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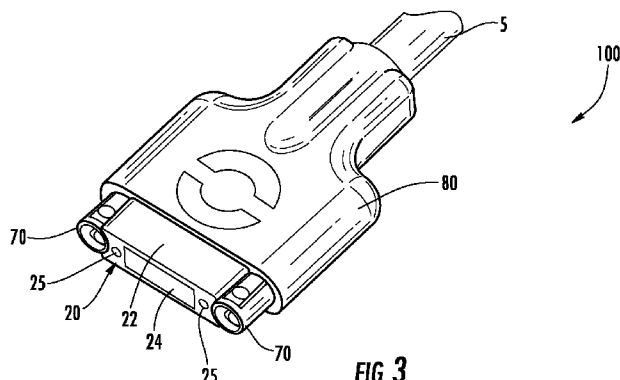


FIG. 3

(57) Abstract: Disclosed are optical plug connectors and optical receptacles for making optical connections. In one embodiment, the optical plug connector includes an optical portion having an optical interface and a cover for protecting the optical interface. The cover can translate toward the optical interface when connecting the optical plug connector and a portion of the cover allows transmission of optical signals therethrough.



OPTICAL PLUG HAVING A TRANSLATING COVER AND A COMPLIMENTARY RECEPTACLE

PRIORITY APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims the benefit of priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 61/839,172, filed on June 25, 2013, the content of which is relied upon and incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

FIELD

[0002] The disclosure is directed to optical connections for use in electronic devices. More specifically, the disclosure is directed to optical connectors such as optical plug connectors having a translating cover along with a complimentary receptacle.

BACKGROUND

[0003] As electronic devices move toward operation at faster data rates the electrical interfaces on these devices along with the electrical transmission cables will reach their bandwidth capacity limitations. Additionally, the electronic devices are trending to smaller and thinner footprints. Optical fibers have displaced copper-based connectivity in much of the traditional long-haul and metro telecommunication networks for numerous reasons such as large bandwidth capacity, dielectric characteristics and the like. As consumers require more bandwidth for consumer electronic devices such as smart phones, laptops, tablets and the like optical fibers and optical ports for optical signal transmission are being considered for replacing the conventional copper-based connectivity for these applications. However, there are significant challenges for providing optical connectivity in consumer devices compared with copper-based connectivity. By way of example, devices such as smart phones, laptops and tablets are exposed to rough handling and harsh environments and the consumer will expect optical connectivity to handle these demanding conditions. Further, these types of devices will require a large number of mating/unmating cycles during their lifetime. Consequently, optical connections for consumer application will need to be easy to clean and maintain by the user.

[0004] There is an unresolved need for optical connections that may be used for relatively small devices like typical consumer applications such personnel devices such

as smart phones, tablets and other consumer devices that have a relatively small footprint. The concepts disclosed herein solve this unresolved need for optical connections.

SUMMARY

[0005] The disclosure is directed to an optical plug connector including an optical portion having an optical interface and a cover for protecting the optical interface. The cover can translate toward the optical interface when connecting the optical plug connector and a portion of the cover allows transmission of optical signals therethrough.

[0006] The disclosure is also directed to an optical plug connector including an optical portion having an optical interface, one or more alignment pins, and a cover for protecting the optical interface. The cover includes one or more bores for receiving the one or more alignment pins, wherein the cover can translate on the one or more alignment pins toward the optical interface when connecting the optical plug connector and a portion of the cover allows transmission of optical signals therethrough.

[0007] The disclosure is further directed to an optical plug connector including an optical portion having a nose with an optical interface, a monolithic alignment pin, a first resilient member, a second resilient member, and a cover for protecting the optical interface. The cover includes a first bore and a second bore for respectively receiving the monolithic alignment pin and a cavity. The cover can translate on the monolithic alignment pin toward the optical interface when connecting the optical plug connector so that the nose engages the cavity of the cover when in a retracted position and the first and second resilient members bias the cover toward a forward position, and a portion of the cover allows transmission of optical signals therethrough.

[0008] Additional features and advantages will be set forth in the detailed description which follows, and in part will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art from that description or recognized by practicing the same as described herein, including the detailed description that follows, the claims, as well as the appended drawings.

[0009] It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description present embodiments that are intended to provide an overview or framework for understanding the nature and character of the claims. The accompanying drawings are included to provide a further understanding of the disclosure, and are incorporated into and constitute a part of this specification. The drawings

illustrate various embodiments and together with the description serve to explain the principles and operation.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0010] **FIG. 1** is a perspective view of an optical plug connector as part of a cable assembly being aligned with a complimentary receptacle according to the concepts disclosed;

[0011] **FIG. 2** is a perspective view of the optical plug connector and the complimentary receptacle of **FIG. 1** shown mated together;

[0012] **FIG. 3** is a front perspective view of the optical plug connector of **FIGS. 1 and 2** shown with the cover in a forward position;

[0013] **FIG. 4** is a front perspective view of the optical plug connector of **FIGS. 1 and 2** shown with the cover in a retracted position such as occurs when the optical plug connector is mated with the receptacle;

[0014] **FIGS. 5 and 6** respectively depict the optical plug connector and complimentary receptacle of **FIGS. 1 and 2** aligned for mating and in contact before mating with a portion of the housing removed from the plug in both **FIGS. 5 and 6** for showing internal details;

[0015] **FIG. 7** is a front exploded view of the optical plug connector of **FIGS. 1 and 2** along with a cable prepared for assembly with the optical plug connector;

[0016] **FIG. 8** is a rear exploded view of the optical plug connector of **FIG. 7** along with a portion of the complimentary receptacle;

[0017] **FIG. 9** is a front perspective view of another optical plug connector shown with the cover in a forward position;

[0018] **FIG. 10** is a front perspective view of the optical plug connector of **FIG. 9** shown with the cover in a retracted position such as occurs when the optical plug connector is mated with a complimentary receptacle;

[0019] **FIG. 11** is a top perspective view of the optical plug connector of **FIGS. 9 and 10** shown with the cover in a forward position and a portion of the housing removed;

[0020] **FIG. 12** is a top cutaway perspective view of the optical plug connector of **FIGS. 9 and 10** shown with the cover in a retracted position and a portion of the housing removed; and

[0021] **FIGS. 13 and 14** are exploded perspective views of the optical plug connector of **FIGS. 9 and 10**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0022] Reference will now be made in detail to the embodiments of the disclosure, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings. Whenever possible, like reference numbers will be used to refer to like components or parts.

[0023] The optical connections disclosed herein enable high-speed data applications for transmitting optical signals to electronic devices such as fast data rates such as 5 Gigabits/sec or greater along with having a relatively small and compact footprints so that they are useful for use with electronic devices such as consumer devices and the like. The concepts disclosed include an optical plug connector having a cover that can translate during mating and a complimentary optical receptacle that mates with the optical plug connector. The optical receptacle may be a portion of an electronic device such as a telephone, laptop, tablet, display, camera, desktop computer or the like so it can receive and transmit optical signals from the optical plug connector. The concepts disclosed may solely have optical connectivity or have hybrid connectivity with optical and electrical. Further, the concepts of the optical connections may be used in other applications such as optical backplanes, switches, routers and other equipment.

[0024] In order to transmit/receive optical signals, the optical plug connector or optical receptacle may include one or more optical channels for that may include one or more lenses or not as desired. By way of example, the one or more lenses of the optical plug connector are used for collimating or focusing the light from the transmission channel(s) of the plug and are optically coupled to a complementary lenses of the optical receptacle such as molded lenses that direct the optical signal to an active element such as a photodiode or the like. The receive channels of the optical plug connector obtains its signals from an active element such as a laser like a vertical-cavity surface-emitting laser (VCSEL) in communication with the molded lens of the optical receptacle for transmission of the optical signals of the optical plug connector when the optical plug connector and optical receptacle are mated together. The optical plug connector and optical receptacle according to the concepts disclosed provide quick and easy connectivity with a footprint that is advantageous for use with electronic devices having

thin and compact profiles. Further, the concepts provide a simple optical plug assembly with a cover that protects the lenses or optical channels of the optical plug connector from dirt and debris and allows access for easy cleaning of the cover (e.g., accessible for wiping) and/or replacing of the cover if desired or necessary to due to damage. Moreover, the cover of the optical plug connector translates from a forward position to a retracted position, but unlike other connector designs the optical interface does not appreciably translate in the Z-direction and instead may “float” to a small degree for optical alignment. Thus, because the concepts disclosed do not require translation of the optical portion like conventional designs, the issues with optical alignment and/or optical fiber movement with the optical portion are inhibited. Additionally, the optical plug connector is a robust and reliable design for applications that are expected to experience large number of mating/unmating cycles such as consumer electronic applications.

