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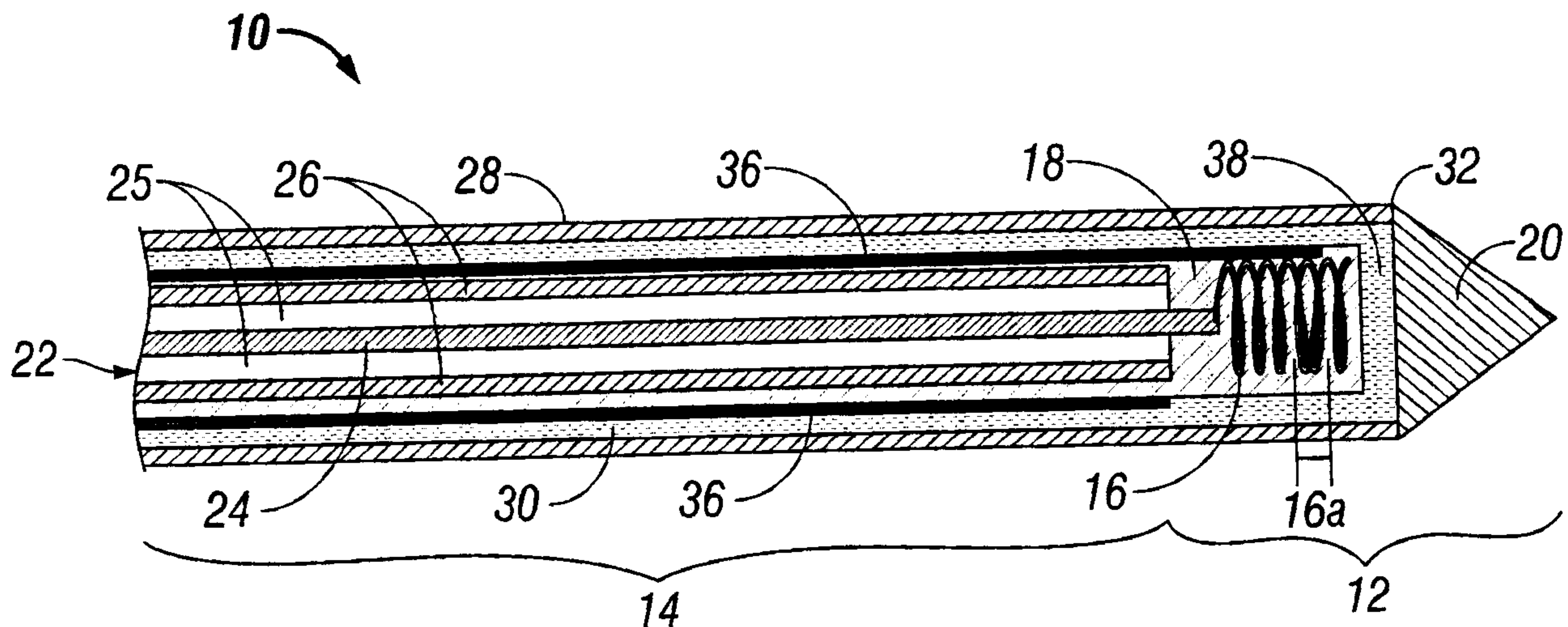
(71) Demandeur/Applicant:
VIVANT MEDICAL, INC., US

(72) Inventeurs/Inventors:
ROSSETTO, FRANCESCA, US;
PRAKASH, MANI N., US;
MASSANGCAY, JOLIE, US

(74) Agent: MCFADDEN, FINCHAM

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(54) Title: COOLED HELICAL ANTENNA FOR MICROWAVE ABLATION



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A microwave antenna assembly including an elongated cooling jacket having proximal and distal ends and an inner lumen defined therebetween and a helical microwave antenna member disposed within at least a portion of the elongated cooling jacket and having an inner and outer conductor, the inner conductor disposed within the outer conductor, wherein at least a portion of the inner conductor extends distally from the outer conductor and forms at least one loop; and wherein the inner conductor is configured to deliver microwave energy.

ABSTRACT

A microwave antenna assembly including an elongated cooling jacket having proximal and distal ends and an inner lumen defined therebetween and a helical microwave antenna member disposed within at least a portion of the elongated cooling jacket and having an inner and outer conductor, the inner conductor disposed within the outer conductor, wherein at least a portion of the inner conductor extends distally from the outer conductor and forms at least one loop; and wherein the inner conductor is configured to deliver microwave energy.

COOLED HELICAL ANTENNA FOR MICROWAVE ABLATION

BACKGROUND

Technical Field

[0001] The present disclosure relates generally to medical / surgical ablation, devices, assemblies and methods of their use. More particularly, the present disclosure relates to cooled microwave antenna assemblies comprising a helical antenna configured for direct insertion into tissue for diagnosis and treatment of the tissue and methods of using the same.

Background of Related Art

[0002] In the treatment of diseases such as cancer, certain types of cancer cells have been found to denature at elevated temperatures (which are slightly lower than temperatures normally injurious to healthy cells). These types of treatments, known generally as hyperthermia therapy, typically utilize electromagnetic radiation to heat diseased cells to temperatures above 41° C while maintaining adjacent healthy cells at lower temperatures where irreversible cell destruction will not occur. Other procedures utilizing electromagnetic radiation to heat tissue also include ablation and coagulation of the tissue. Such microwave ablation procedures, e.g., such as those performed for menorrhagia, are typically done to ablate and coagulate the targeted tissue to denature or kill it. Many procedures and types of devices utilizing electromagnetic radiation therapy are known in the art. Such microwave therapy is typically used in the treatment of tissue and organs such as the prostate, heart, and liver.

[0003] One non-invasive procedure generally involves the treatment of tissue (e.g., a tumor) underlying the skin via the use of microwave energy. The microwave energy is able to non-invasively penetrate the skin to reach the underlying tissue. However, this non-invasive procedure may result in the unwanted heating of healthy tissue. Thus, the non-invasive use of microwave energy requires a great deal of control. This is partly why a more direct and precise method of applying microwave radiation has been sought.

[0004] Presently, there are several types of microwave probes in use, e.g., monopole, dipole, and helical. One type is a monopole antenna probe, which consists of a single, elongated microwave conductor exposed at the end of the probe. The probe is sometimes surrounded by a dielectric sleeve. The second type of microwave probe commonly used is a dipole antenna, which consists of a coaxial construction having an inner conductor and an outer conductor with a dielectric separating a portion of the inner conductor and a portion of the outer conductor. The third type of microwave probe commonly used is a helical antenna. Helical antennas are typically composed of a single driven element, or conducting wire, coiled in a spiral, or helix. In the monopole and dipole antenna probe, microwave energy generally radiates perpendicularly from the axis of the conductor. Helical antenna may radiate in a normal mode, in which the radiation pattern is similar to that of an electrically short dipole or monopole or the helical antenna may radiate in the axial mode, in which the radiation pattern is circular.

SUMMARY

[0005] The present disclosure relates generally to microwave antenna assemblies and methods of their use, e.g., in tissue ablation applications. More particularly, the present

disclosure relates to a cooled microwave antenna assemblies containing a helical antenna. The microwave antenna assembly may be structurally robust for direct insertion into tissue, without the need for additional introducers or catheters, for diagnosis and treatment of the tissue.

[0006] A microwave antenna assembly of the present disclosure includes an elongate cooling jacket having proximal and distal ends and an inner lumen defined therebetween and a helical microwave antenna member disposed within at least a portion of the elongated cooling jacket. Helical microwave antenna includes an inner and outer conductor, the inner conductor disposed within the outer conductor. At least a portion of the inner conductor extends distally from the outer conductor and forms a plurality of loops; wherein at least two loops of the plurality of loops forms an electrical connection therebetween. At least a portion of the plurality of loops is configured to deliver microwave energy.

[0007] The microwave antenna assembly may further include a rigid member that supports the helical microwave antenna, wherein the rigid member engages the distal portion of the outer conductor. The rigid member may define a lumen therewithin and at least a portion of the inner conductor of the helical microwave antenna may be disposed within the lumen of the rigid member. At least one loop of the helical microwave antenna member may be disposed on the periphery of the rigid member. The transverse cross-section of a portion of the inner conductor disposed within the outer conductor may be different than a transverse cross section of the inner conductor that extends distally from the outer conductor. The rigid member may be formed of a dielectric material.

[0008] The microwave antenna assembly may further include a sharpened tip adapted to penetrate tissue and attached to the distal end of the elongated cooling jacket forming a fluid-tight seal therewith. Microwave antenna assembly may include at least one inflow tube for supplying cooling fluid to the distal end of the elongated cooling jacket.

[0009] The inner conductor of the microwave antenna assembly may further include a feedline conductive member and a helical conductive member. The distal end of the feedline conductive member connects to the proximal end of the helical conductive member. A substantial portion of the feedline conductive member may be disposed within the outer conductor with a substantial portion of the helical conductive member distal the outer conductor. The transverse cross-section of the feedline conductive member may be different than a transverse cross-section of the helical conductive member.

[0010] The elongated cooling jacket of the microwave antenna assembly may include a dielectric material. Alternatively, the elongated cooling jacket may include a proximal jacket portion and a distal jacket portion. The distal jacket portion may be disposed between, and attached to, the proximal jacket portion and the sharpened tip. The distal jacket portion may be formed of a dielectric material and the proximal jacket portion may be formed of a conductive material. A plurality of the at least two loops of the helical microwave antenna member may be disposed within the distal jacket portion of the elongate cooling jacket. The microwave antenna assembly may further include a coating disposed on an outer surface thereof and configured to prevent tissue from sticking thereto.

[0011] In yet another embodiment of the present disclosure a helical microwave antenna includes a first and second assembly. The first assembly includes a tubular outer conductor defining a longitudinal lumen therethrough and an insulating member, disposed within at least a portion of the outer conductor and defining a longitudinal lumen therewithin. The second assembly includes an elongated conductive member forming a helical loop portion and a feedline portion and a rigid member defining a lumen therewithin. The lumen of the rigid member adapted to receive at least a portion of the elongated conductive member, wherein the helical loop portion of the elongated conductive member is disposed on the periphery of a distal portion of the rigid member and at least a portion of the feedline portion extends proximally from the rigid member. The proximal portion of the second assembly is adapted to engage a distal portion of the first assembly with at least a portion of the feedline portion of the elongated conductive member disposed within the lumen of the insulating member.

[0012] The outer conductor of the first assembly may engage the rigid member of the second assembly. Engagement may be formed by at least one of a press fit engagement, a threaded engagement, a taper lock engagement and a chemical engagement.

[0013] In yet another embodiment of the present disclosure, a microwave antenna assembly includes a feedline configured to supply microwave energy, a helical microwave antenna connected to a distal end of the feedline, the helical microwave antenna being configured to transmit microwave energy; and a rigid member supporting the helical microwave antenna, wherein at least a portion of the rigid member engages the feedline and is partially disposed therewithin.

[0014] In yet another embodiment of the present disclosure, a method of forming a helical antenna member includes the steps of removing an inner conductor of a microwave antenna feedline, removing a portion of insulation from a distal portion of the microwave antenna feedline, forming a helical microwave antenna including a feedline portion and a helical portion, providing a rigid member configured to receive a helical microwave antenna, joining the helical microwave antenna and the rigid member wherein the helical portion of the helical microwave antenna substantially surrounds at least a portion of the rigid member and at least a portion of the feedline portion extends proximally from the rigid member, and joining the distal end of the microwave antenna feedline with the proximal end of the rigid member wherein at least a portion of the helical antenna member is disposed within a lumen defined in the rigid member and at least a portion of the feedline portion of the helical antenna member is disposed within the microwave antenna feedline. The feedline portion may be formed from a first elongate conductive member and the helical portion of the helical microwave antenna is formed from a second elongate conductive member.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional side view of a distal end of a cooled helical microwave antenna assembly according to an embodiment of the present disclosure;

[0016] FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional side view of a distal end of a cooled helical microwave antenna assembly of FIG. 1 including a double cooling jacket;

[0017] FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional side view of a distal end of the cooled helical microwave antenna assemblies of FIGS. 1 and 2 with the cooling jacket, sharpened tip, inflow tubes and antenna insulation removed therefrom;

[0018] FIGS. 4A-4I are various geometries of helical-shaped antennas for use in the cooled helical antenna assemblies of FIGS. 1 and 2;

[0019] FIG. 5A is a schematic cross-sectional side view of the distal end of a helical microwave antenna assembly including the helical shaped geometry of FIG. 4D;

[0020] FIG. 5B is a schematic cross-sectional side view of the distal end of the helical microwave antenna assembly of FIG. 5A, having a reinforced configuration;

[0021] FIG 6A is a schematic cross-sectional side view of the distal end of a helical microwave antenna assembly including the helical shaped geometry of FIG. 4B;

[0022] FIG. 6B is a schematic cross-sectional side view of the distal end of the helical microwave antenna assembly of FIG 6A, having a reinforced configuration;

[0023] FIGS. 7A-7F illustrate a method of assembling the reinforced helical microwave antenna assembly of FIG 6B;

[0024] FIG. 7G is a flowchart of the steps in the formation of the structurally rigid helical antenna assembly of FIG. 6B;

[0025] FIG 8A is a schematic cross-sectional side view of the distal end of a helical microwave antenna assembly including the helical shaped geometry of FIG. 4C;

[0026] FIG. 8B is a schematic cross-sectional side view of the distal end of the helical microwave antenna assembly of FIG 8A, having a reinforced configuration;

[0027] FIGS. 9A-9F illustrate a method of assembling the reinforced helical microwave antenna assembly of FIG 8B; and

[0028] FIG. 9G is a flowchart of the steps in the formation of the structurally rigid helical antenna assembly of FIG. 8B.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

[0029] Embodiments of the presently disclosed microwave antenna assembly will now be described in detail with reference to the drawing figures wherein like reference numerals identify similar or identical elements. As used herein and as is traditional, the term “distal” refers to the portion that is furthest from the user and the term “proximal” refers to the portion that is closest to the user. In addition, terms such as “above”, “below”, “forward”, “rearward”, etc. refer to the orientation of the figures or the direction of components and are simply used for convenience of description.

[0030] During invasive treatment of diseased areas of tissue in a patient the insertion and placement of an electrosurgical energy delivery apparatus, such as a microwave antenna assembly, relative to the diseased area of tissue is important for successful treatment. The size and dimension of the ablation area created by a microwave antenna is dependant, among other factors, on the type of microwave antenna. Clinicians should therefore select a microwave antenna capable of generating an ablation region greater than the size and dimension of the target

tissue and insert the microwave antenna such that the ablation region created by the microwave antenna includes the target tissue.

[0031] Dipole and monopole microwave antennas typically form oblong or tear-shaped ablation regions. The helical antennas of the present disclosure may create near spherical ablation regions while other helical antennas of the present disclosure with different geometries may create ablation regions similar in shape to those created by a dipole or monopole antennas, thereby allowing a clinician to select a microwave antenna that creates an appropriate ablation region for each individual target tissue area.

Cooled Helical Antennas

[0032] Referring now to FIGS. 1-2, a microwave antenna assembly, according to an embodiment of the present disclosure, is shown as 10. The microwave antenna assembly 10 includes an antenna portion 12 and a feedline portion 14 operatively connected to and supporting antenna portion 12. Antenna portion 12 includes a helical antenna member 16, antenna insulation 18 surrounding the exterior of antenna member 16, and a sharpened distal tip 20. Feedline portion 14 includes a coaxial feedline 22 including an inner conductor 24 electrically connected to antenna member 16, and an outer conductor 26 overlying at least a portion of inner conductor 24 and at least partially separated therefrom by a feedline insulation 25.

