Chu and Wong Respond: We are grateful to Katz and Alfano[1] for pointing out the pulse compression in our data.[2] We will now show that the compression can be explained by the next-higher-order term in the Taylor-series expansion of the wave vector $k(\omega)$. Since the effect of pulse compression in the *linear* regime is not clearly identified in the literature, we present here a simplified version of Garrett and McCumber's[3] and Crisp's[4] analysis so that the physical significance of the Taylor-series expansion is obvious.

We model the absorption line at ω_0 as a Lorentzian,[4]

$$k=\frac{n_0\omega}{c}+\frac{i\alpha T_2}{1-i(\omega-\omega_0)T_2}$$
$$\simeq\frac{n_0\omega}{c}+i\alpha T_2[1+i\Delta\omega T_2-(\Delta\omega T_2)^2+\ldots], \quad (1)$$

where T_2 includes both inhomogeneous and homoeneous broadening of the line, and $\Delta\omega=\omega-\omega_0$. The Taylor-series expansion is valid when the laser bandwidth $\Delta\nu_L \ll T_2^{-1}$ and $\omega_L\simeq\omega_0$. Let $S(\omega)$ be the input pulse profile and use the Fourier-transform method[3] to get

$$\mathcal{E}(z,t)\sim\int_{-\infty}^{\infty}S(\omega)\exp[+i(kz-\omega t)]d\omega\sim\exp(-\alpha T_2 z)\int_{-\infty}^{\infty}S(\Delta\omega)\exp[-i\Delta\omega(t-n_0z/c+\alpha T_2^2z)]$$
$$\times\exp(+\alpha\Delta\omega^2T_2^3z)d(\Delta\omega). \quad (2)$$

If we neglect the $\Delta\omega^2$ term and higher-order terms, inspection of (2) gives

$$\mathcal{E}(z,t)\sim\exp[-\alpha T_2 z\mathcal{E}(0,t'\equiv t-z/v_g)], \quad (3)$$

where $v_g\equiv d\omega/dk_r$ in the approximation of (1). Thus, the pulse propagates with the group velocity v_g even if $v_g>c$ or $\pm\infty$. The result is independent of the exact shape of $S(\Delta\omega)$ as long as $S(\Delta\omega)\sim 0$ when the approximation in (1) breaks down.

Since $\alpha\Delta\omega^2T_2^3z$ is positive, the additional term enhances the frequency wings of the laser pulse and this will result in a pulse compression. For example, a Gaussian pulse with $S(\Delta\omega)\sim\exp(-\Delta\omega^2/2t^2)$ yields

$$\mathcal{E}(z,t)\sim\exp(-t'^2/2\Delta^2),$$
$$\Delta^2\equiv 2(\tau^2/2-\alpha T_2^3z) \quad (4)$$

and t' is given by (3). Thus, the emerging pulse is a Gaussian compressed by a factor $(1-2\alpha T_2^3z/t^2)^{1/2}$ *but still traveling at the group velocity.* A 34-ps Gaussian pulse with a 48-ps autocorrelation width (full width at half maximum) propagating through our [N] $=1.5\times10^{17}$ cm^{-3} sample ($\Delta\nu_{abs}=0.16$ meV, $\alpha=5.7$) gives a cross-correlation pulse of 40 ps as observed. In our other samples our experimental results are also quantitatively consistent with (4).

As long as $\Delta\omega^3$ terms or higher can be neglected, pulse propagation still occurs at the group velocity.

Although the theoretical analysis is most easily done with Gaussian pulses, our experimental results, which were obtained with non-Gaussian pulses,[2] show that the pulse behavior does not depend strongly on the exact shape of the pulse provided that $\Delta\nu_L\ll\Delta\nu_{abs}$ and z is small. We feel that both numerical analysis and further experimental work will clarify these details.

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