[0025] **FIG. 1** is a perspective view of an optical plug connector **10** (hereinafter “plug”) being a portion of a cable assembly **100** as it is being aligned with a complimentary receptacle **200** and **FIG. 2** is a perspective view of plug **10** of cable assembly **100** mated with receptacle **200**. Plug **10** is attached to cable **5**, thereby forming cable assembly **100**. Cable assembly **100** may use any suitable cable **5** attached to the plug. Although, the cable **5** and plug **10** are shown having a straight through alignment for simplicity sake, the concepts of the plug disclosed herein may have any suitable angle with respect to the cable such as 45, 60 or 90 degrees, but still other angles are possible.

[0026] Plugs according to the concepts disclosed may have an optical portion with an optical interface or both an optical portion with an optical interface and an electrical portion with an electrical interface. As shown in this explanatory embodiment, plug **10** and complimentary receptacle **200** both have an optical interface and an electrical interface. For instance, plug **10** optionally includes one or more electrical contacts **70** in addition to an optical portion **40** having an optical interface **12** (**FIG. 7**). Consequently, the plug **10** and complimentary receptacle **200** may transmit/receive signals and/or power as desired.

[0027] **FIGS. 3 and 4** are front perspective views of plug **10** shown respectively with a cover **20** in a forward position and the cover **20** in a retracted position such as occurs when the optical plug connector is mated with the receptacle **200** such as shown in **FIG.**

2. In other words, cover **20** can translate toward the optical interface **12** (**FIG. 7**) when connecting the plug **10** connector and a portion of cover **20** allows transmission of optical signals therethrough. The cover **20** can may have a manual operation for retraction/extension with a user activated slide or it may be biased to an extended position as desired. Moreover, the optical portion **40** does not translate like cover **20**, but instead the optical portion may “float” for optical alignment with the complimentary receptacle. As used herein, “float” means relatively small movements or shifting for the optical alignment of optical portions of the plug. Consequently, the plug designs disclosed are advantageous over conventional designs where the optical portion translates since the optical fibers are not disturbed by significant movements and/or the optical interface is protected and not exposed to potential damage, dirt, debris and the like.

[0028] Cover **20** protects the optical interface **12** from dirt, debris and contact, etc when in both the extended position (**FIG. 3**) and retracted position (**FIG. 4**). By way of example, cover **20** may include a body **22** and a window **24** attached to the body **22** where the window **24** allows the transmission of optical signals therethrough. Further, cover **20** may be inspected or cleaned by the user as desired. Cover **20** may even be removed and replaced if desired. Cover **20** translates from the extended position to the retracted position using one or more cover guides. Cover guides may be any suitable structure disposed on any suitable component such as grooves, protrusions or rails disposed on a housing **80** and/or cover **20**, recesses or bores located on cover **20**, alignment pins, etc. as desired. In some plug embodiments many cover guides may exist for guiding the translation of the cover **20** as desired. By way of example, cover **20** of plug **10** has several different cover guides. First, plug **10** includes cover guides configured as one or more alignment pins **30** that cooperate with cover **20** that includes one or more bores **25** for receiving the alignment pins **30** as best shown in **FIG. 4**. Although, alignment pins **30** are also used for alignment of the optical interface **12**, bores **25** of cover **20** need not have a precision fit with the alignment pins **30** since the translation of cover **20** does not impact optical alignment of the plug **10**. As shown in **FIG. 4**, when cover **20** is in the retracted position the one or more alignment pins **30** extend forward of the cover **20** and may be used for aligning the optical interface **12** of plug **10** with receptacle **200** by cooperating with one or more bores **230**.

[0029] Plug **10** also includes a second cover guide structure formed on the cover **20**. Specifically, cover **20** has one or more recesses **27** that are cover guides. Recesses **27** generally conform with a portion of the one or more electrical contacts **70**. More specifically, recesses **27** are concave recesses disposed on opposite ends of cover **20** and generally conform to the round shape of electrical contacts **70** so that the cover moves uniform distances on both ends when translating. Finally, plug **10** has third cover guides with the cover **20** cooperating with the housing **80**. Specifically, cover **20** has one or more protrusions **29** that are cover guides. Protrusions **29** are disposed on the top and bottom portions of cover **20** and cooperate with one or more grooves **89** disposed on the inside of housing **80** as shown in **FIGS. 7 and 8**. Moreover, protrusions **29** act as stops so that the cover **20** remains secured within the housing **80** when in the extended position since the grooves **89** do not extend to the front end of housing **80**; however, cover **20** may be removed. To remove the cover **20**, the user simply squeezes the rear portion of cover **20** to deflect the protrusions inward and then the cover **20** may be removed. Consequently, the user may have access to inspect, wipe and/or clean the optical interface **12** behind the cover **20** of the plug **10** as desired, or for replacing the cover **20** if it is damaged.

[0030] Cover **20** may have any suitable configuration for the given plug design. For instance, the window **24** may be formed from any suitable material such as a polymer such as Ultem® or Zeonex® or a glass such as a chemically strengthened glass such as available from Corning, Incorporated of Corning, New York. As an example, the window **24** may be Gorilla® Glass available from Corning Incorporated. Moreover, the window **24** may have a suitable coating such as an anti-reflection coating and/or a scratch-resistant coating as desired. In other embodiments, the cover **20** is formed as a single component. By way of example, the cover **20** may be formed entirely from a polymer that is transmissive to the optical signals. Plug **10** is suitable for applications that anticipate a relatively large number of mating/unmating cycles or environments that may be exposed to dirt and debris such as consumer devices; however, suitable materials for components should be selected to withstand the desired number of mating cycles.

[0031] **FIGS. 5 and 6** respectively depict the plug **10** (with a portion **80b** of the housing **80** removed) and receptacle **200** aligned for mating and in contact before mating

together. When assembled, the components of plug **10** are at least partially disposed in housing **80** that has a first portion **80a** and a second portion **80b**. As depicted, plug **10** may also include one or more resilient members **50** for biasing cover **20** to an extended position (e.g., forward position). Resilient member **50** may have any suitable construction such as leaf springs or the like. In embodiment resilient members **50** are coil springs. The coil springs are located between the optical portion **40** and cover **20** and disposed on respective alignment pins **30** as shown. Consequently, cover **20** may move to the retracted position guided in part by alignment pins **30** and biased forward by resilient members **50**. As shown, optical portion **40** has alignment pins **30** attached using one or more bores **42** (**FIGS. 7 and 8**) and is disposed between electrical contacts **70** with a nose **41** of optical portion **40** aligned with a cavity **21** (**FIG. 8**) at a rear of cover **20**. When cover **20** moves rearward the nose **41** engages cavity **21** of cover **20** when in a retracted position. Thus, when the cover **20** is in the retracted position the window **24** of cover **20** is in close proximity to the optical interface **12** of the optical portion **40** for allowing the transmission of optical signals through the window **24** and to/from optical interface **12**. One or more electrical contacts **70** are secured between the first portion **80a** and second portion **80b** of housing **80**. Specifically, electrical contacts **70** include one or more openings **72** that receive one or more protrusions **82** of first and second portions **80a,80b** of housing **80** and secure the electrical contacts **70** in position. When assembled, a portion of electrical contacts **70** extend beyond housing **80** for making electrical connections with one or more electrical contacts **270** of receptacle **200** when mated together. Electrical contacts **70** also include one or more detents **74** for engagement with the electrical contacts of receptacle **200**. First and second portion **80a,80b** of housing **80** are aligned and secured together using attachment features **82** such as pins and bores that align; moreover, the first and second portions **80a,80b** may be the same part that assembles to itself. Although electrical contacts are depicted as being round any suitable size, shape or style of electrical contact may be used with the concepts disclosed such as pins, pogo pins, tubes, blades, rails or other suitable electrical contacts.

[0032] **FIGS. 7 and 8** are respective front and rear partially exploded views of the plug **10** along with cable **5** prepared for assembly with plug **10**. Plugs and receptacles may have any suitable number of optical channels arranged in any desired pattern such as a

linear or round array of optical channels. In this plug embodiment, optical interface **12** has a plurality of optical channels arranged in a linear array. Optical interface **12** includes a plurality of lens **45** integrally formed in the optical portion **40** and is formed from an optically transmissive material for desired wavelengths. Other embodiments may have the lenses formed as a separate component(s) if desired, but using a single component with integral lenses aids in controlling registration of the lenses with the bores **42** that cooperate with alignment pins **30**. Additionally, an index-matching material may be used between the ends of the respective optical fibers and the face of optical portion **40** on the side where the optical fiber is inserted into the optical portion **40** for reducing optical reflection, scattering and loss by eliminating any air gaps between the fiber end and the optical portion **40**.

[0033] Cable **5** of this embodiment includes both optical fibers **7** and electrical conductors **9** as shown. The optical fibers **7** are cleaved to a proper length and inserted into respective fiber bores **43** on the rear portion of optical body **40** for optical communication with the lenses. An index-matching material may be used on the ends of the optical fibers **7** for improving optical coupling with the optical portion **40**. Electrical conductors **9** are electrically connected with the electrical contacts **270** in a suitable manner. A crimp band **8** is attached near and end of cable **5** for creating a demarcation point for the optical fibers **7** and electrical conductors **9** and is used for securing the cable **5** to housing **80**. When deformed about cable **5**, crimp band **8** has one or more wings that fit into a saddle **83** of housing **80** for attaching the cable **5** to plug **10** and inhibiting relative movement therebetween and along with strain-relieving the cable **5** to the plug **10**. If desired, a filling material such as an adhesive, silicone, a sleeve, an insert or the like may be injected or placed into the passageway of the cable for protecting the optical fibers. Thereafter, the first and second shells **80a,80b** of housing **80** can be assembled about the components.