[0033] Microwave antenna assembly 10 includes a cooling jacket 28 surrounding at least a segment of feedline portion 14 and at least a segment of antenna portion 12. Cooling jacket 28 connects to sharpened distal tip 20 at contact area 32 and forms a fluid-tight seal around a cooling chamber 30 (i.e., the space defined between an outer surface of feedline portion 14

and/or antenna portion 12 and an inner surface of cooling jacket 28). Fluid-tight seal at contact area 32 may be formed by means of an interference fit, a screw junction, various shaped slip fit connections, adhesive, soldering, crimping or other suitable methods for joining two members.

[0034] Cooling jacket 28 is made of an insulating material, such as, for example, a polyimide or similar dielectric material, to avoid shielding microwave radiation around antenna member 16. The outer surface of cooling jacket 28 may also be coated with a suitable lubricious substance to aid in the movement of cooling jacket 28 in or through tissue as well as to aid in preventing tissue from sticking to the outer surface thereof. The coating itself may be made from suitable materials, e.g., polymers, etc.

[0035] Microwave antenna assembly 10 includes one or more inflow tubes 36 to supply cooling fluid to a distal portion 38 of cooling chamber 30. Inflow tubes 36 may include thin-walled polyimide tubes. In operation, a pump (not explicitly shown) supplies cooling fluid (e.g., saline, water or other suitable cooling fluid) to one or more inflow tubes 36 which, in turn, deliver cooling fluid to the distal portion 38 of cooling chamber 30. Inflow tubes 36 may be held in place along cooling jacket 28 by using UV adhesive or other similar suitable adhesives, as well as heat shrink tubing or by other suitable methods.

[0036] Cooling fluid flows through the cooling chamber 30, away from the distal end of microwave antenna assembly 10 to a proximal end thereof, to absorb energy and exists through a cooling fluid return or tube (not explicitly shown). Cooling chamber 30 supplies cooling fluid to feedline 22, thus limiting shaft burn and the length of the ablation area around antenna, limiting

tissue charring, maximizing energy transfer from the generator to the antenna and allowing for a larger radius of ablation area.

[0037] The outer diameter of the cooling jacket 28 defines the cross-sectional size of the microwave antenna assembly 10. The diameter of the cooling jacket 28 should be small enough to limit the invasiveness of a procedure performed with microwave antenna assembly 10. The diameter of the helical antenna member must be small enough to fit inside cooling jacket 28 and to allow for adequate cooling therearound. Helical antenna member 16 may have a helix diameter of between about 0.030" and about 0.060", which allows for a diameter of cooling jacket 28 to be between about 0.80" and about 0.095".

[0038] A proximal end of feedline 22 connects microwave antenna assembly 10 to an electrosurgical power generating source (not explicitly shown), e.g., a generator or other suitable source of radio frequency energy and/or microwave energy, and supplies electrosurgical energy to antenna member 16 of the microwave antenna assembly 10. In operation, during initial insertion into tissue, microwave antenna assembly 10 defines a path through the tissue by virtue of the mechanical geometry of sharpened distal tip 20, and, if needed, by the application of energy to tissue, e.g. electrical, mechanical or electro-mechanical energy.

[0039] Feedline 22 may be formed from a suitable flexible, semi-rigid or rigid microwave conductive cable and may connect directly to an electrosurgical power generating source. Alternatively, feedline 22 may connect to a connector (not shown) capable of conducting electrosurgical energy and configured to connect to an electrosurgical power generation source (not shown) via an electrical cable (not shown).

[0040] Feedline insulation 25 may be disposed between inner conductor 24 and outer conductor 26 to provide insulation therebetween. Feedline insulation 25 may be any suitable dielectric or low loss material, such as, for example, low density, ultra-low density PTFE, or equivalent material including air. As described hereinbelow, at least a portion of the feedline insulation 25 may be removed and/or replaced with a portion of the antenna insulation 18 or other suitable member that reinforces or strengthens feedline 22 and/or antenna member 16.

[0041] Inner conductor 24, outer conductor 26 and/or antenna member 16 may be formed of suitable conductive material including, and not limited to, copper, gold, silver or other conductive metals having similar conductivity values. Alternatively, inner conductor 24, outer conductor 26 and/or antenna member 16 may be constructed from stainless steel or may be plated with other materials, e.g., other conductive materials, such as gold or silver, to improve their respective properties, e.g., to improve conductivity, decrease energy loss, etc.

[0042] As described hereinbelow, inner conductor 24 may be removed and replaced with a suitable inner conductor (not shown) having an antenna member 16 disposed on or about the distal end thereof.

[0043] Antenna member 16 may be formed from an elongated conductive member shaped into a helical configuration. Antenna member 16 may be formed from a portion of the inner conductor 24 that extends distal of the feedline portion 14 into the antenna portion 12. Alternatively, antenna member 16 may be formed from a separate elongated conductive member and attached to inner conductor 24, outer conductor 26 or both using suitable attachment

methods like soldering, crimping or other suitable methods used to attach two elongated conductors.

[0044] The transverse cross-sectional profile of antenna member 16 may be different from the transverse cross-sectional profile of the inner conductor 24. For example, transverse cross-sectional profile of the helical antenna 26 may be selected to facilitate the formation of a helical shape while the transverse cross-sectional profile of the inner conductor 24 may be substantially circular. The transverse cross-sectional profile of antenna member 16 may include a cross-sectional profile having with at least one partially flat surface. The at least one partially flat surface may mechanically aid in the formation of the helical shape. Alternatively, the at least one partially flat surface may provide a contact surface for the adjacent loops of the helical antenna member 16 to make contact with each other.

[0045] The transverse cross-sectional profile, shape and dimension of the antenna member 16 may influence the operative properties of the microwave antenna and affect the ability of the microwave antenna to deliver energy.

[0046] The transverse cross-sectional profile of the antenna member 16 may be altered during the formation of the antenna member 16. For example, prior to the formation of antenna member 16 the transverse cross-sectional shape of the material forming antenna member 16 may have a first transverse cross-sectional profile (e.g., circular or rectangular). Upon the formation of helical antenna 16, or upon a compression of helical antenna 16 after formation, the first transverse cross-sectional profile of the material may change to a second transverse cross-sectional profile.

[0047] A layer of antenna insulation 18 (e.g., 0.0025" - .005" PET, PTFE or similar material) is placed around helical antenna member 16 to completely insulate antenna member 16 from cooling fluid. The thickness and type of antenna insulation 18 may also be selected to effectively match the impedance of the antenna member 16 to tissue. Other means of insulating antenna member 16 from cooling water may be used, such as, for example, to surround antenna member 16 with adhesive, epoxy or similar materials

[0048] At least two of the loops forming helical antenna member 16 are in electrical contact with each other, at one contact point, thereby forming a loop contact area 16a. As illustrated in FIG. 2, contact between the two or more loops in the loop contact area 116a may be achieved by simply wrapping the loops of the helix in close proximity to one another or the loops may be compressed to create contact between one or more loops. Various transverse cross-sectional profiles may also be selected to achieve contact between one or more loops. Elongated material that forms the helical antenna member 16, 116 may have one or more flat surfaces to increase the electrical contact surface between the plurality of helical loops. The axial position of the loop contact area 16a, 116a along the helical antenna member 16, 116 may vary. For example, the loop contact area of FIG. 1 is located toward the middle or distal portion of the helical antenna member 16 and the loop contact area 116a of FIG. 2 is located toward the middle of the helical antenna member 116. The loop contact area may be located at various axial locations on the helical antenna member as illustrated in other embodiments contained herewithin.

[0049] The figures herewithin are illustrative of the various embodiments and should not be construed as limiting. For example, FIG. 1 illustrates a helical antenna member 16 with six

helical loops and a loop contact area 16a including two loops and FIG. 2 illustrates a helical antenna member 116 with eleven helical loops and a loop contact area 116a including four loops. The actual number of loops in the helical antenna and the actual number of loops in the loop contact area may include any number of loops based on the selected properties of the helical antenna. The selected properties may include generator frequency, required ablation size, required ablation dimensions and microwave assembly dimension. Contact between loops may be any include any suitable contact, such as for example, a single point, a single tangential point or a plurality of points along an arcuate length.

[0050] The plurality of wraps or loops of the helical antenna member 16 may be axially compressed to allow at least one or more of the helical loops to make electrical contact with each other. The transverse cross-sectional profile of the material that forms the helical antenna member 16 may vary along its length to influence the properties of the helical antenna member 16 and to suitably match the helical antenna member 16 to the target tissue.

[0051] Turning now to FIG. 2, another embodiment of a microwave antenna assembly in accordance with the present disclosure is designated as 100. Microwave antenna assembly 100 is substantially similar to microwave antenna assembly 10 and thus will only be described herein to the extent necessary to identify differences in construction and operation. Microwave antenna assembly 100 includes a shaft cooling jacket 128 and an antenna cooling jacket 129. Distal end of antenna cooling jacket 129 forms a fluid-tight seal with sharpened distal tip 120 at contact area 132. Proximal end of antenna cooling jacket 129 forms a fluid-tight seal with shaft cooling jacket 128 at contact area 133. The fluid-tight seals at contact areas 132, 133 may be formed by

means of an interference fit, a screw junction, various shaped slip fit connections, adhesive, soldering, crimping or other suitable methods for joining and sealing two members.

[0052] As mentioned above, loop contact area 116a of FIG. 2 is located near the middle of the helical antenna member 116. The pitch, or distance between adjacent loops, in the loop contact area 116a is different than the pitch outside of the loop contact area 116a.

[0053] Shaft cooling jacket 128, antenna cooling jacket 129 and sharpened distal tip form a fluid-tight seal to define a cooling chamber 130 about at least antenna member 16. At least one inflow tube 136 supplies cooling fluid to a distal portion 138 of cooling chamber 130.

[0054] The antenna cooling jacket 129 is formed of an insulating material, such as, for example, a polyimide or similar dielectric material, to avoid shielding microwave radiation around antenna member 116. The shaft cooling jacket 128, which does not surround the antenna member 116, does not need to have insulating properties and can be formed of a suitable conductive or non conductive material, such as, for example, stainless steel hypotube, other metal or plastic tubes. It is desirable to maintain the same outer diameter for the cooling jackets 128, 129 to avoid steps along the outer surface of the device.

[0055] The outer surface of cooling jackets 128, 129 may also be coated. The coating is a suitable lubricious substance to aid in the movement of cooling jacket in tissue as well as to aid in preventing tissue from sticking to the outer surface thereof. The coating itself may be made from suitable conventional materials, e.g., polymers, etc.

Helical Antenna Geometries

[0056] The microwave antenna assemblies of the present disclosure include a helical microwave antenna to create lesions in tissue. As illustrated in FIG. 3, feedline 122 includes an outer conductor 126 and an inner conductor 124 separated by insulation 125. Helical antenna member 116 may be formed of a suitable conductive member that extends distally from the feedline 122 and forms a helical or spiral geometry, including a plurality of turns, loops or wraps, with each turn, loop or wrap spaced by a pitch “S”, a diameter “D”, and a length of “L”. The pitch “S” between two loops in electrical contact is approximately equal to zero. Antenna member 116 may be a portion of the inner conductor 124 that extends distally beyond the outer conductor 126, as illustrated in FIG. 3. Alternatively, helical antenna member 116 may be a separate elongated member that connects to the inner conductor 124, outer conductor 126 or both, as illustrated hereinbelow.

[0057] In some embodiments herein, the energy delivered and the magnetic field generated by helical antenna member 116 is dependent on several factors, including and not limited to the diameter “D”, the length “L” and the pitch “S” thereof. The helical antenna member 116 radiates microwave energy at a frequency wavelength of “ λ ”. When “ D/λ ” is relatively small, the helical antenna member 116 operates in a normal mode and the energy field generated by the helical antenna member 116 resembles a monopole antenna.

[0058] The optimum length “L” of helical antenna member 116 depends on the diameter “D” but can usually be selected to have a length “L” of approximately 0.4” to 0.6” for diameters “D” of approximately 0.04”.

[0059] By varying the geometry of helical antenna member 116, the helical antenna member 116 may operate in a unidirectional or axial mode. Helical antennas members 116 may operate in a unidirectional or axial mode if the range of " $(\pi D)/\lambda$ " is between about 0.75 and 1.33. At 915 Mhz and at diameters "D" of interest in an interstitial application, " D/λ " will be relatively small. Consequently, energy radiation will be similar to a monopole, e.g., perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the helix.

[0060] In addition, in some embodiments described herewithin, the helical antenna member 116 may include a loop contact area 116a, as described above. The energy delivered and the magnetic field generated by the helical antenna member 116 may be dependant on at least one characteristic of the loop contact area 116a. For example, energy delivered and the magnetic field generated may change dependant upon: the position of the loop contact area 116a, the number and/or pitch of the loops within the loop contact area 116a, the quality and/or amount of the contact between loops and the cross-sectional area of the loops within the loop contact area 116a or any combination thereof.

[0061] A variety of methods may be used to create the loop contact area 116a. Contact between the two or more loops may occur due to the positioning of two or more loops in close proximity to each other. As illustrated in FIG. 1, the loop contact area 16a may be formed by repositioning one or more loops such that contact occurs between loops. In another method contact area may be created by deforming one or more loops, thereby increasing the width of the loops, such that contact is made between two or more loops.

[0062] In another method, the two or more loops are joined to one another by soldering, welding, brazing or any other suitable method known by one having skill in the art. Alternatively, a jumper may connect two or more loops together or other suitable methods and means may be used to connect two or more loops.

[0063] Various geometries for helical antenna members 116 are illustrated in FIGS. 4A-4F with FIGS. 4A-4C illustrating helical antenna members known in the art. FIG. 4A illustrates a microwave antenna assembly 100 including a helical antenna member 116 having a clockwise helical configuration, and FIG. 4B illustrates a microwave antenna assembly 101 including a helical antenna member 116 having a counter-clockwise helical configuration. The direction of the magnetic field generated by each microwave antenna assembly 100, 101 is dependant on the orientation of the helix of helical antenna member 116. Therefore, the energy fields generated by antennas assemblies 100, 101, with similar sizes, are opposite in direction.

[0064] As illustrated in FIGS. 4C and 4D, respective microwave antenna assemblies 102, 103 include inner conductors 124 that contact the helical antenna member 116 at a distal end thereof. In FIG. 4C the helical antenna member 116 contacts a distal end 126a of the outer conductor 126. Alternatively, as illustrated in FIG. 4D, the helical antenna member 116 may not contact or may be spaced away from distal end 126a of outer conductor 126. Although helical antenna members 116 and inner conductors 124 are illustrated as separate elements, the inner conductors 124 and helical antenna members 116 may or may not be separate elements in any of the embodiments contained herein.

[0065] In FIG. 4E, a microwave antenna assembly 104 includes a helical antenna member 116 having a proximal end in contact with a distal end of outer conductor 126. Helical antenna member 116 is positioned radially about a portion of the inner conductor 124 that extends distally from the distal end of outer conductor 126 and is positioned substantially along the radial center of helical antenna member 116.

[0066] In FIGS. 4A-4E, the helical antenna member 116 may be modified by forming an electrical connection between two or more of the loops of the helical antenna member 116, as described and taught herewithin.

[0067] FIGS. 4F-4I illustrate respective microwave antenna assemblies 105-108 including helical antenna members 116a, 116b forming a double helix or double spirals. Each microwave antenna assembly 105-108 includes a first helical antenna member 116a oriented in a first direction, and a second helical antenna member 116b oriented in a second direction. First helical antenna member 116a is formed from, or connects to, the inner conductor 124. Second helical antenna member 116b connects to a distal end of outer conductor 126.

