine an optimal ECG system, and the validation of the QRS onset and T offset detection algorithm on the annotated PTB Diagnostic ECG database.

The fifth chapter presents the results of the experiments carried out in chapter four and the analyses are brought into discussion. Base on these results, an optimal twelve-lead ECG system is designed.

Chapter 6, the conclusion, summarizes the research works done for this thesis and put forward suggestions for future works in the development of the automated ECG diagnosis system.