[0034] Receptacle **200** may also optionally include one or more electrical contacts **270** for transmitting electrical signals or power as desired that fit into a receptacle body **210**. Electrical contacts **270** fit into a plurality of respective openings **212** of receptacle body **210** and are electrically connected to electrical conductors **209** of the electronic device such as a tablet, smart phone, display or the like.

[0035] Other components of the receptacle **200** and the signal conversion components for the electronic device will be discussed.

[0036] Receptacle **200** may include a receptacle circuit board attached to the receptacle body **210** that electrically connects to a complimentary circuit board of the electronic device. The receptacle circuit board includes an electrical interface and one or more integrated circuits for processing signals along with other components as desired for communicating with the electronic device. Receptacle **200** may include a receptacle circuit board assembly attached to the lens body of the receptacle **200**. When the electronic device is assembled, the receptacle circuit board assembly is electrically attached to circuit board of the electronic device for communicating signals between the receptacle and the circuit board of the electronic device. For instance, receptacle **200** is configured with a flexible tether having pluggable electrical attachment to circuit board of the electronic device. Specifically, circuit board of the electronic device includes an electrical connector for cooperating with a complementary electrical connector of the receptacle circuit board assembly for easily making the appropriate electrical connections between the circuit board of the electronic device and the receptacle circuit board assembly. Of course, other electrical connectivity may be used with the concepts disclosed.

[0037] The receptacle circuit board assembly is used for converting the optical signals to electrical signals and vice versa and may have any suitable arrangement or layout. The receptacle circuit board assembly includes at least one active component aligned with at least one optical channel of the optical body of the receptacle when properly aligned and attached to lens body of the receptacle. The receptacle circuit board assembly is attached to the lens body and spaced at a suitable distance from the lenses using ledges or other structure, which provides the desired z-direction distance between the active component and the lens body. The receptacle circuit board assembly may use a passive and/or active alignment for positioning the receptacle circuit board assembly in the X-direction and Y-direction. Active component(s) are an electro-optical component used for transmitting or receiving optical signals to/from the optical channels of the lens body of the receptacle **200**. By way of example, the active component is a photodiode or other similar device for receiving optical signals or a vertical-cavity surface-emitting laser (VCSEL) for

transmitting optical signals, thereby providing one or more transmit and receive channels. Additionally, the receptacle circuit board assembly may include further electronic components such as transimpedance amplifiers (TIAs) or laser drivers arranged as a first circuit portion and/or a second circuit portion for processing signals and other electronics such as integrated circuits (ICs) like clock and data recovery (CDR), laser drivers serializer/deserializer (SerDes), and the like on the circuit board.

[0038] The optical channels of the receptacle **200** include respective lenses at the rear side of the optical body for focusing or collimating the optical signals to/from the active components on the receptacle circuit board. “Operably attached” means that the active components of the receptacle circuit board assembly are properly spaced from the optical channels of the lens body (z-direction) such as the lenses of the optical body maintain the desired distance between the active components and the optical channels and suitable aligned in the x-direction and y-direction for providing the desired level of optical coupling.

[0039] The flexible substrate for electrical connection allows an electrical turn so that the profile of the device may remain small such as thin when electrically connecting the receptacle circuit board assembly having the active components (e.g., photodiodes and VCSELs), transimpedance amplifier (TIA), and the laser drivers to the other integrated circuits on the circuit board of the electronic device. Splitting the electronics between the receptacle circuit board assembly that is attached to the lens body **210** and other components on the circuit board of the electronic device such as the clock and data recovery (CDR) IC and SerDes IC allow for smaller receptacle footprints and keeps the specific electrical traces to/from the active components such as the TIA or laser drive to short lengths such as 200 microns or less and the electrical traces may even be about 100 microns or less. Specifically, the flexible substrate provides an electrical turn with flex coupling between the receptacle circuit board assembly and circuit board of the electronic device, thereby allowing relatively small form-factors for the optical connector since the CDR and SerDes IC’s are relatively large and are located on another circuit portion such as the electronic device circuit board that can be orientated in different manner such as a horizontal plane where there is more space available.

[0040] Receptacle circuit board assembly may also include other advantageous arrangements when having optical connectors with more than one transmit and one receive channel. For instance, the receptacle circuit board assembly may use separate TIAs and/or laser drivers on the receptacle circuit board assembly (i.e., several TIAs or laser drivers for different optical channels). Consequently, a first circuit portion with the TIAs and laser drivers can now be split (i.e., multiple TIAs and laser drivers) with a dedicated TIA and laser driver placed onto each side of the plurality of optical channels that are arranged in an array. If using a receptacle circuit board assembly with multiple TIA/laser driver arrangement (e.g., one TIA/laser driver for each side of the array) for enabling a relatively small height **H** for the receptacle **200**, thereby allowing use of the optical connector in thin devices such as smart phones, tablets and the like. Further, placing electrical components such as the TIA and laser drivers relatively close to the active components such as photodiodes and VCSELs allows relatively short wire bond lengths such as 100 microns or shorter for supporting high-speed data transfer rates such as 10Gb/sec or more and even up to 20 Gb/sec and higher.

[0041] When assembled, the lens body attaches to receptacle body **210**. The lens body may have an optional cover attached thereto for protecting the optical interface. In other words, the cover may protect the lenses that form the optical channels of the receptacle **200**. The cover of receptacle **200** may be formed from any suitable material such as glass or a polymer as discussed herein.

[0042] Other variations of plugs and receptacles are possible according to the concepts disclosed herein. By way of example, **FIGS. 9-14** show another explanatory plug embodiment having a cover for protecting the optical interface where the cover can translate toward the optical interface when connecting the optical plug connector and a portion of the cover allows transmission of optical signals therethrough. **FIG. 9** is a front perspective view of another optical plug connector **310** (hereinafter plug **310**) shown with a cover **320** in a forward position and **FIG. 10** shows plug **310** shown with the cover **320** in a retracted position such as occurs when the optical plug connector is mated with a complimentary receptacle. Plug **310** is similar to plug **10** and differences will be highlighted as appropriate. Like plug **10**, plug **310** has a cover **320** that translates between a forward position and a retracted position using one or more cover guides. In

this embodiment, one of the cover guides is a monolithic alignment pin **330** (**FIGS. 11 and 12**) and the cover **320** has bores **325** (e.g., disposed on the window **324**) for receiving the monolithic alignment pin **330**. However, the biasing of the cover **320** to a forward position is independent of the monolithic alignment pin **330** (e.g., no springs riding on the monolithic alignment pin) that also is used for optical alignment of the optical interface **12**. Additionally, the length of the monolithic alignment pin may also be longer for optical alignment for this embodiment. Consequently, all things being equal optical alignment of the optical interface **12** should be more precise since there will not be any biasing forces that interacting with the monolithic alignment pin **330**. Plug **310** also includes one or more optional electrical contacts **370**. Electrical contacts **370** extend beyond a housing **380** and are fixed in position by being secured between a first portion **380a** and a second portion **380b** of housing **380**. Specifically, first portion **380a** and second portion **380b** of housing **380** include one or more recesses **382** sized and shaped for receiving electrical contacts **370** and electrical contacts **370** are electrically attached to electrical conductors of the cable.

[0043] **FIG. 11** is a top perspective view of plug **310** shown with the cover **320** in a forward position and **FIG. 12** is a top perspective view of plug **310** shown with the cover in a retracted position with both views having second portion **380b** of housing **380** removed. As depicted, the monolithic alignment pin **330** has a generally serpentine form and is provided to enable some small float or deflection for the optical portion **340** having the optical interface **12**. Monolithic alignment pin **330** is secured in housing **380** using one or more tabs and/or cutouts to inhibit movement. Optical portion includes a nose **341** that engages a cavity of cover **320** when in a retracted position; however, other embodiments may eliminate the nose and have a flat front end for the optical portion if desired. As depicted, plug **320** includes one or more resilient members **350** for biasing the cover **320** to a forward position. Resilient members **350** are coil springs that are seated on protrusions **327** of a body **322** of cover **320**. Moreover, when approaching the fully retracted position protrusions **327** of cover **320** are at least partially received in guides **389** formed in the first and second portions **380a,380b** of housing **380**. Guides **389** also act as backstops for the resilient members **350** when the plug **320** is assembled.