[0068] In FIGS. 4G and 4I, the distal end of first helical antenna member 116a and the distal end of second antennal member 116b connect at the distal end of microwave antenna 105, 108.

Structurally Strengthened Helical Antenna Members

[0069] Any of the aforementioned microwave antenna assemblies can be strengthened by adding rigid members inside the helix of the helical antenna members. Rigid members may be made of ceramic, hard plastic or other suitable rigid dielectric material as well as insulated metal.

The rigid members may extend from the helical antenna members into the feedline to give rigidity to the entire microwave antenna assembly, to the transition point between the feedline and the helical antenna member.

[0070] FIG. 5A illustrates the helical antenna member of FIG. 4D without a rigid member and FIG. 5B illustrates the helical antenna member of FIG. 4D with a rigid member 218 disposed therewithin.

[0071] As seen in FIG. 5B, a rigid member 218 may support a helical antenna member 216b of microwave antenna assembly 200b, at least a portion of the inner conductor 224 and/or at least a portion of the feedline 222. Rigid member 218 may be formed of appropriate insulating or non-conducting material provided the material is sufficiently rigid/stiff and does not materially or significantly impair the ability of the microwave antenna assembly 200b to deliver microwave energy.

[0072] With reference to FIGS. 5A and 5B, rigid member 218 provides support to microwave antenna assembly 200b at two locations "A" and "B". An inner lumen 218a, formed in the substantial radial center of rigid member 218, provides support for inner conductor 224. Helical antenna member 216b is formed or wrapped around the outer perimeter 218b of rigid member 218. Rigid member 218 aids in preservation of the helical shape and prevents deformation of helical antenna member 216b.

[0073] At least a portion of rigid member 218 may extend into feedline 222 and provide support for the distal portion of feedline 222. Rigid member 218 provides support for helical antenna member 216b and provides a transition between feedline 222 and antenna portion 212.

[0074] Rigid member 218 may have a uniform longitudinal/transverse cross-sectional area and/or dimension as illustrated in FIG. 5B. Alternatively, cross-sectional area and/or dimension of rigid member 218 may vary at one or more locations along a length thereof. For example, the portion of the rigid member 218 disposed within outer conductor 226 of feedline 222 may have a first cross-sectional area and/or dimension and the portion of rigid member 218 distal of the distal end of feedline 222 may have a second cross-sectional area and/or dimension. Alternatively, at least a portion of a length of rigid member 218 may be tapered.

Method of Forming a Rigid Helical Antenna Member

[0075] FIGS. 6A and 6B illustrate the addition of a rigid member 318 to the helical antenna member 101 of FIG. 4B. As illustrated in FIG. 6A, in the proximal portion “A” of the helical antenna member 316a, the inner conductor 224 transitions from the center of the feedline 322 to the proximal end of helical portion of the antenna portion 312a.

[0076] FIG. 6B illustrates a structural rigid helical antenna assembly 330b formed from the helical antenna member 300a of FIG. 6A and including a rigid member 318 disposed therewithin. Rigid member 318 may provide a transition between the feedlines 222 and the antenna 312b and may provide strength to portions “A” and “B” of the antenna 312a, 312b. At least a portion of rigid member 318 is disposed within outer conductor 326 of feedline 322 and a portion of rigid member 318 extends beyond the distal portion of the outer conductor 326. The cross-sectional dimension of the portion of rigid member 318 extending beyond the distal portion of the outer conductor 326 is substantially similar to the cross-sectional dimension of the feedline 322.

[0077] Rigid member 318 defines a lumen 318a formed in at least a portion of the proximal portion “A” and provides support for inner conductor 324 as it transitions from the center of the feedline 322 to the helical portion of the antenna 312b. A cross-sectional dimension of lumen 318a may conform to the dimensions of inner conductor 324 contained therewithin or lumen 318a may be slotted and may slidably engage inner conductor 324. The lumen 318a of rigid member 318 disposed within the feedline 322 may be substantially centered within rigid member 318. In the proximal portion “A” of antenna portion 312b, helical antenna member 316b transitions from the center of the feedline 322 to an outer surface 318b of rigid member 318. Lumen 318a of rigid member 318 supports helical antenna member 316a during the transition from the center of feedline 322 to the outer surface 318b of rigid member 318.

[0078] The cross-sectional dimension of the portion of the rigid member 318, disposed within the outer conductor 326, is substantially equal to the cross-sectional dimension of the inner diameter of the outer conductor 326. Rigid member 318 and outer conductor 326 engage and form connection therebetween. Various methods of engagement may be used to secure rigid member 318 within outer conductor 326 such as, for example, a press fit engagement, a threaded engagement, locking tab engagement, a taper lock engagement, chemical engagement, e.g., adhesive or epoxy, or any other suitable engagement method or means.

[0079] As illustrated in FIGS. 7A-7G, helical antenna assembly 330b of FIG. 6B may be obtained by adding a structurally rigid member to the helical antenna assembly 330a of FIG. 6A. Helical antenna assembly 330b of FIG. 6B includes a first assembly 440, including a modified feedline 322 and formed by the method illustrated in FIG. 7A-7C, and a second assembly 441, including an inner conductor 324, a helical antenna member 316b, and rigid member 318.

[0080] As illustrated in FIGS. 7A-7C and 7G, first assembly 440 is formed by taking a feedline/coaxial cable 422 of sufficient length and removing inner conductor 424 therefrom to expose coaxial cable 422a with only the outer conductor 426 and insulation 425 (Step 450). Next, a portion of the insulation 425 from the distal portion of the coaxial cable 422b is removed (Step 451).

[0081] As illustrated in FIGS. 7C-7F and the flowchart of FIG. 7G, the second assembly 441 is formed by joining helical antenna member 416 and rigid member 418 (Step 452). Helical antenna member 416 may be formed from a portion of any suitable elongated conductive member as discussed hereinabove. At least a portion of helical antenna member 416 is placed within the lumen 418a of rigid member 418. A suitable length of helical antenna member 416 extends distally from the distal end of rigid member 418.

[0082] In the formation of the second assembly 441, helical antenna member 416 may be tightly wound around rigid member 418 such that helical antenna member 416 is compressed onto rigid member 418. Alternatively, helical antenna member 416 may be compressed on rigid member 418 such that two or more adjacent windings of helical antenna member 416 contact one another, as discussed hereinabove. Rigid member 418 may contain grooves in which helical antenna member 416 is contained. Alternatively, the helical antenna member 416 may be formed by depositing metal onto the rigid member 418 and the feedline 422 may connect to the helix in any suitable manner, e.g., solder, crimp adhesive, etc.

[0083] The cross-sectional area and dimension, along the length of helical antenna member 416, as discussed hereinabove, need not be uniform. For example, the cross-section of

the helical portion of helical antenna member 417 may have one or more sides that are substantially flat or may have a transverse cross-sectional dimension of any suitable shape, such as, for example, circular, rectangular, square or oblong.

[0084] As illustrated by opposing arrows 453 in FIG. 6B and by step 453 of flowchart of FIG. 7G, the structurally rigid helical antenna is formed by joining the first assembly 440 and the second assembly 441. The joining of first assembly 440 and second assembly 441 is performed by inserting the proximal portion of second assembly 441 into the distal portion of first assembly 440, wherein the distal portion of helical antenna member 316b forms the inner conductor 324 of the feedline 322. At least a portion of rigid member 318 of second assembly 441 may be disposed within at least a portion of first assembly 440 in that region where the insulation 325 has been removed.

[0085] With continued reference to FIG. 6B, a distal portion of the outer conductor 326 of the first assembly 440 engages a proximal portion of rigid member 318 of the second assembly 441. Various methods of engagement may be used to secure the rigid member 418 within outer conductor 326, such as, for example, a press fit engagement, a threaded engagement, locking tab engagement, a taper lock engagement, chemical engagement, e.g., adhesive or epoxy, or any other suitable engagement method or means.

[0086] FIGS. 8A-8B illustrate the microwave antenna assembly of FIG. 4C with the addition of a rigid member and an electrical connection formed in the loop contact area 516a between at least two loops of the helical microwave antenna 516. In FIG. 8A, the antenna portion 512a includes a proximal portion "A" and a distal portion "B". In the proximal portion

“A” helical antenna member 516 connects to a distal portion of outer conductor 526. The distal portion “B” of helical antenna member 516 includes the helical shaped portion of helical antenna member 516 and a portion of the inner conductor 524 that extends distally from the feedline 522 and connects to the distal end of the helical portion of the antenna portion 516.

[0087] FIG. 8B illustrates the microwave antenna assembly 500 of FIG. 8A with a rigid member 518 for supporting helical antenna member 516 in the antenna portion 512b. A portion of rigid member 518 is disposed within outer conductor 526 of feedline 522 and a portion of rigid member 518 extends beyond the distal portion of the outer conductor 526. The cross-sectional dimension of the portion of rigid member 518 extending beyond the distal portion of the outer conductor 526 is substantially similar to the cross-sectional area of the feedline 522.

[0088] Rigid member 518 defines a lumen 518a, located at the radial center of thereof, and extends through a substantial portion thereof. Lumen 518a of rigid member 518 provides a support pathway for the portion of the inner conductor 524 that extends from the distal end of the feedline 522 to the distal end of helical antenna member 518 of antenna portion 512b. Lumen 518a, at the distal end of rigid member 518, is angled to extend from the radial center of rigid member 518 to a perimeter 518b of rigid member 518.

[0089] The cross-sectional dimension of the rigid member 518, disposed within the outer conductor 526, is substantially similar to the inner diameter of the outer conductor 526. Rigid member 518 and outer conductor 526 engage and form a connection therebetween. Various methods of engagement may be used to secure the rigid member 518 within outer conductor 526 such as, for example, a press fit engagement, a threaded engagement, locking tab engagement, a

taper lock engagement, chemical engagement, e.g., adhesive or epoxy, or any other suitable engagement method or means.

[0090] Structural rigidity of microwave antenna member 500 (see FIG. 8B), may be obtained by the steps illustrated in FIGS. 9A – 9F and the flowchart of FIG. 9G. As seen in FIG. 8B, helical microwave antenna assembly 501 includes a first assembly 540 obtained by the method illustrated in FIGS. 9A-9C and a second assembly 541 obtained by the method illustrated in FIGS. 9D-9F.

[0091] As illustrated in FIGS. 9A-9C and the flowchart of FIG. 9G, the first assembly 540 is formed by taking a feedline/coaxial cable 522 of sufficient length and removing the inner conductor 524 to expose the coaxial cable 522a with only the outer conductor 526 and insulation 525 (Step 550). Next, a portion of the insulation 525 from the distal portion of the coaxial cable 522b is removed, (Step 551).

[0092] As illustrated in FIGS. 9C-9F and the flowchart of FIG. 9G, the second assembly 541 is formed by joining helical antenna member 516 and rigid member 518 (Step 552). Helical antenna member 516 may be formed from a portion of any suitable elongated conductive member as discussed hereinabove. At least a portion of helical antenna member 516 is placed within the lumen 518a of rigid member 518. A suitable length of helical antenna member 516 extends distally from the distal end of rigid member 518.

[0093] The structurally rigid helical antenna is formed by joining the first assembly 540 and second assembly 541 as illustrated by opposing arrows 553 in FIG. 8B and Step 553 of FIG. 9G. The joining of first assembly 540 and second assembly 541 may be performed by inserting

the proximal portion of second assembly 541 into the distal portion of first assembly 540. A suitable length of helical antenna member 516 may form the inner conductor 524 of the feedline 522. At least a portion of rigid member 518 of second assembly 541 may be disposed within at least a portion of first assembly 540 in the region where the insulation 525 has been removed.

[0094] Next, the proximal end of helical antenna member 516 is connected to the distal portion of the outer conductor 526 (Step 554). Connection may be formed by soldering, welding, crimping or other suitable means of connecting two conductive members.

[0095] In accordance with the present disclosure, the contact area 516a may be formed prior to joining the helical antenna member 516 with rigid member. Contact area may be formed while joining or after joining the helical antenna member 516 and rigid member 518. Contact area 16a, 116a, as illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 3, may be formed by positioning, or repositioning one or more loops of the helical antenna 16, 116 to form a contact area 16a, 116a between two or more loops. Loop positioning or loop repositioning may be performed after helical antenna member is disposed on a rigid member thereby creating contact between at least two loops. Alternatively, one or more loops may be compressed and /or deformed thus widening one or more loops thereby creating contact between at least two loops.

[0096] The present application discloses cooled helical antennas, various helical antenna geometries, structurally strengthened helical antennas and methods of forming a rigid helical antenna. It is envisioned that the various embodiments described hereinabove may be combined. For example, the methods of forming a rigid helical antenna may be applied to any of the various geometries disclosed and the structurally strengthened helical antennas may be combined and

incorporated in the cooled helical microwave antenna assemblies. Modification of the above-described assemblies and methods, and variations of aspects of the disclosure that are obvious to those of skill in the art are intended to be within the scope of the claims.

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. A microwave antenna assembly, comprising:

an elongated cooling jacket having proximal and distal ends and an inner lumen defined therebetween;

a helical microwave antenna member disposed within at least a portion of the elongated cooling jacket and having an inner and outer conductor, the inner conductor disposed within the outer conductor, wherein at least a portion of the inner conductor extends distally from the outer conductor and forms a plurality of loops; wherein at least two loops of the plurality of loops forms an electrical connection therebetween, and wherein at least a portion of the plurality of loops is configured to deliver microwave energy.
2. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 1, further comprising a rigid member that supports the helical microwave antenna, wherein the rigid member engages the distal portion of the outer conductor.
3. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 2, wherein the rigid member defines a lumen therewithin; and wherein at least a portion of the inner conductor of the helical microwave antenna is disposed within the lumen of the rigid member.
4. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 3, wherein the at least one loop of the helical microwave antenna member is disposed on the periphery of the rigid member.

5. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 1 further including:
a sharpened tip adapted to penetrate tissue and attached to the distal end of the elongated cooling jacket and forming a fluid-tight seal; and
at least one inflow tube that supplies cooling fluid to the distal end of the elongated cooling jacket.
6. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 2, wherein the rigid member comprises a dielectric material.
7. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 2, wherein a transverse cross-section of a portion of the inner conductor disposed within the outer conductor is different than a transverse cross section of the inner conductor that extends distally from the outer conductor.
8. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 2, wherein the inner conductor of the helical microwave antenna member further comprises:
a feedline conductive member; and
a helical conductive member connected to the distal end of the feedline conductive member;
wherein a substantial portion of the feedline conductive member is disposed within the outer conductor and a substantial portion of the helical conductive member is distal of the outer conductor.

9. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 8, wherein a transverse cross-section of the feedline conductive member is different than a transverse cross-section of the helical conductive member.

10. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 1, wherein the elongated cooling jacket comprises a dielectric material.

11. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 5, wherein the elongated cooling jacket further comprises:

a proximal jacket portion; and

a distal jacket portion disposed between, and attached to, the proximal jacket portion and the sharpened tip;

wherein a plurality of the at least two loops of the helical microwave antenna member is disposed within the distal jacket portion of the elongated cooling jacket.

12. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 11, wherein the distal jacket portion comprises a dielectric material.

13. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 12, further comprising a lubricious coating disposed on an outer surface thereof.

14. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 12, wherein a proximal jacket portion comprises a conductive material.

