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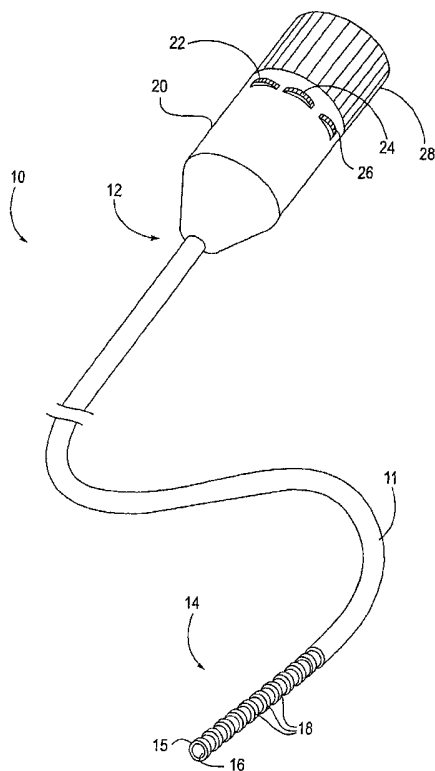
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: ARTICULATABLE ACCESS SHEATH AND METHODS OF USE



(57) Abstract: The present invention provides devices, systems, methods and kits for endoscopically accessing a body cavity and providing a directed pathway toward a target tissue within the cavity. The directed pathway is provided by an access sheath which is positioned in a desired configuration, generally directed toward the target tissue. Depending on the location of the target tissue and the desired angle of approach, the access sheath may be required to maintain one or more curves in one or more planes to properly direct the interventional devices. In addition, the access sheath has a locking feature to hold the sheath in place and maintain the desired configuration. Interventional devices may then be passed through the sheath to the target tissue.

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<p><b>A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER</b>                  IPC(7) : A61B 1/04                  US CL : 600/114                  According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC</p>												
<p><b>B. FIELDS SEARCHED</b>                  Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)                  U.S. : 600/114, 115, 121; 606/190</p> <p>Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched</p> <p>Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)</p>												
<p><b>C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category *</th> <th>Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th> <th>Relevant to claim No.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>X</td> <td>US 5,772,578 A (Heimberger et al.) 30 June 1998, Fig. 1-11</td> <td>1-76</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.	X	US 5,772,578 A (Heimberger et al.) 30 June 1998, Fig. 1-11	1-76				
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<p><input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.      <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.</p>												
<p>* Special categories of cited documents:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</td> <td>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"E" earlier application or patent published on or after the international filing date</td> <td>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</td> <td>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</td> <td>"&amp;" document member of the same patent family</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention	"E" earlier application or patent published on or after the international filing date	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone	"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art	"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&" document member of the same patent family	"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	
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<p>Name and mailing address of the ISA/US                  Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US                  Commissioner for Patents                  P.O. Box 1450                  Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450                  Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230</p>		<p>Authorized officer <i>Jackie Tan-Uyen T. Ho</i>                  (Jackie) Tan-Uyen T. Ho                  Telephone No. (703) 308-0858</p>										