[0044] Optical portion **340** includes optical interface **12** having a plurality of lenses **345** integrally formed in the optical portion **340** and is formed from an optically transmissive material for desired wavelengths. Other embodiments may have the lenses formed as a separate component(s) if desired, but using a single component with integral lenses aids in controlling registration of the lenses **345** with the bores **342** that cooperate with monolithic alignment pin **330**. Optical portion **340** includes fiber bores (not visible) at the rear end that extend toward the lenses **345** for insertion of the respective optical fibers of the cable and are in optical alignment with the lenses **345** for optical communication therebetween. As discussed, an index-matching material may be used between the ends of the respective optical fibers and the face of optical portion **40** on the side where the optical fiber is inserted into the optical portion **40** for reducing optical reflection, scattering and loss by eliminating any air gaps between the fiber end and the optical portion **40**.

[0045] **FIGS. 13 and 14** are exploded perspective views of the plug **310**. Cover **320** may have any suitable configuration for the given plug design such as including body **322** and window **324** of a suitable shape, size, etc. Like plug **10**, the window **324** of the connector may be formed from any suitable material such as a polymer such as Ultem® or Zeonex® or a glass such as a chemically strengthened glass such as available from Corning, Incorporated. Moreover, the window **324** may have a suitable coating such as an anti-reflection coating and/or a scratch-resistant coating as desired. In other embodiments, the cover **320** is formed as a single component. By way of example, the cover **320** may be formed entirely from a polymer that is transmissive to the optical signals. Still other variations and modifications are possible using the concepts disclosed herein.

[0046] Although the disclosure has been illustrated and described herein with reference to embodiments and specific examples thereof, it will be readily apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that other embodiments and examples can perform similar functions and/or achieve like results. All such equivalent embodiments and examples are within the spirit and scope of the disclosure and are intended to be covered by the appended claims. It will also be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made to the concepts disclosed without departing

from the spirit and scope of the same. Thus, it is intended that the present application cover the modifications and variations provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

We claim:

1. An optical plug connector, comprising:
 - an optical portion having an optical interface; and
 - a cover for protecting the optical interface, wherein the cover can translate toward the optical interface when connecting the optical plug connector and a portion of the cover allows transmission of optical signals therethrough.
2. The optical plug connector of claim 1, further including one or more cover guides, wherein the cover translates using one or more cover guides.
3. The optical plug connector of claim 2, wherein the cover guides are one or more alignment pins and the cover includes one or more bores for receiving the alignment pins.
4. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 1-3, further including one or more resilient members for biasing the cover toward a forward position.
5. The optical plug connector of claim 3, wherein the one or more resilient members are coil springs.
6. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 1-5, wherein the optical portion has a nose that engages a cavity of the cover when in a retracted position.
7. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 1-6, wherein the cover includes one or more cover guides.
8. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 1-7, the cover including a body and a window attached to the body, wherein the window allows the transmission of optical signals therethrough.
9. The optical plug connector of claim 8, the window being a chemically-strengthened glass or a polymer.

10. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 1-7, wherein the cover is formed as single component.
11. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 1-10, further including one or more electrical contacts.
12. The optical plug connector of claim 11, wherein the cover has one or more recesses that generally conform with a portion of the one or more electrical contacts.
13. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 1-12, the optical interface including a plurality of lenses integrally formed in the optical portion.
14. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 1-13, further including a housing.
15. The optical plug connector of claim 1, further including a housing having a first portion and a second portion and one or more electrical contacts, wherein the electrical contacts are secured between the first portion and second portion of the housing.
16. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 1-15 being a portion of a cable assembly.
17. The optical plug connector of claim 16, further including a housing where a crimp band is secured by a portion of the housing.
18. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 1-17, wherein the cover may be removed and replaced.
19. An optical plug connector, comprising:
 - an optical portion having an optical interface;
 - one or more alignment pins; and
 - a cover for protecting the optical interface, the cover includes one or more bores for receiving the one or more alignment pins, wherein the cover can translate on the one or more alignment pins toward the optical interface when connecting the optical

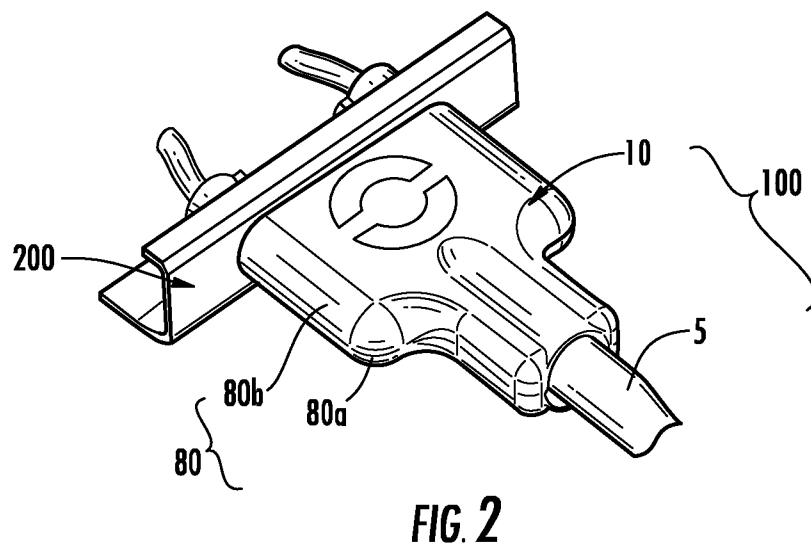
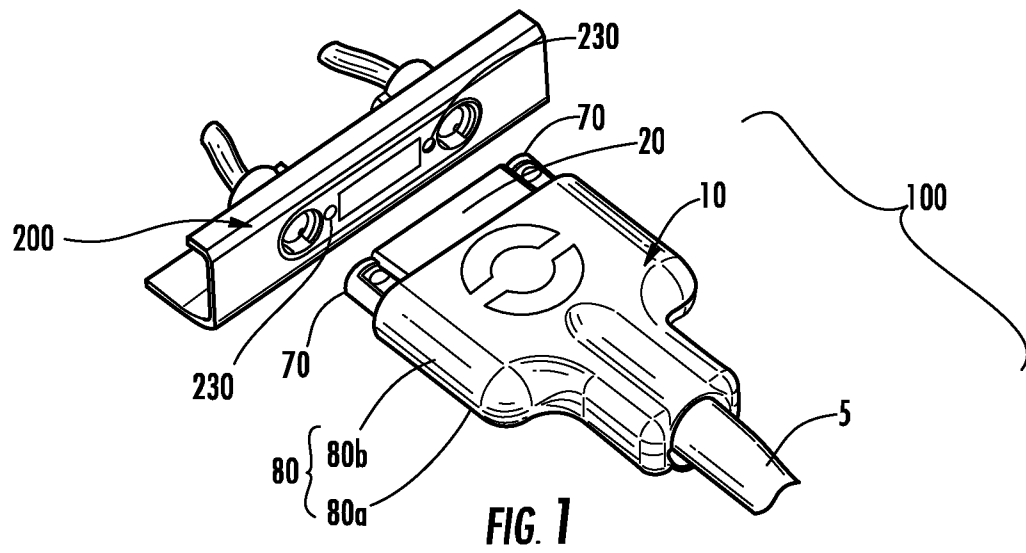
plug connector and a portion of the cover allows transmission of optical signals therethrough.

20. The optical plug connector of claim 19, further including one or more resilient members for biasing the cover toward a forward position.
21. The optical plug connector of claim 20, wherein the one or more resilient members are coil springs received on the one or more alignment pins.
22. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 19-21, wherein the optical portion has a nose that engages a cavity of the cover when in a retracted position.
23. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 19-22, wherein the cover includes one or more cover guides.
24. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 19-23, the cover including a body and a window attached to the body, wherein the window allows the transmission of optical signals therethrough.
25. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 19-24, wherein the cover is formed as single component.
26. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 19-25, further including one or more electrical contacts.
27. The optical plug connector of claim 26, wherein the cover has one or more recesses that generally conform with a portion of the one or more electrical contacts.
28. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 19-27, the optical interface including a plurality of lenses integrally formed in the optical portion.
29. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 19-28, further including a housing.