15. A helical microwave antenna, comprising:

a first assembly including:

a tubular outer conductor defining a longitudinal lumen therethrough; and

an insulating member, disposed within at least a portion of the lumen of the outer conductor and defining a longitudinal lumen therewithin; and

a second assembly including:

an elongated conductive member forming a helical loop portion and a feedline portion; and

a rigid member defining a lumen therewithin, the lumen of the rigid member adapted to receive at least a portion of the elongated conductive member, wherein the helical loop portion of the elongated conductive member is disposed on the periphery of a distal portion of the rigid member and at least a portion of the feedline portion extends proximally from the rigid member;

wherein a proximal portion of the second assembly is adapted to engage a distal portion of the first assembly, and wherein at least a portion of the feedline portion of the elongated conductive member is disposed within the lumen of the insulating member.

16. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 15, wherein the helical loop portion of the elongated conductive member includes a plurality of loops and at least two loops of the plurality of loops form an electrical connection therebetween.

17. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 15, wherein the outer conductor of the first assembly engages the rigid member of the second assembly.

18. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 17, wherein the proximal portion of the second assembly is engaged to the distal portion of the first assembly by at least one of a press fit engagement, a threaded engagement, a taper lock engagement and a chemical engagement.

19. A microwave antenna assembly, comprising:
a feedline configured to supply microwave energy;
a helical microwave antenna connected to a distal end of the feedline, the helical microwave antenna being configured to transmit microwave energy; and
a rigid member for supporting the helical microwave antenna, wherein at least a portion of the rigid member engages at least a portion of the feedline and wherein at least a portion of the feedline is disposed within the rigid member.

20. The microwave antenna assembly according to Claim 19, wherein the helical microwave antenna includes a plurality of loops and at least two loops of the plurality of loops form an electrical connection therebetween.

21. The microwave antenna assembly according to 20, wherein at least one of the electrical connections is formed by one of positioning of a loop during assembly, repositioning a loop after assembly, soldering, welding, brazing and widening a loop by one of compressing and deforming at least one loop.

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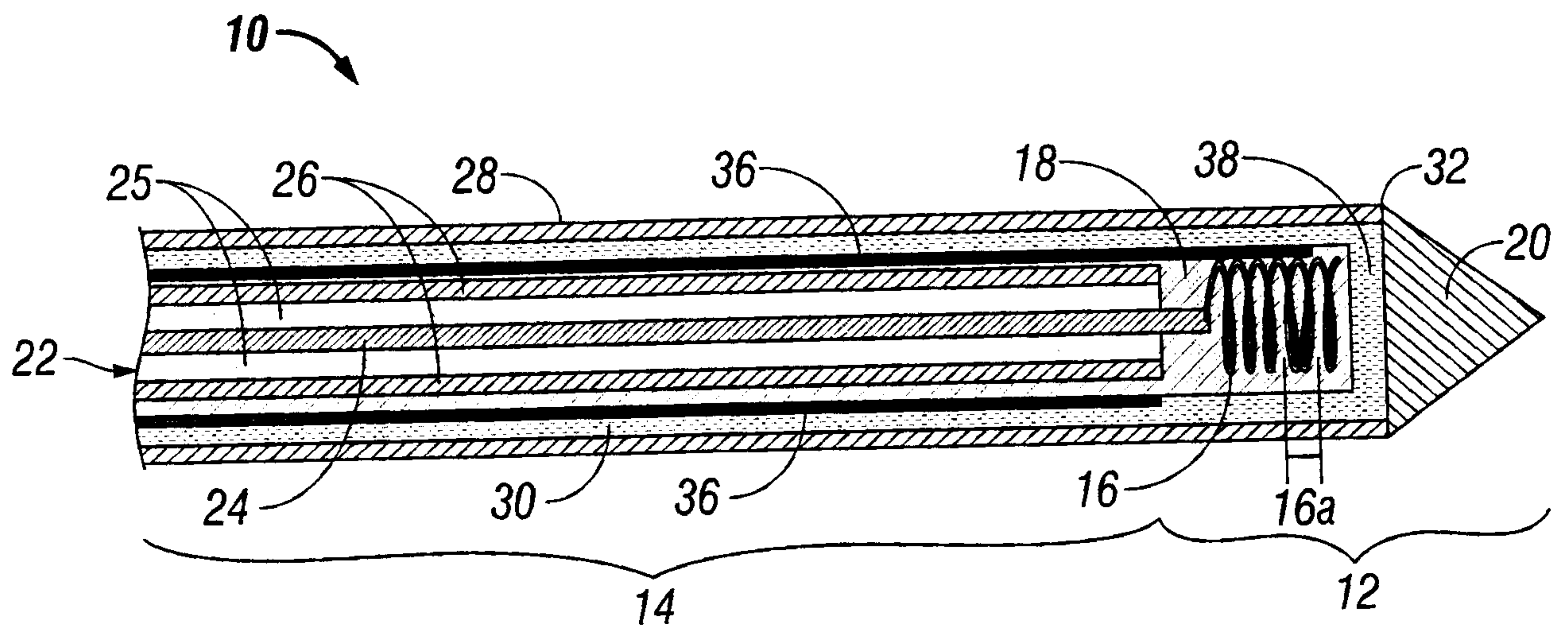


FIG. 1

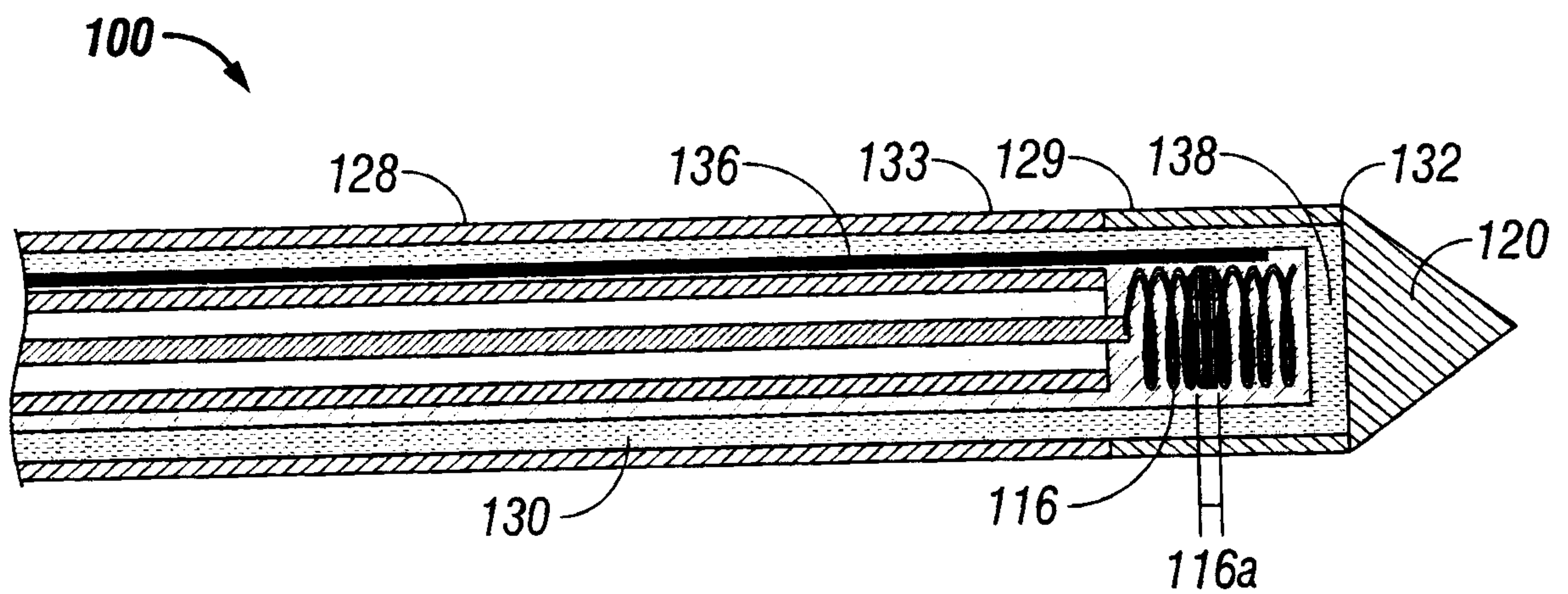


FIG. 2

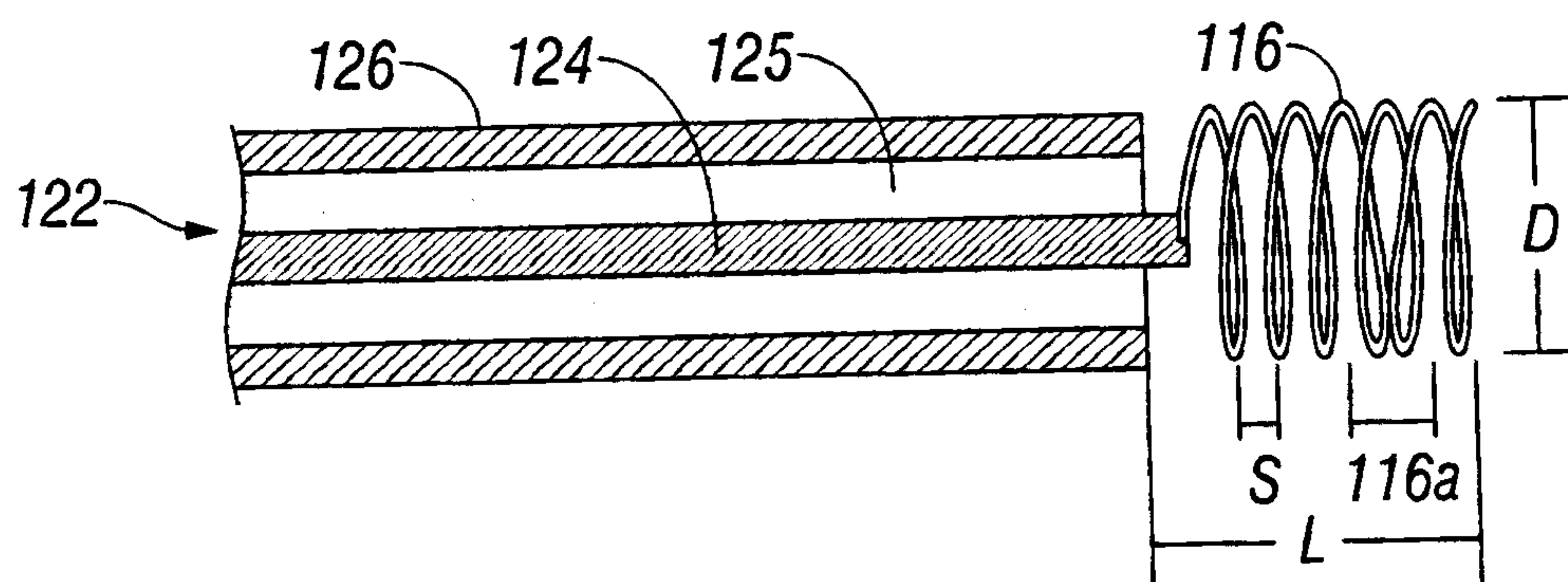


FIG. 3

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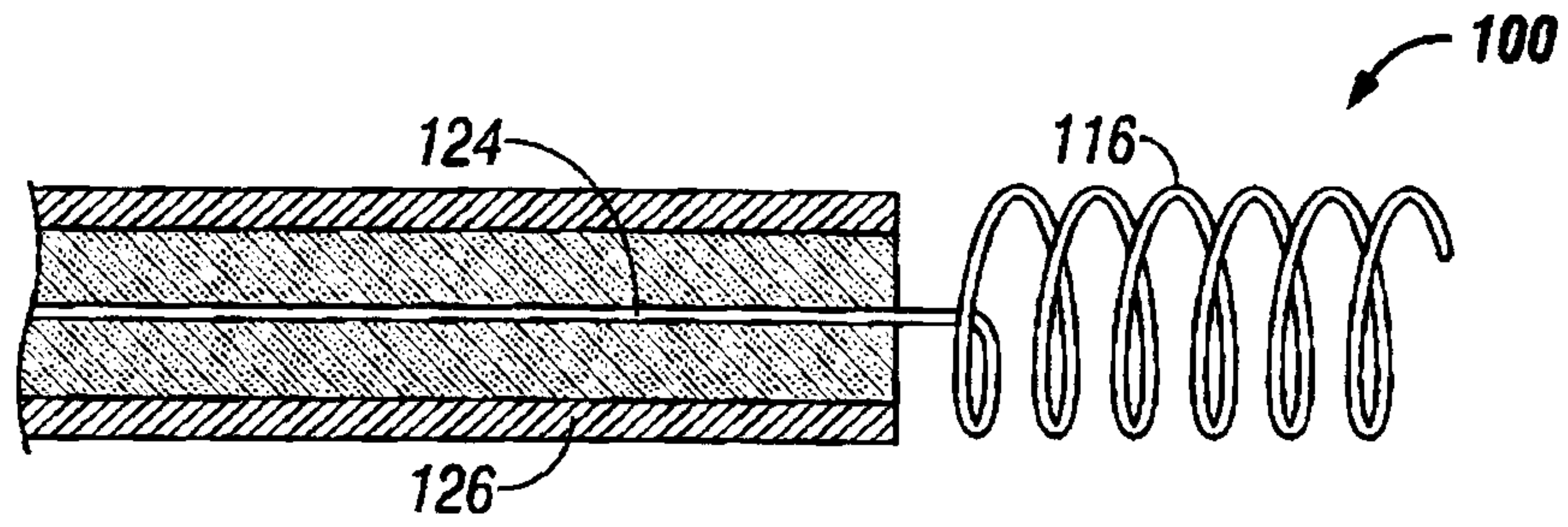


FIG. 4A
(Prior Art)

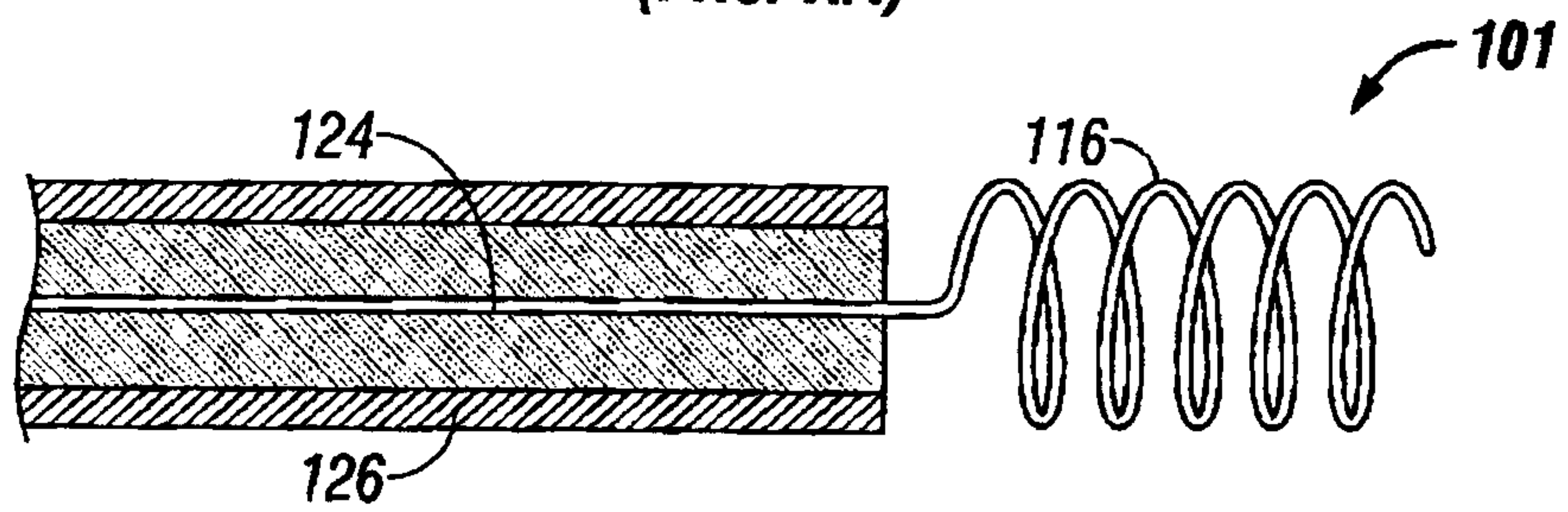


FIG. 4B
(Prior Art)