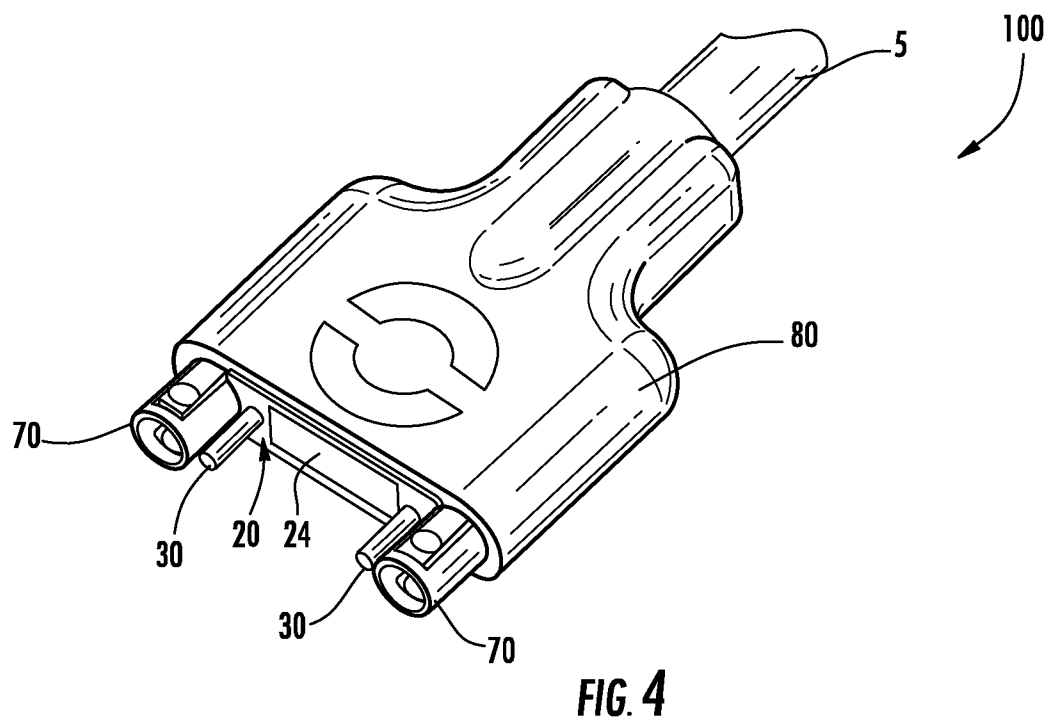
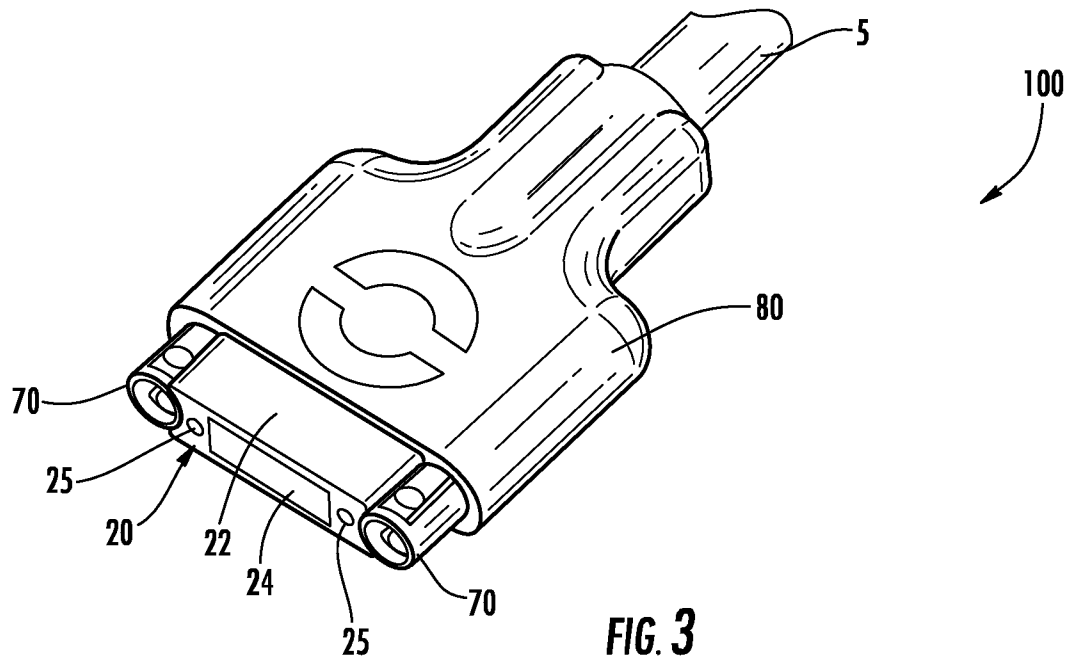
30. The optical plug connector of claim 19, further including a housing having a first portion and a second portion and one or more electrical contacts, wherein the electrical contacts are secured between the first portion and second portion of the housing.
31. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 19-30 being a portion of a cable assembly.
32. The optical plug connector of claim 31, further including a housing where a crimp band is secured by a portion of the housing.
33. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 19-32, wherein the cover may be removed and replaced.
34. An optical plug connector, comprising:
- an optical portion having a nose with an optical interface;
 - a monolithic alignment pin;
 - a first resilient member;
 - a second resilient member; and
 - a cover for protecting the optical interface, the cover includes a first bore and a second bore for respectively receiving the monolithic alignment pin and a cavity, wherein the cover can translate on the monolithic alignment pin toward the optical interface when connecting the optical plug connector so that the nose engages the cavity of the cover when in a retracted position and the first and second resilient members bias the cover toward a forward position, and a portion of the cover allows transmission of optical signals therethrough.
35. The optical plug connector of claim 34, wherein the first and second resilient members are coil springs that are received on the monolithic alignment pin.
36. The optical plug connector of either of claims 34 or 35, wherein the cover includes one or more cover guides.

37. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 34-36, the cover including a body and a window attached to the body, wherein the window allows the transmission of optical signals therethrough.
38. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 34-37, wherein the cover is formed as single component.
39. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 34-38, further including one or more electrical contacts.
40. The optical plug connector of claim 39, wherein the cover has one or more recesses that generally conform with a portion of the one or more electrical contacts.
41. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 34-40, the optical interface including a plurality of lenses integrally formed in the optical portion.
42. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 34-41, further including a housing.
43. The optical plug connector of claim 34, further including a housing having a first portion and a second portion and one or more electrical contacts, wherein the electrical contacts are secured between the first portion and second portion of the housing.
44. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 34-43 being a portion of a cable assembly.
45. The optical plug connector of claim 44, further including a housing where a crimp band is secured by a portion of the housing.
46. The optical plug connector of any one of claims 34-46, wherein the cover may be removed and replaced.

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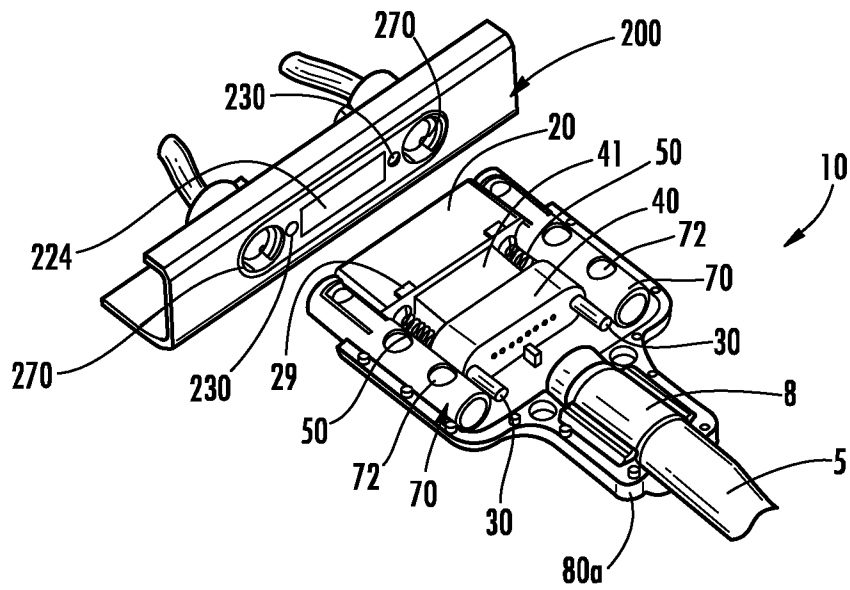