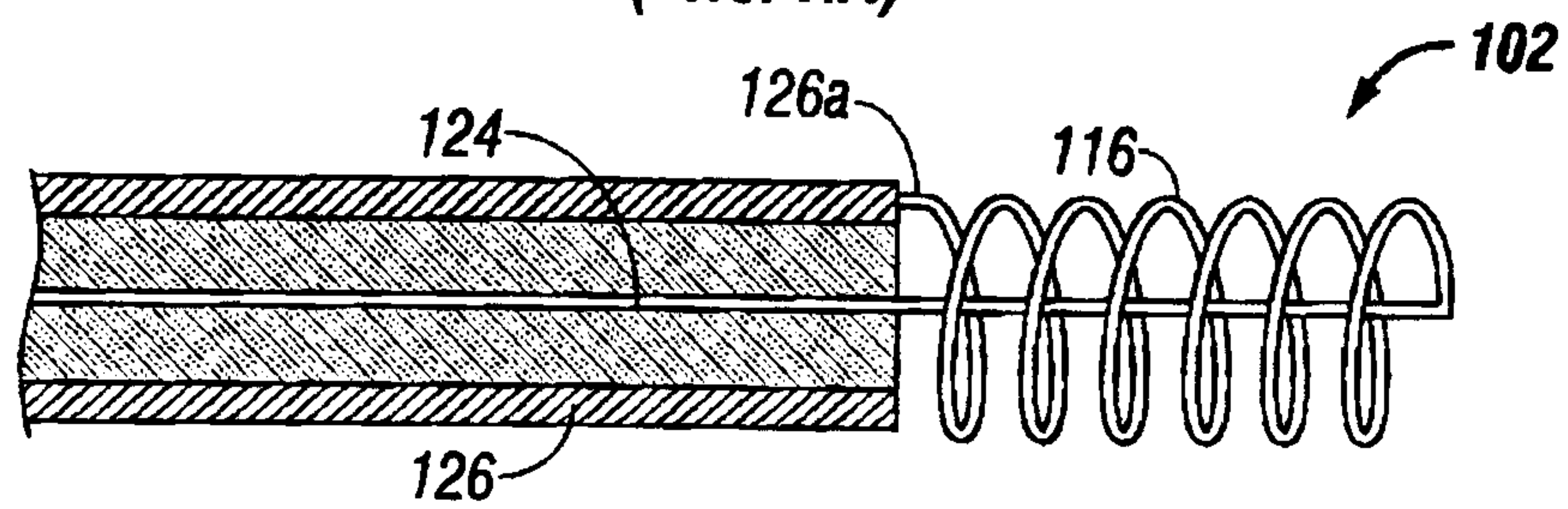


FIG. 4C
(Prior Art)

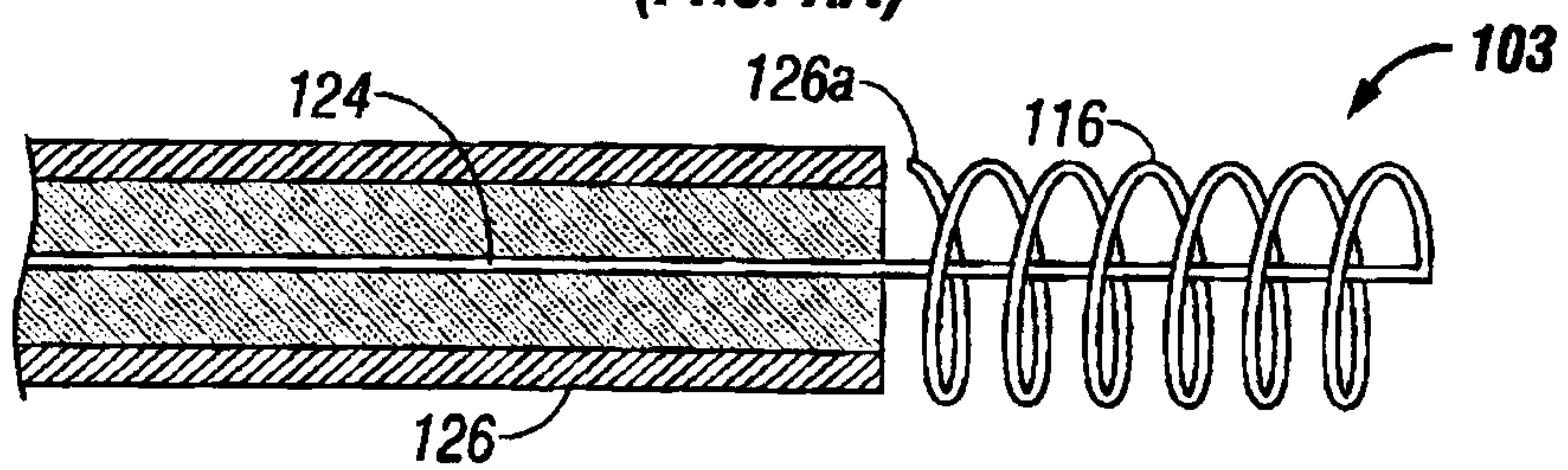


FIG. 4D

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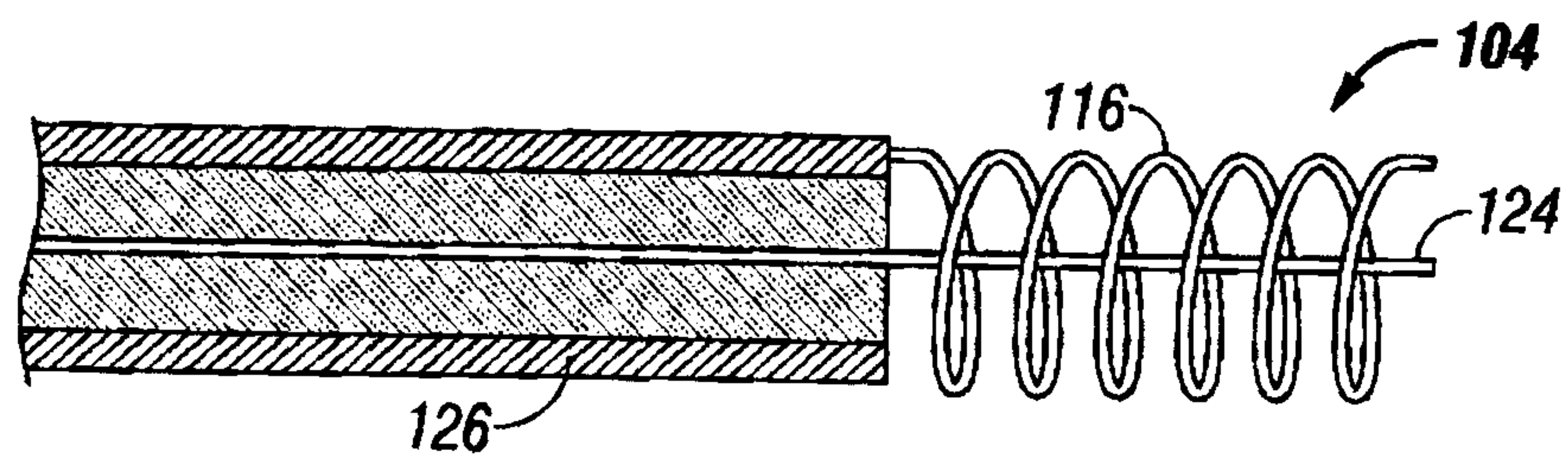