FIG. 5

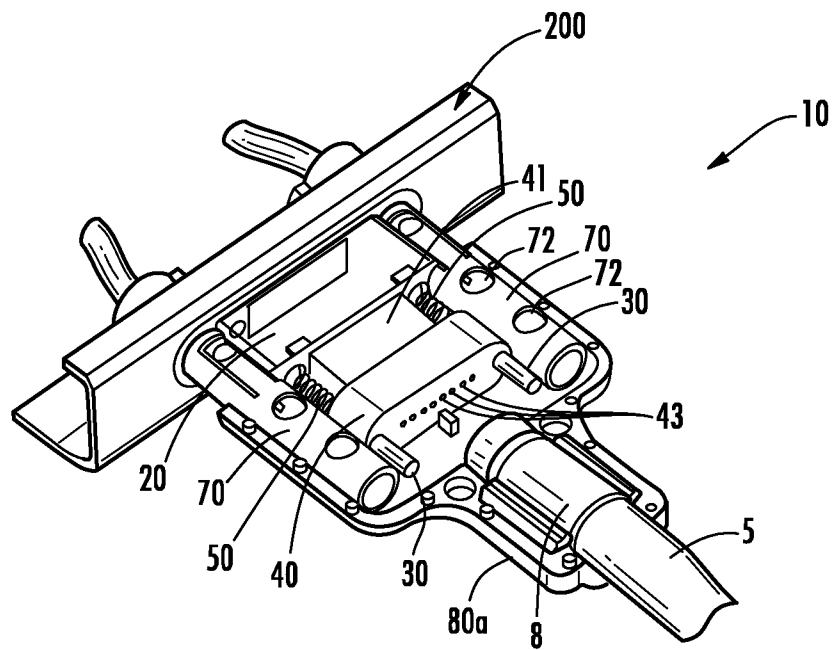


FIG. 6

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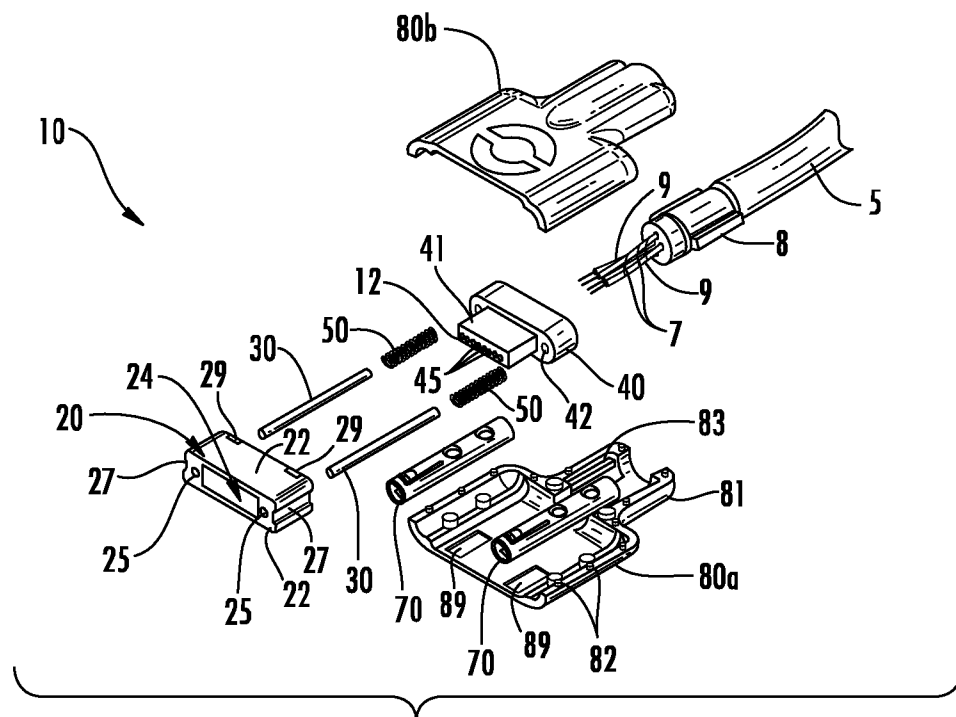