FIG. 4E

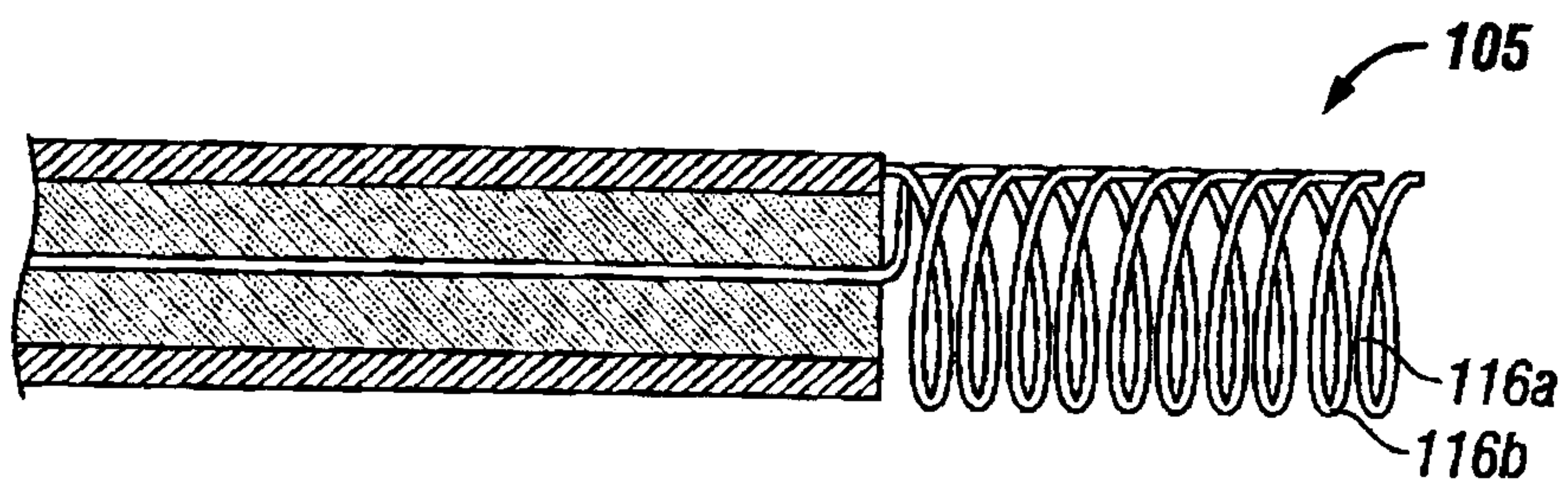


FIG. 4F

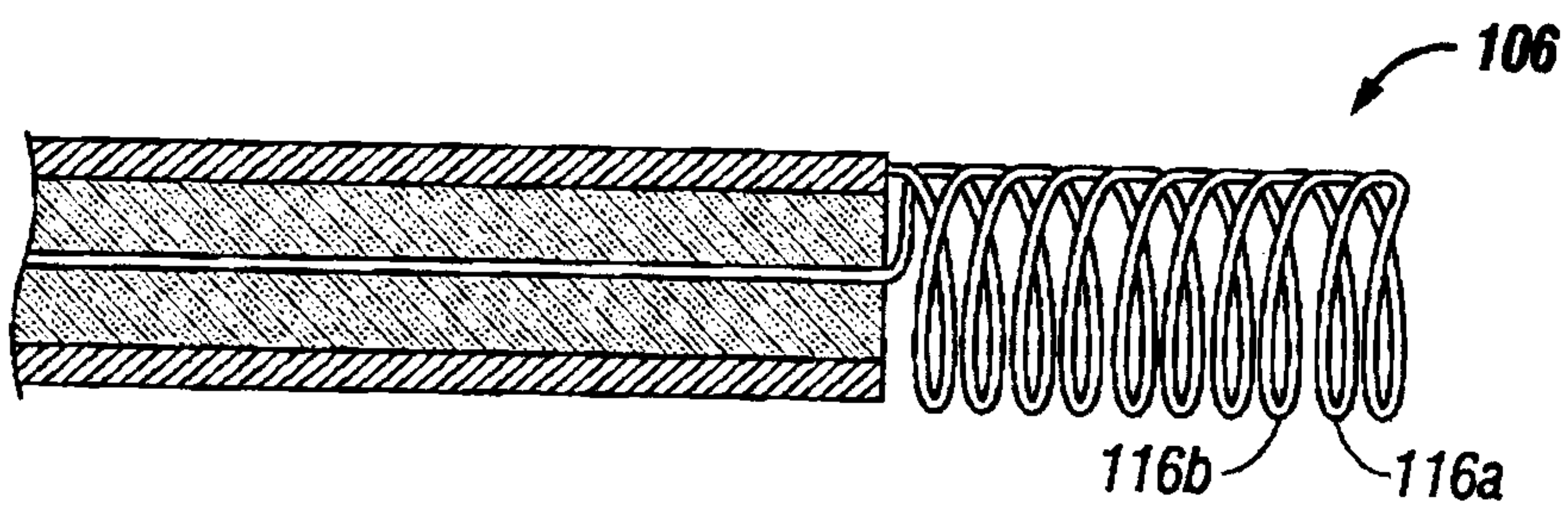


FIG. 4G

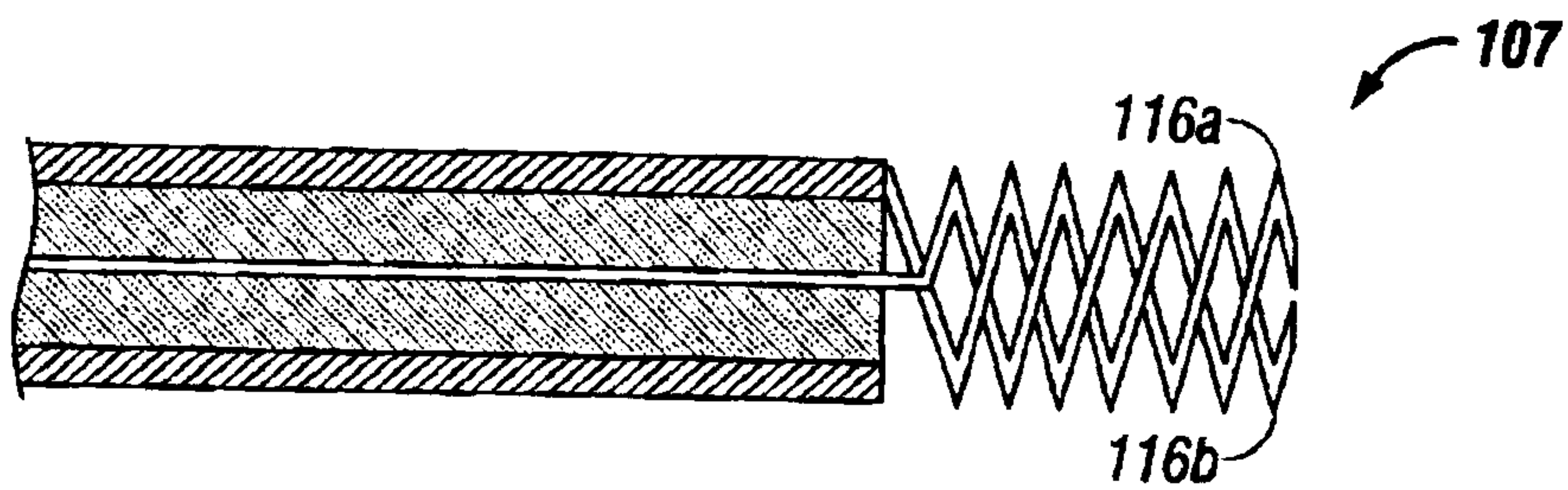


FIG. 4H

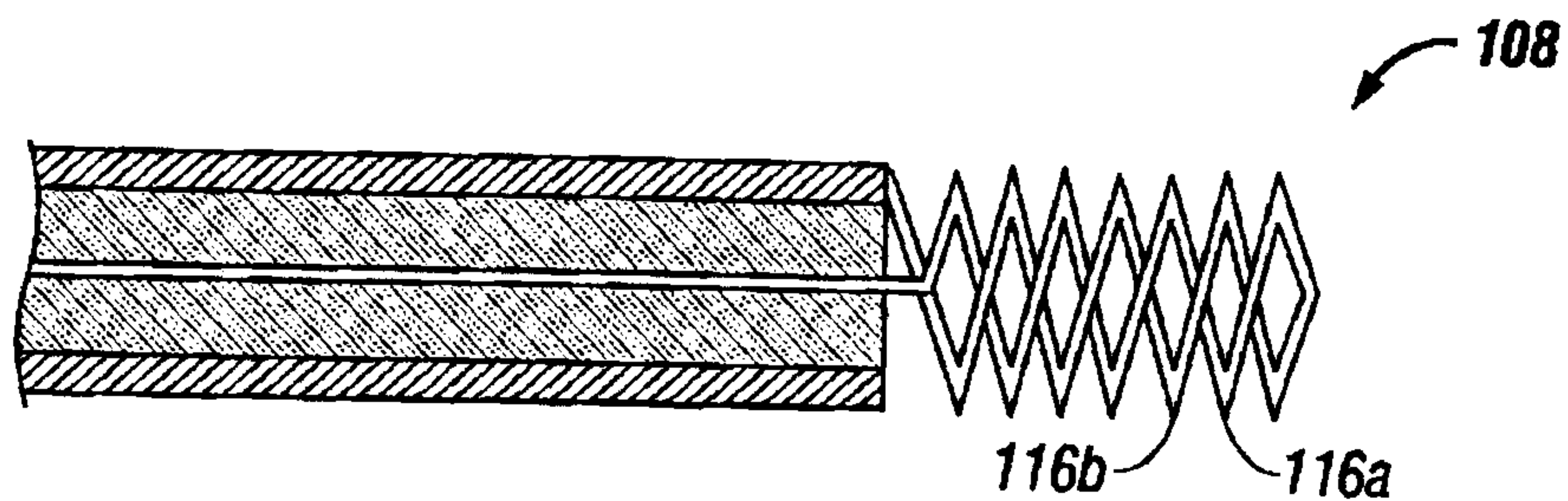


FIG. 4I

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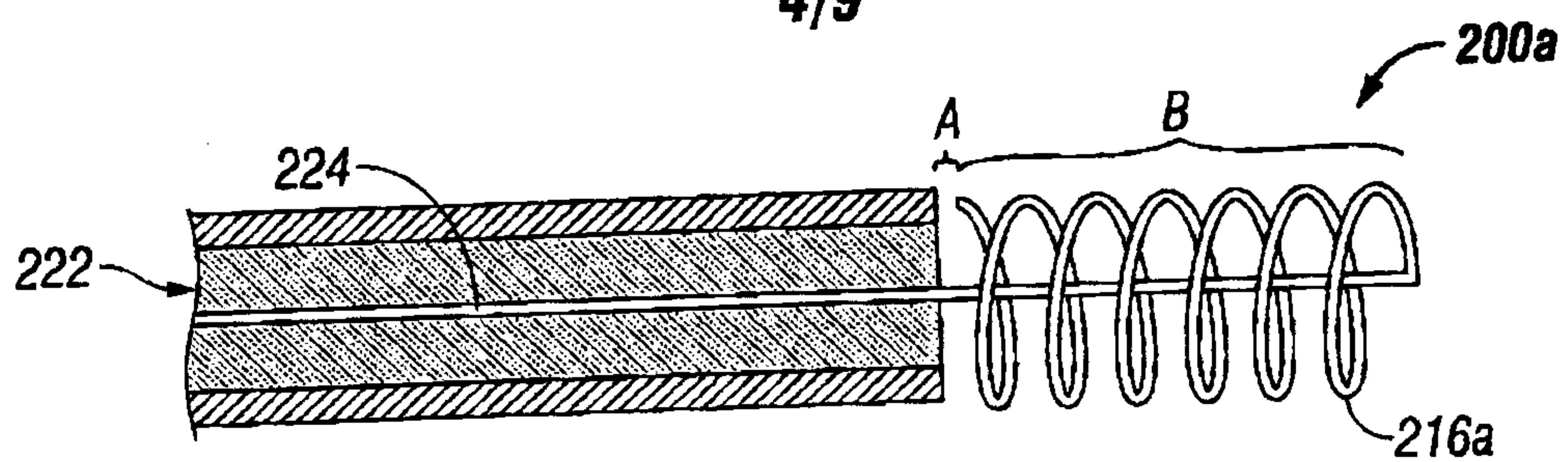


FIG. 5A

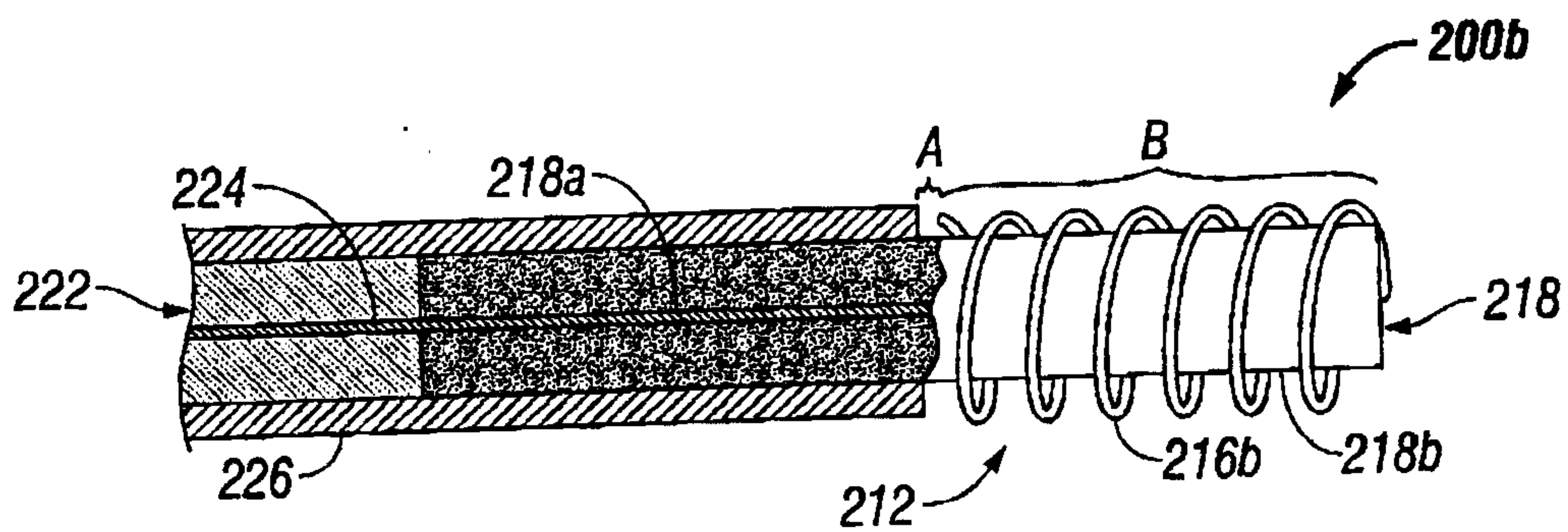


FIG. 5B

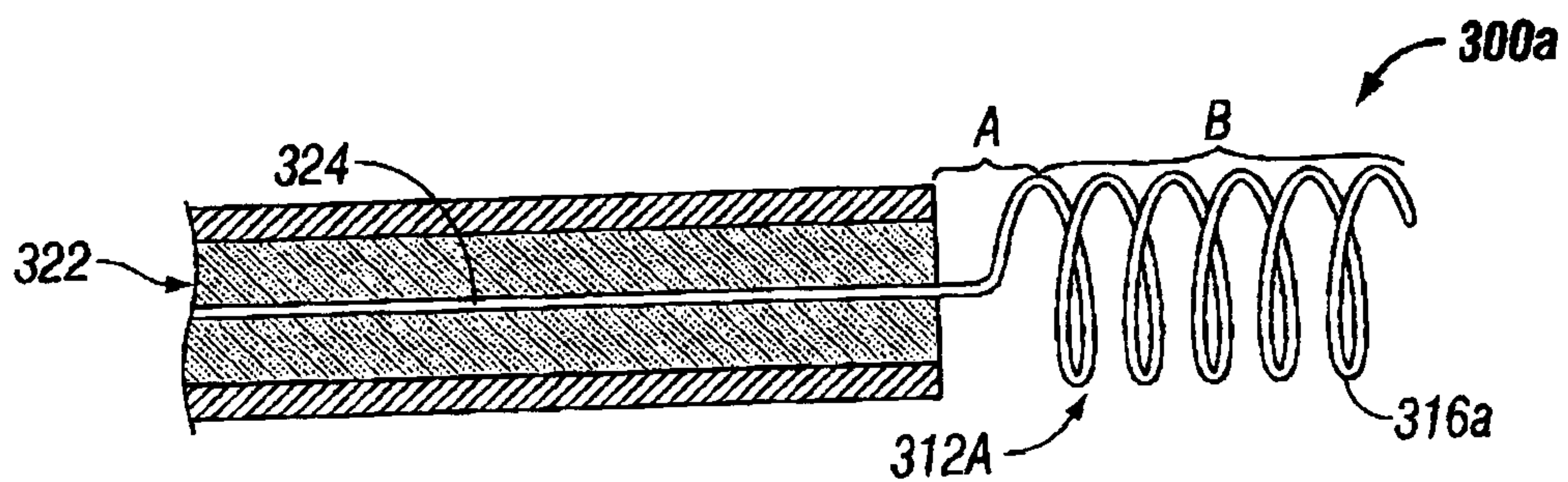


FIG. 6A

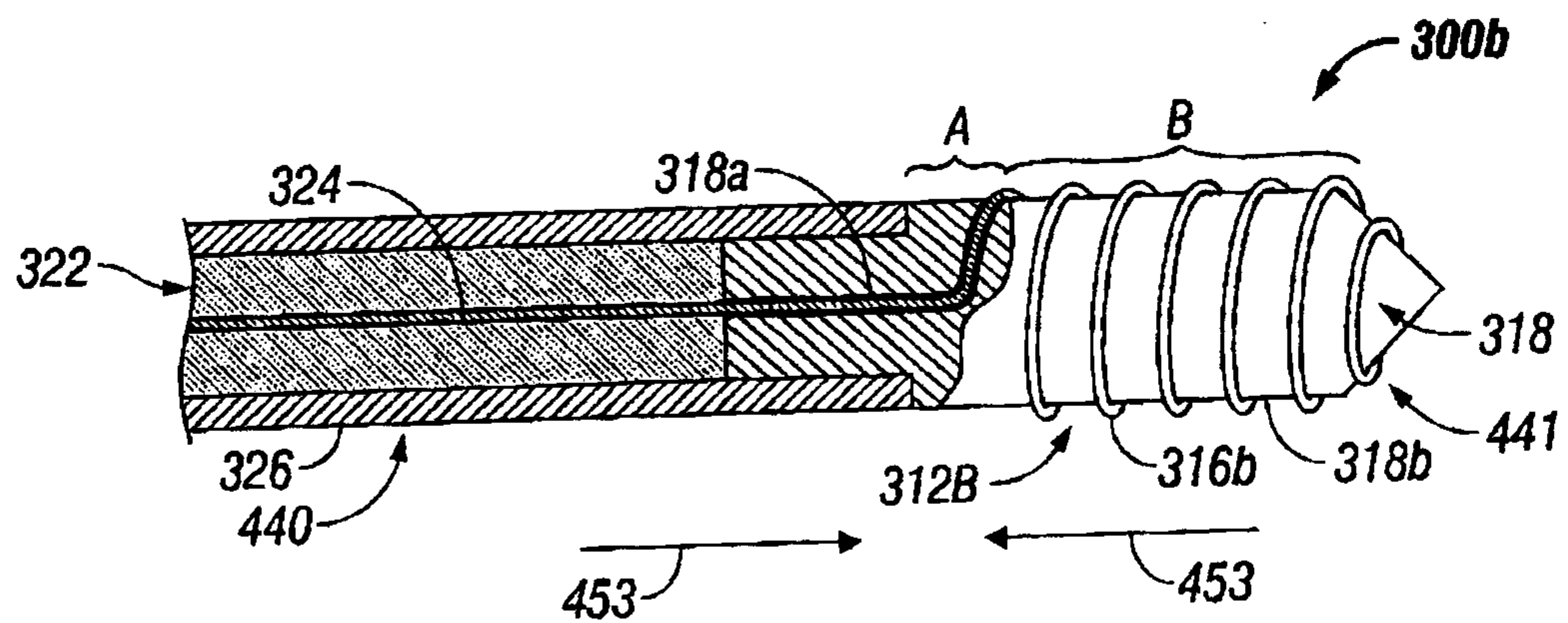


FIG. 6B

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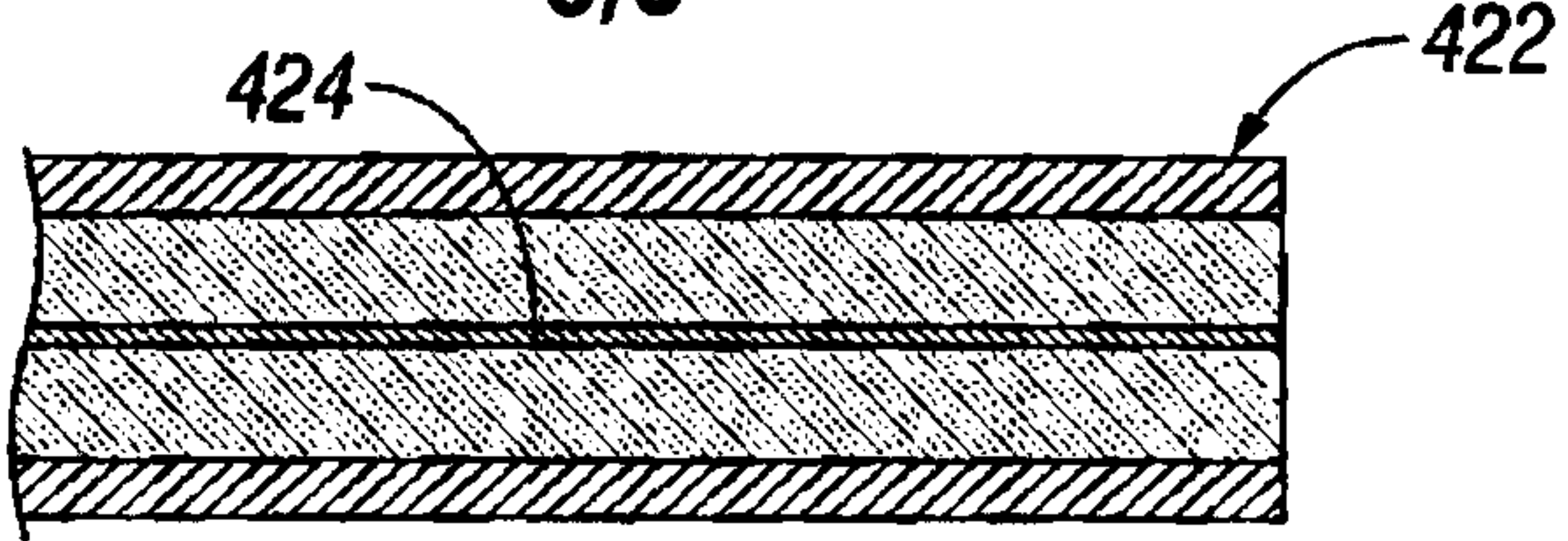