FIG. 7

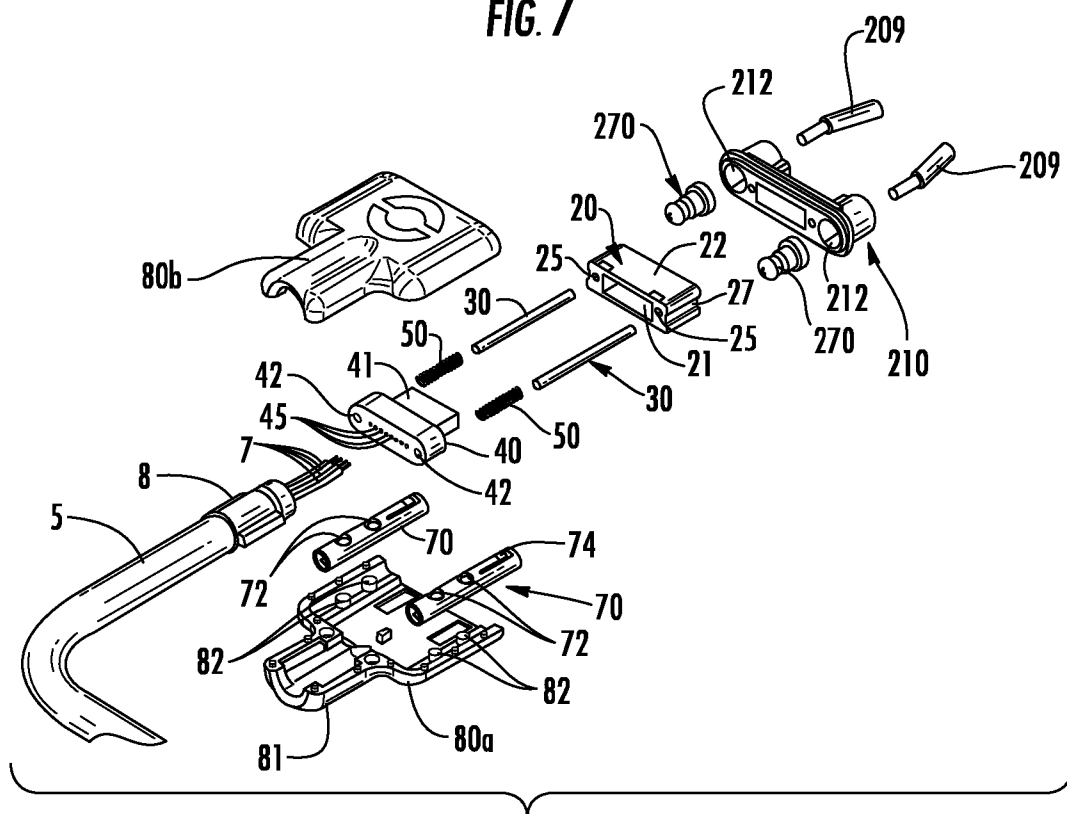


FIG. 8

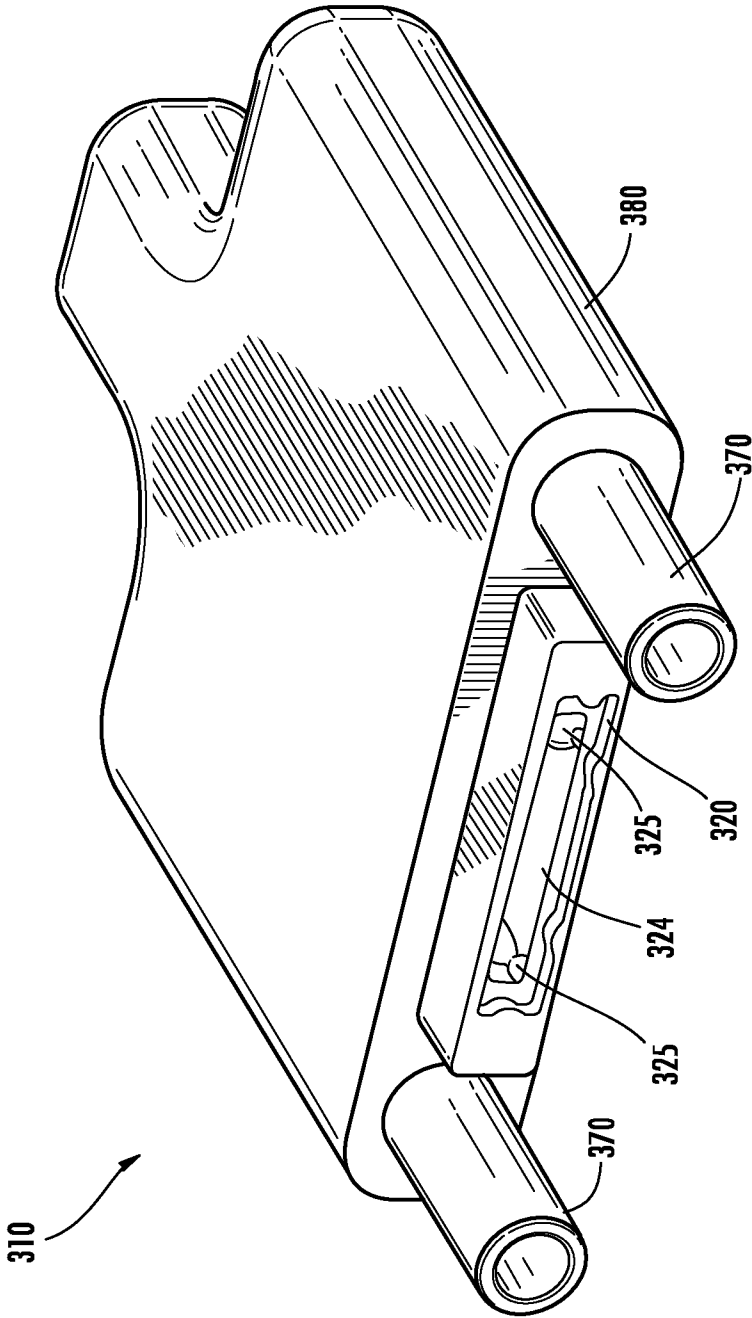


FIG. 9

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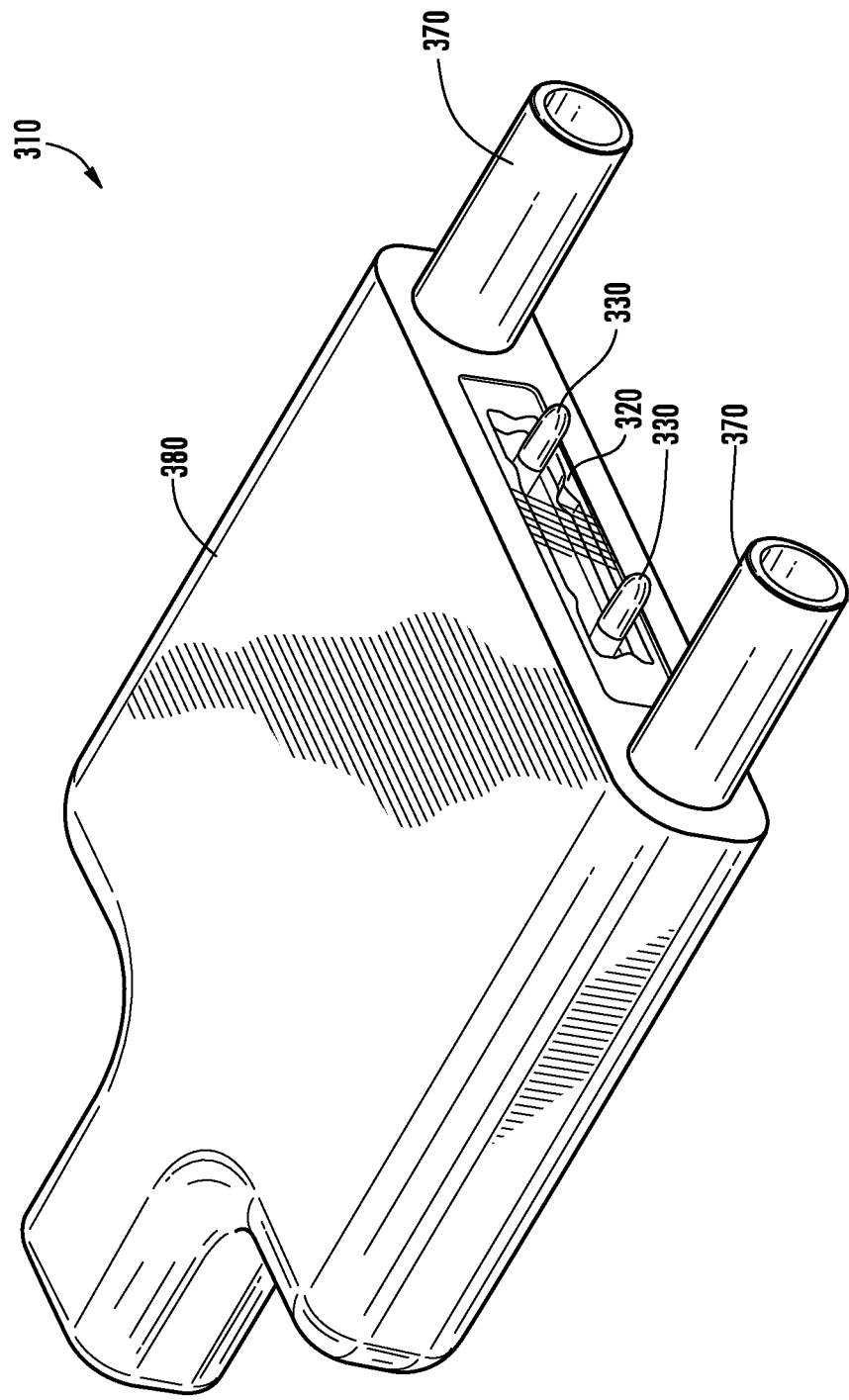


FIG. 10

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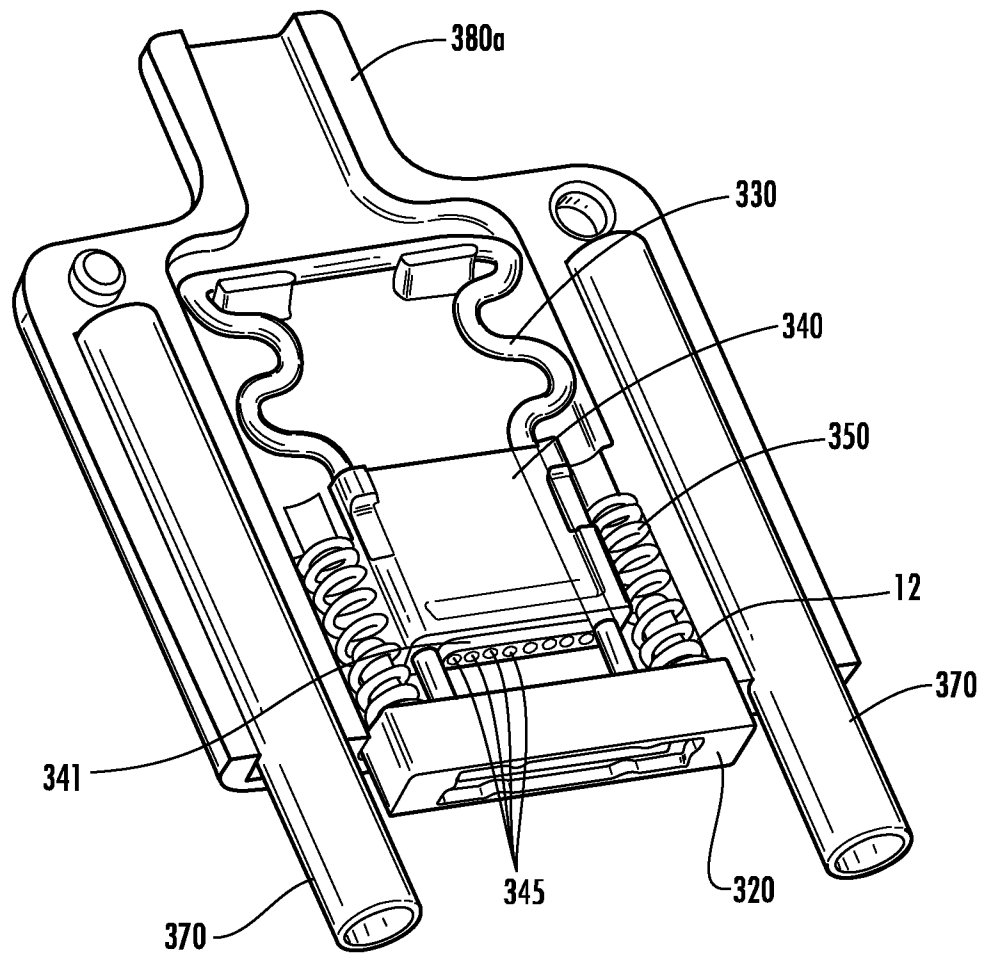


FIG. 11

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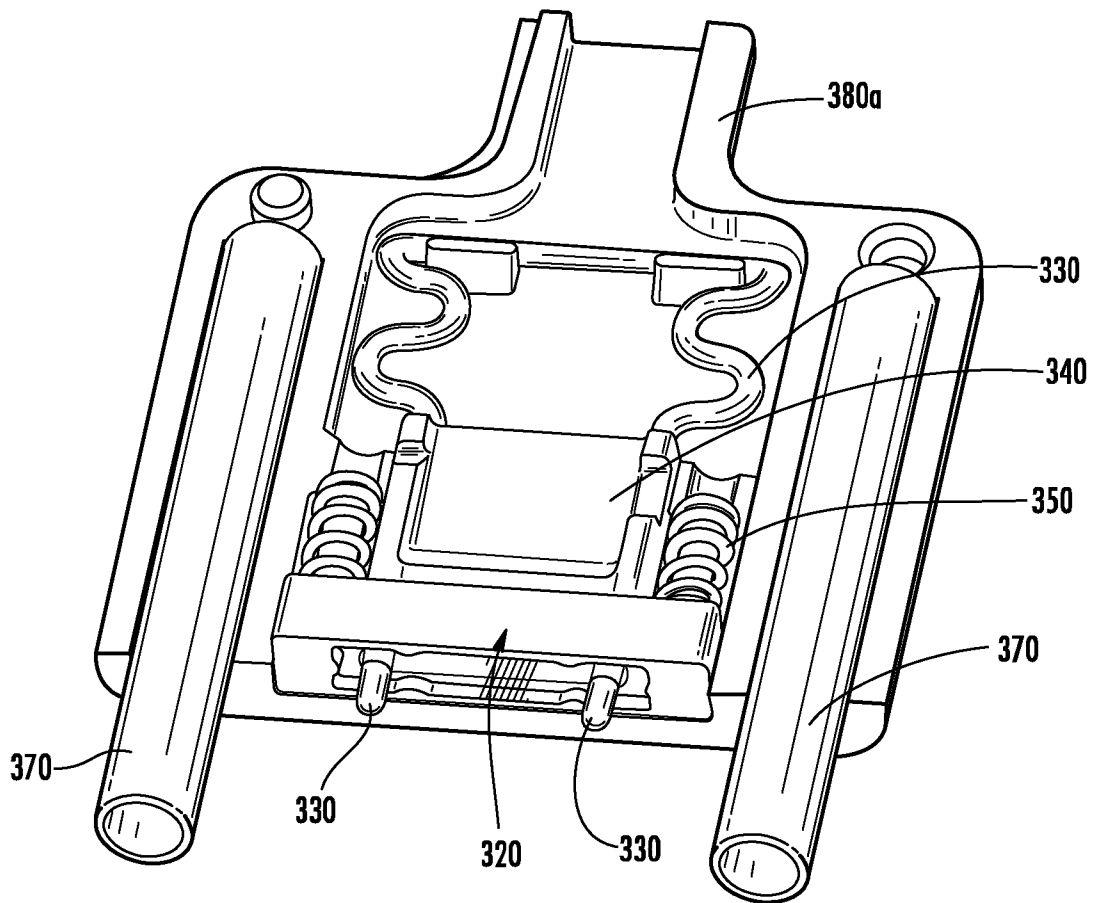