FIG. 7A

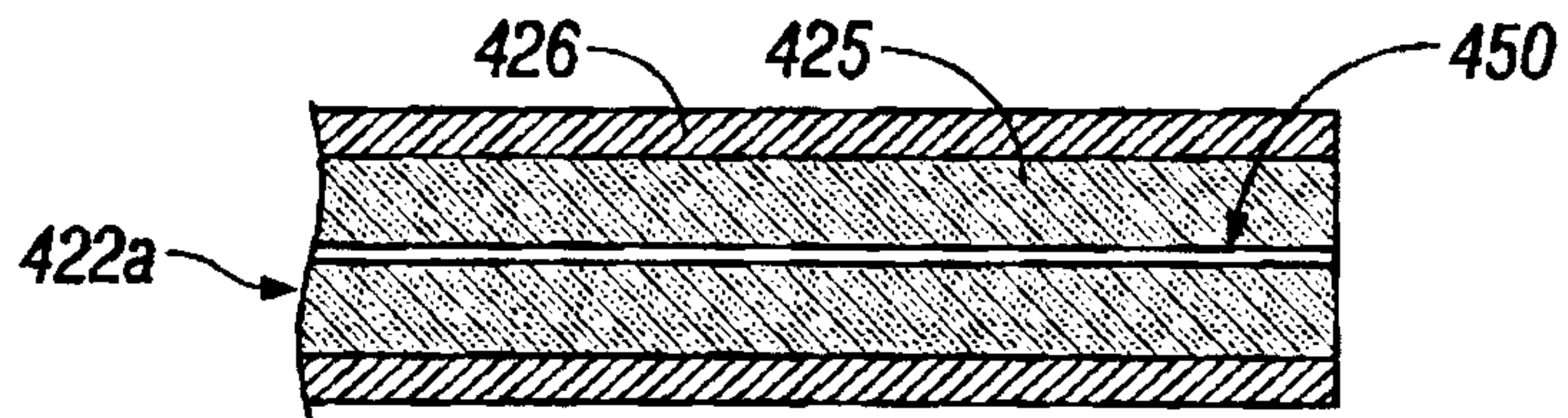


FIG. 7B

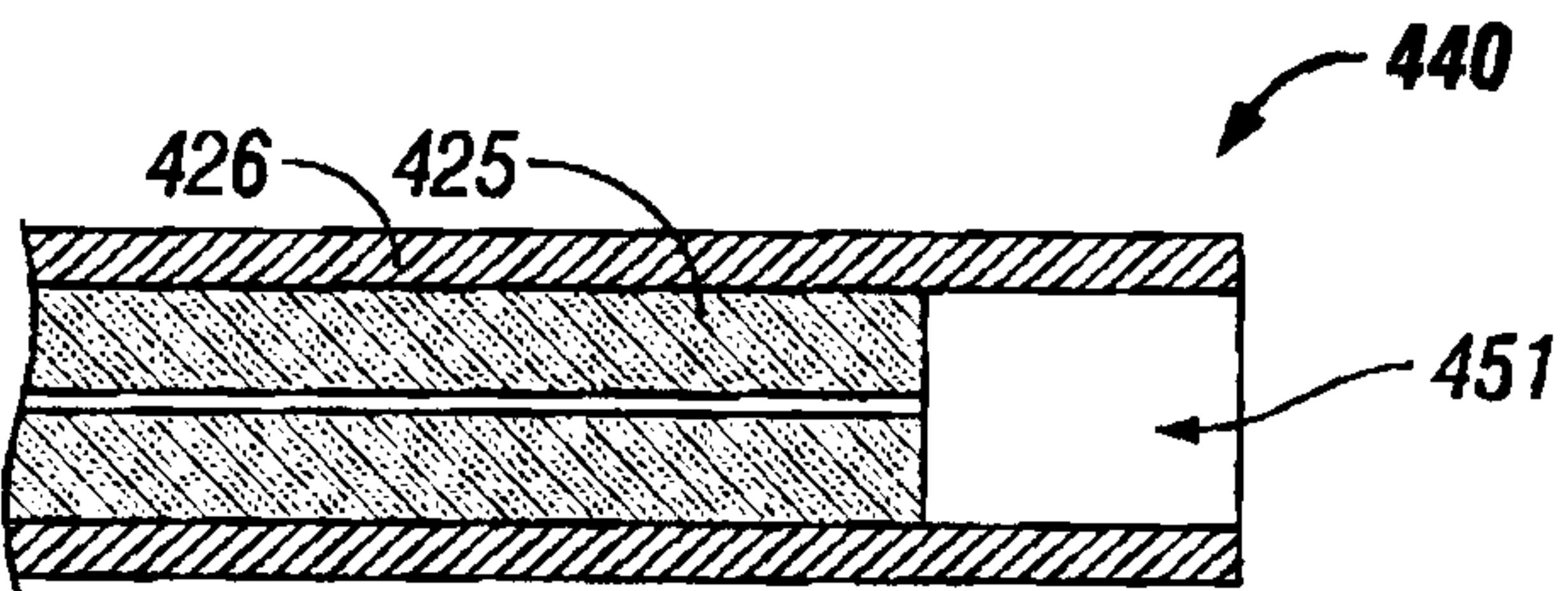


FIG. 7C

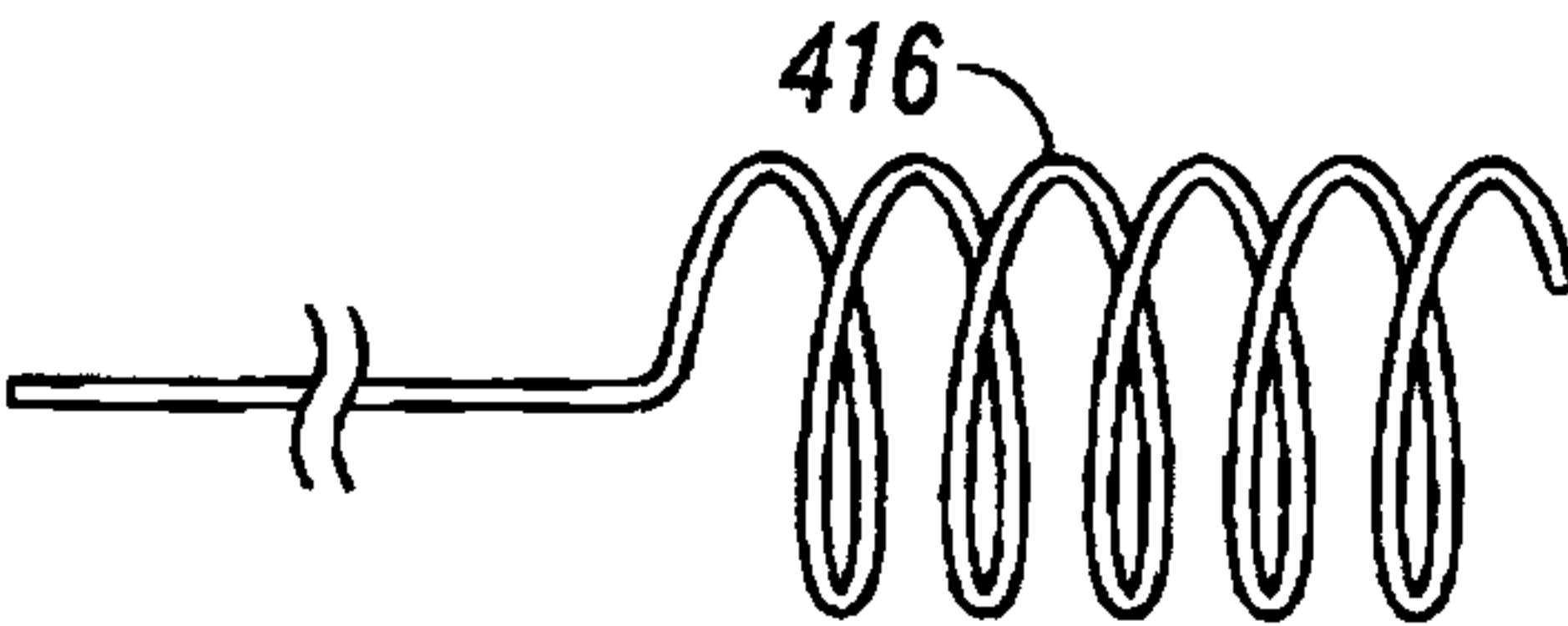


FIG. 7D

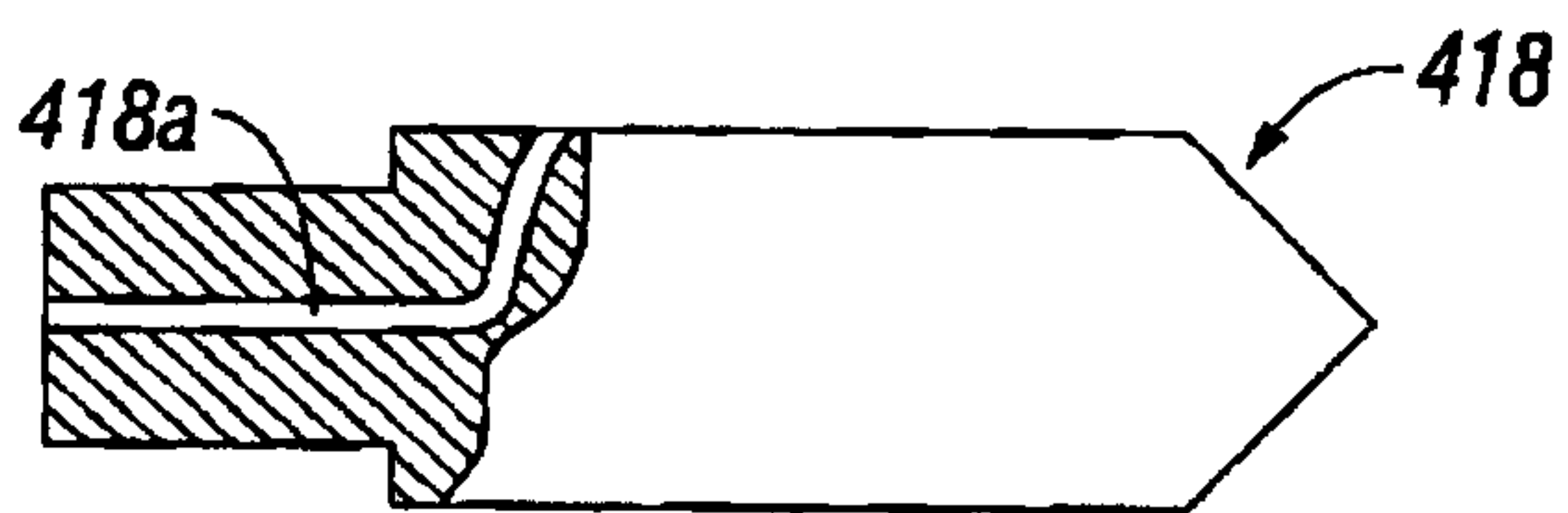


FIG. 7E

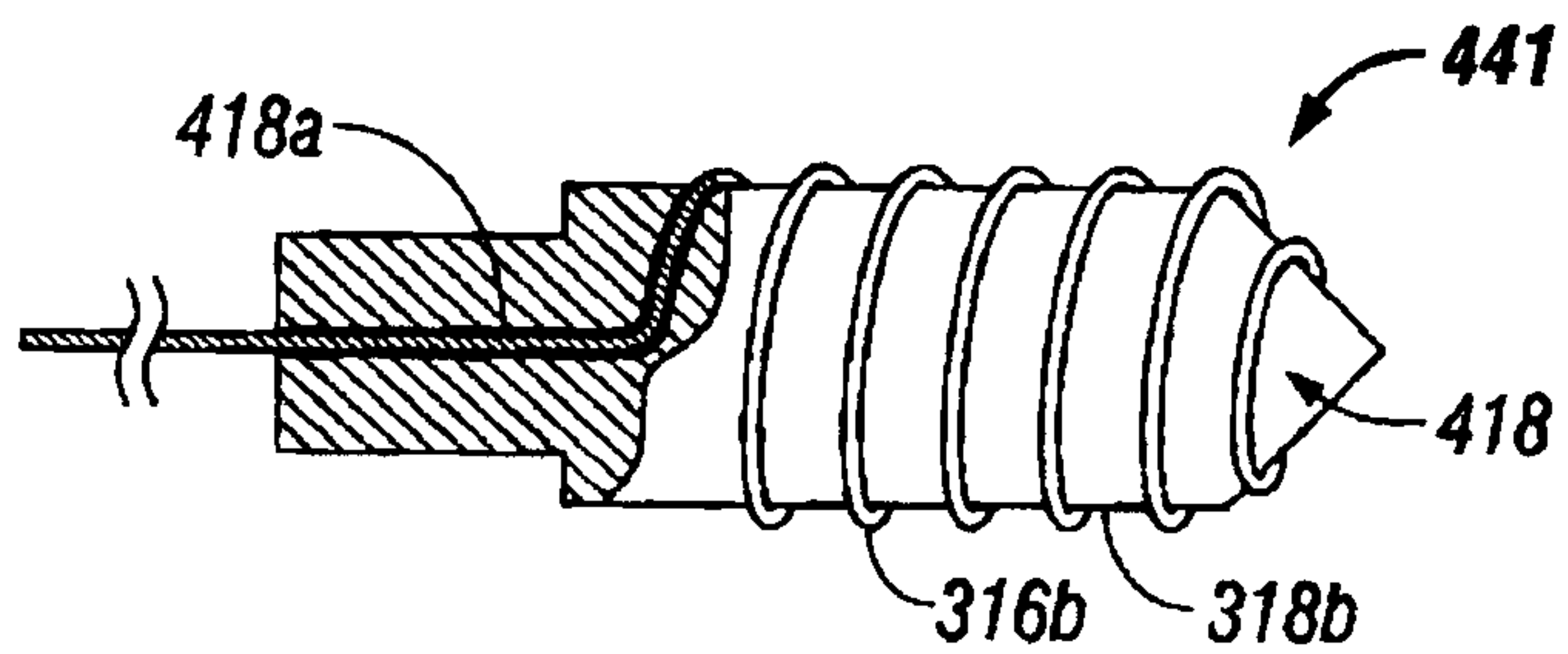
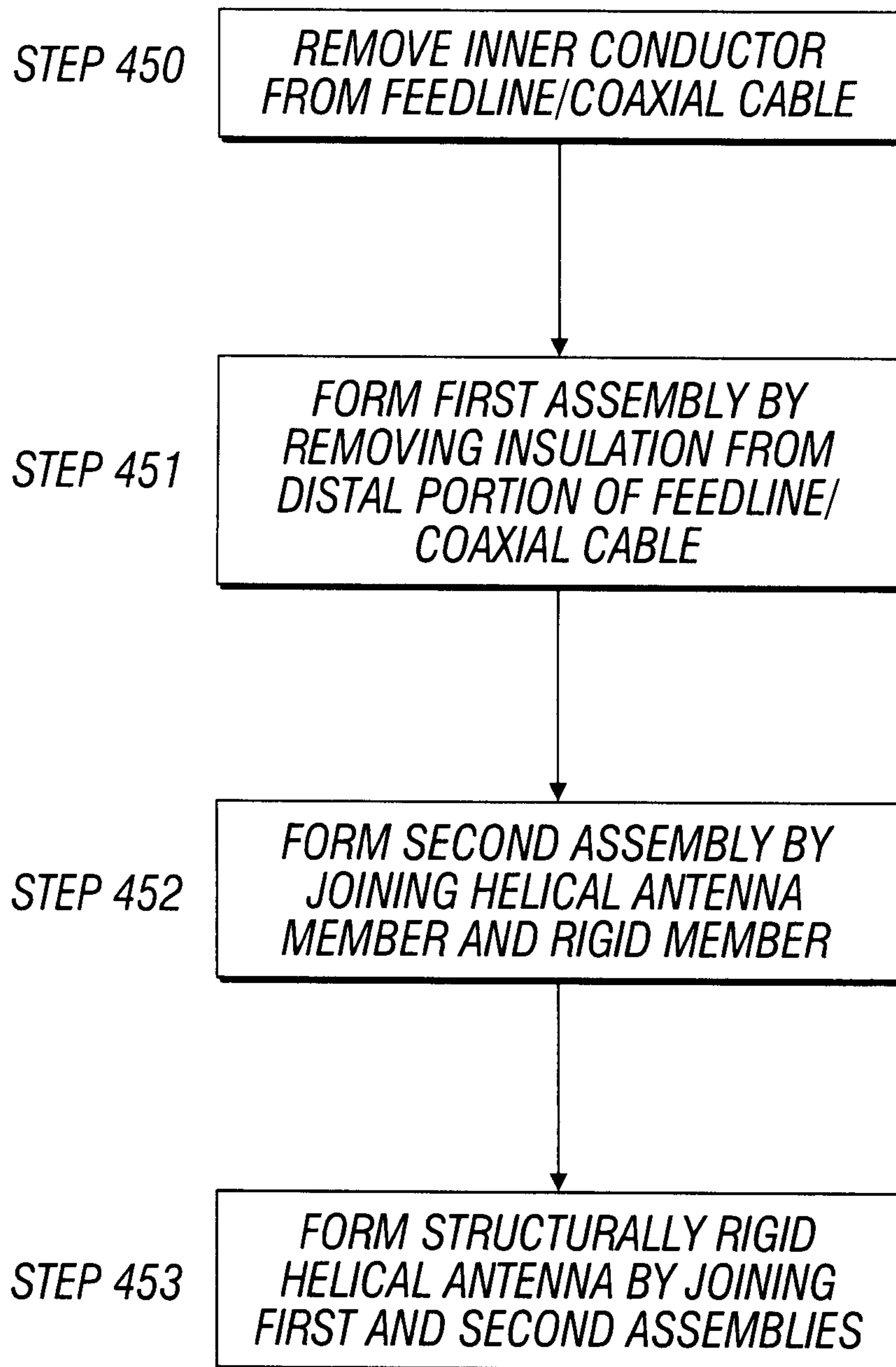