FIG. 12

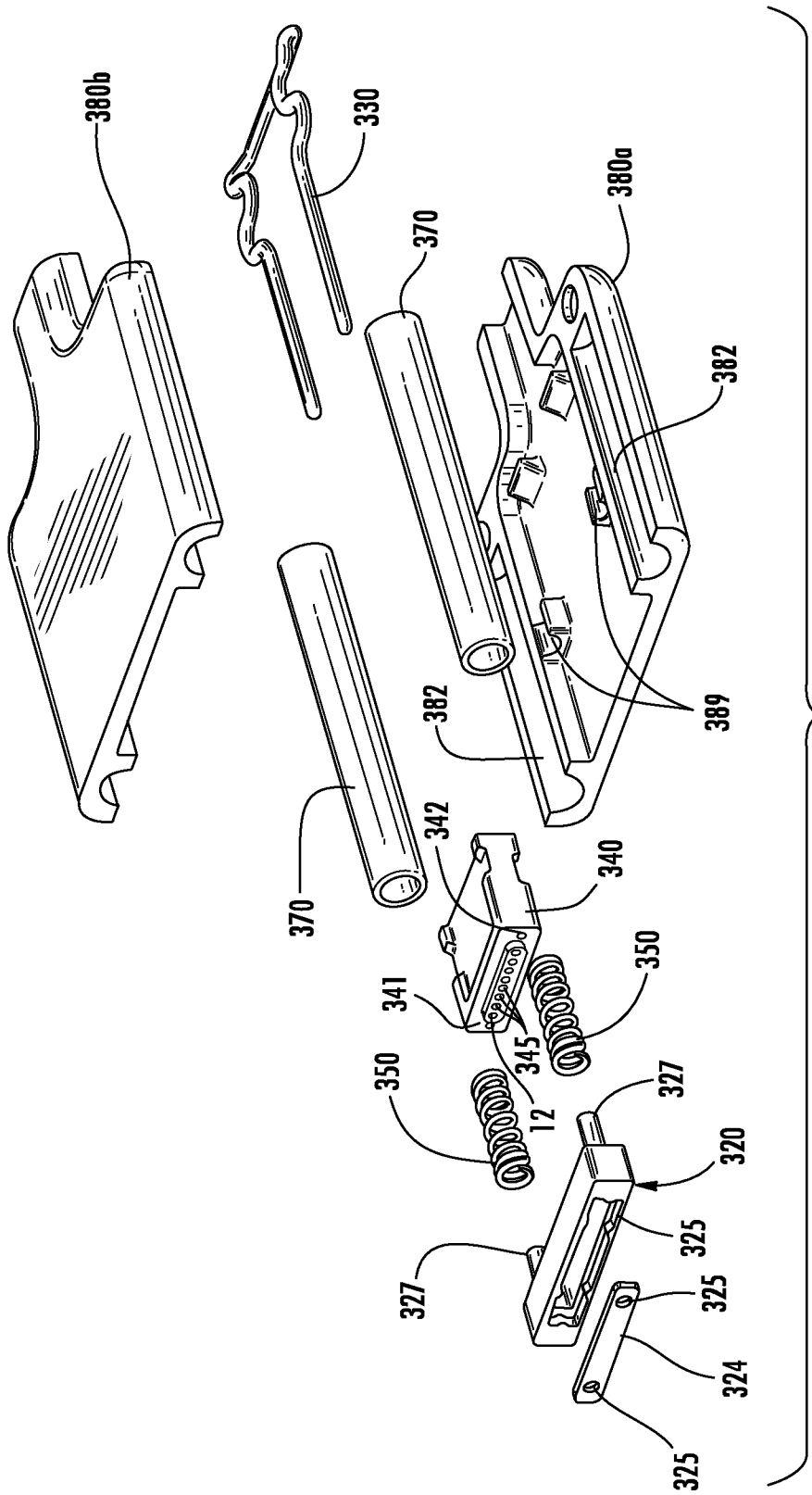


FIG. 13

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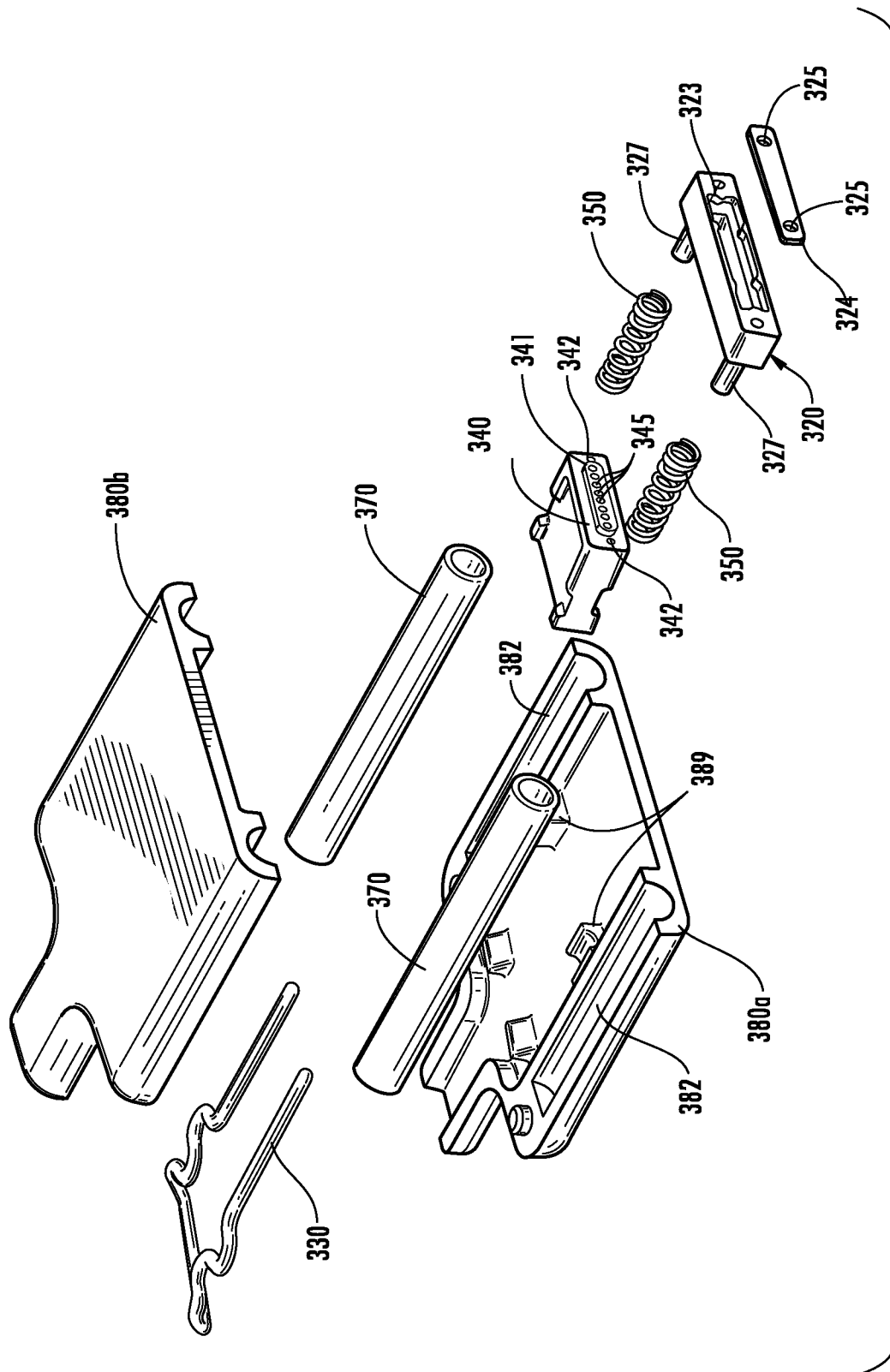


FIG. 14