FIG. 7F

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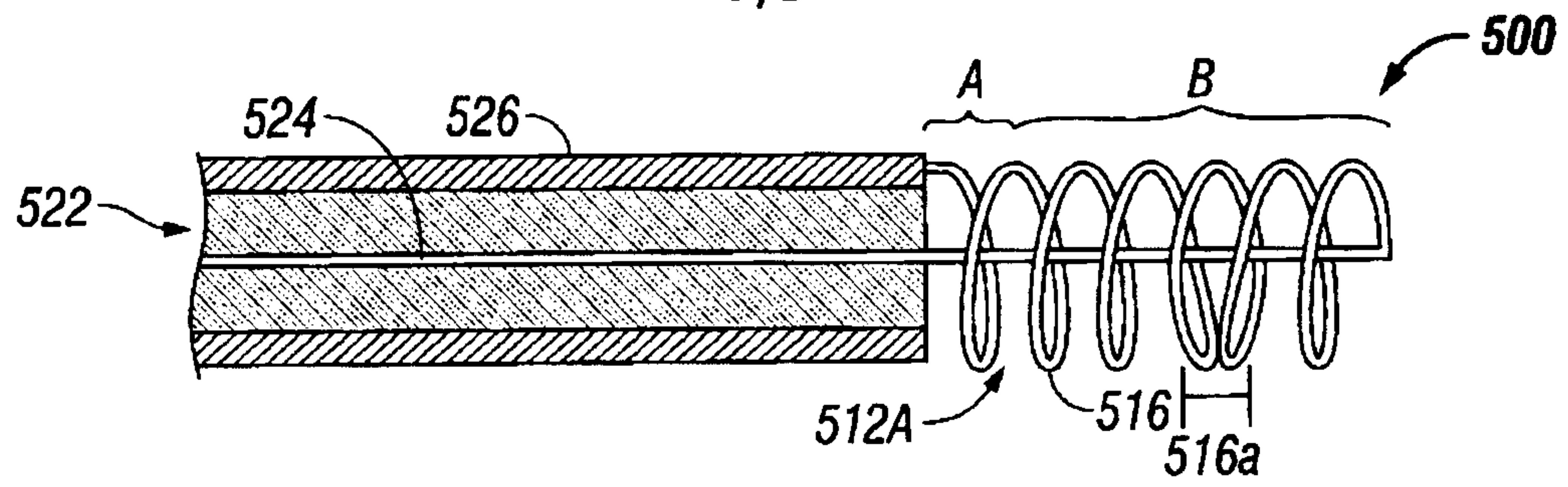


FIG. 8A

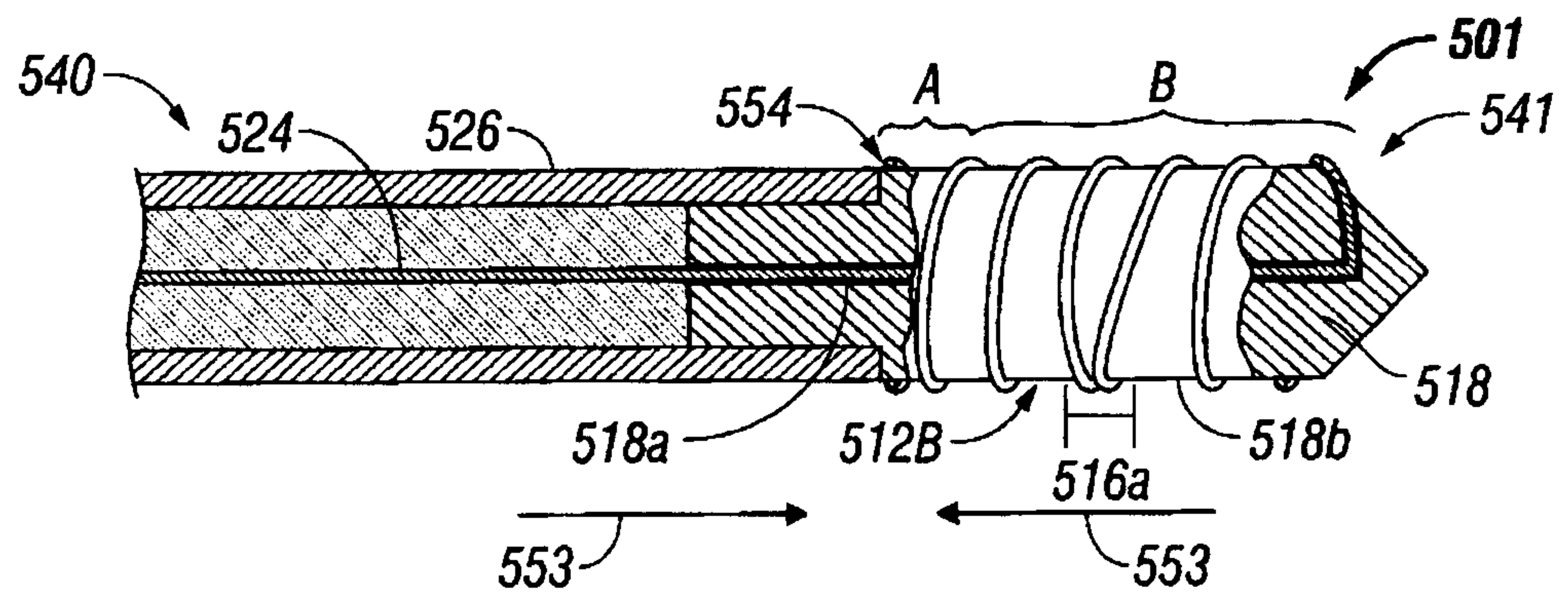


FIG. 8B

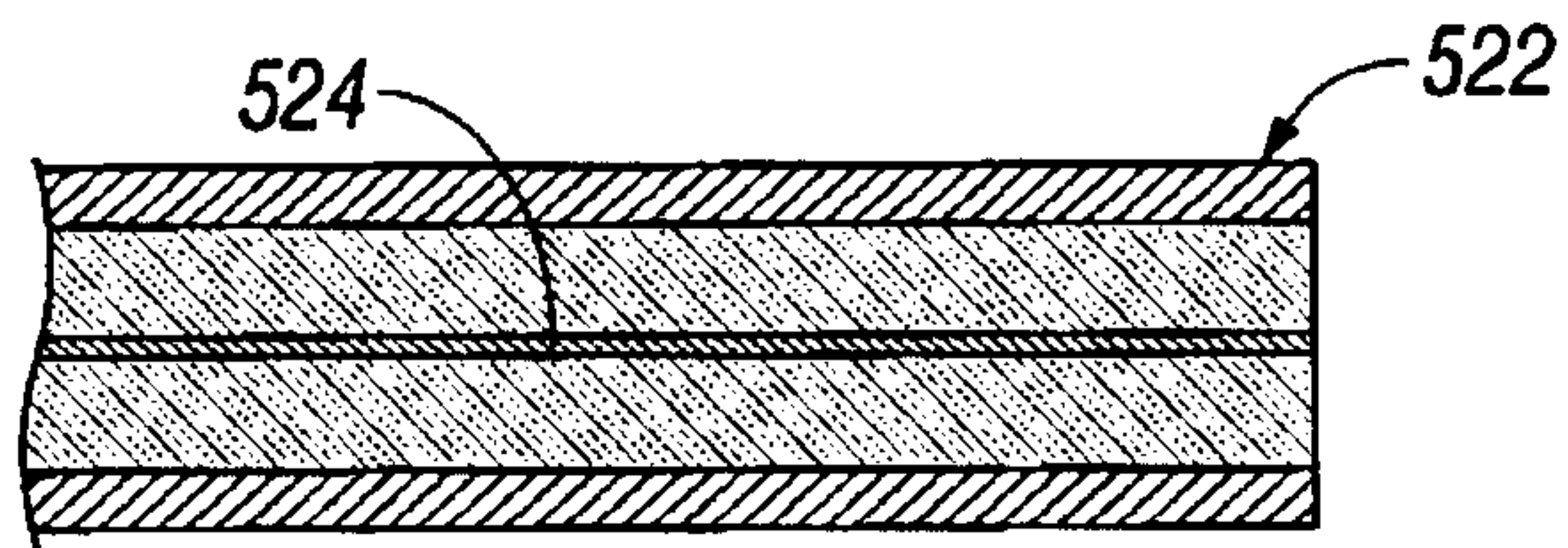


FIG. 9A

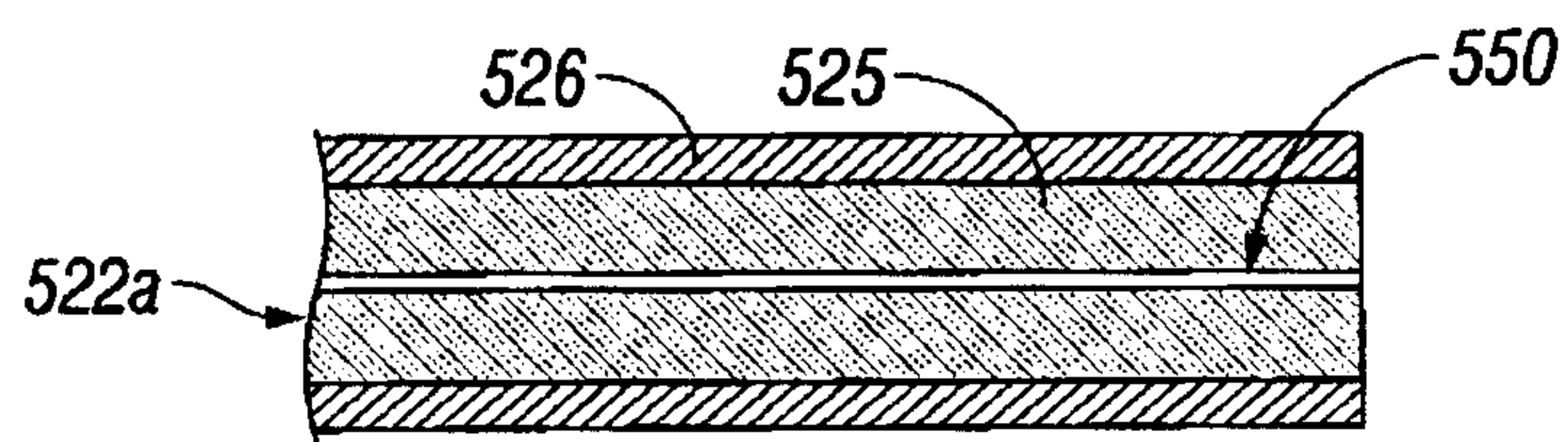


FIG. 9B

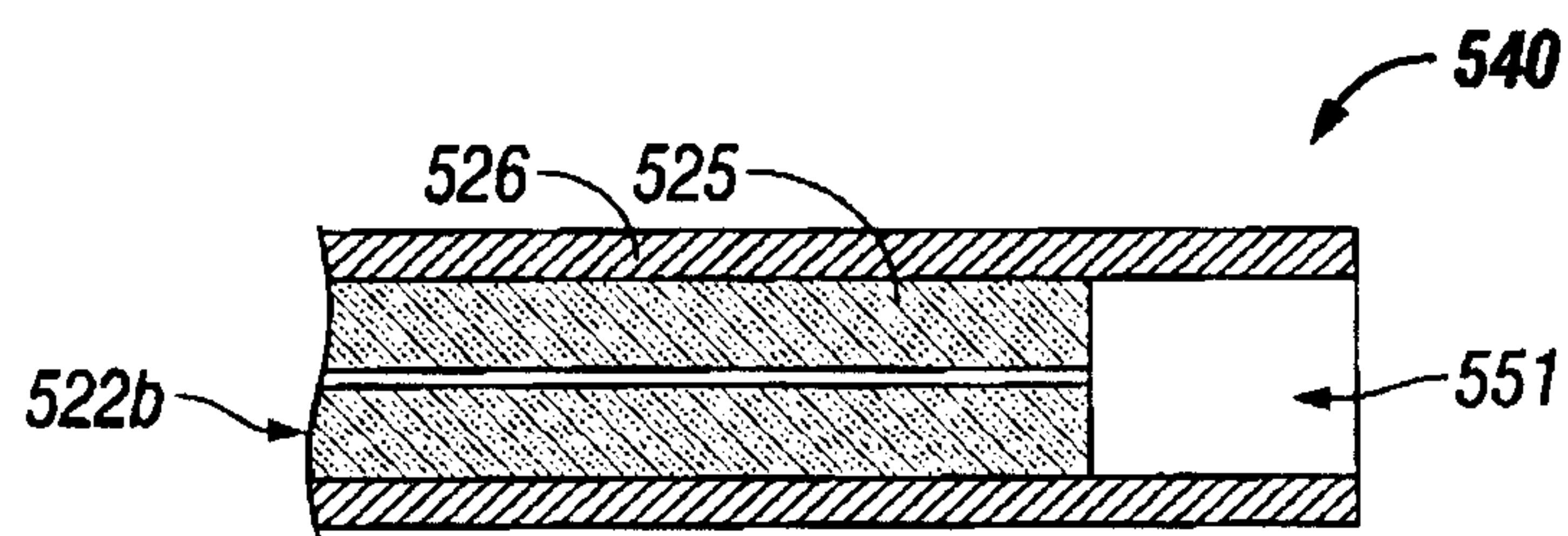


FIG. 9C

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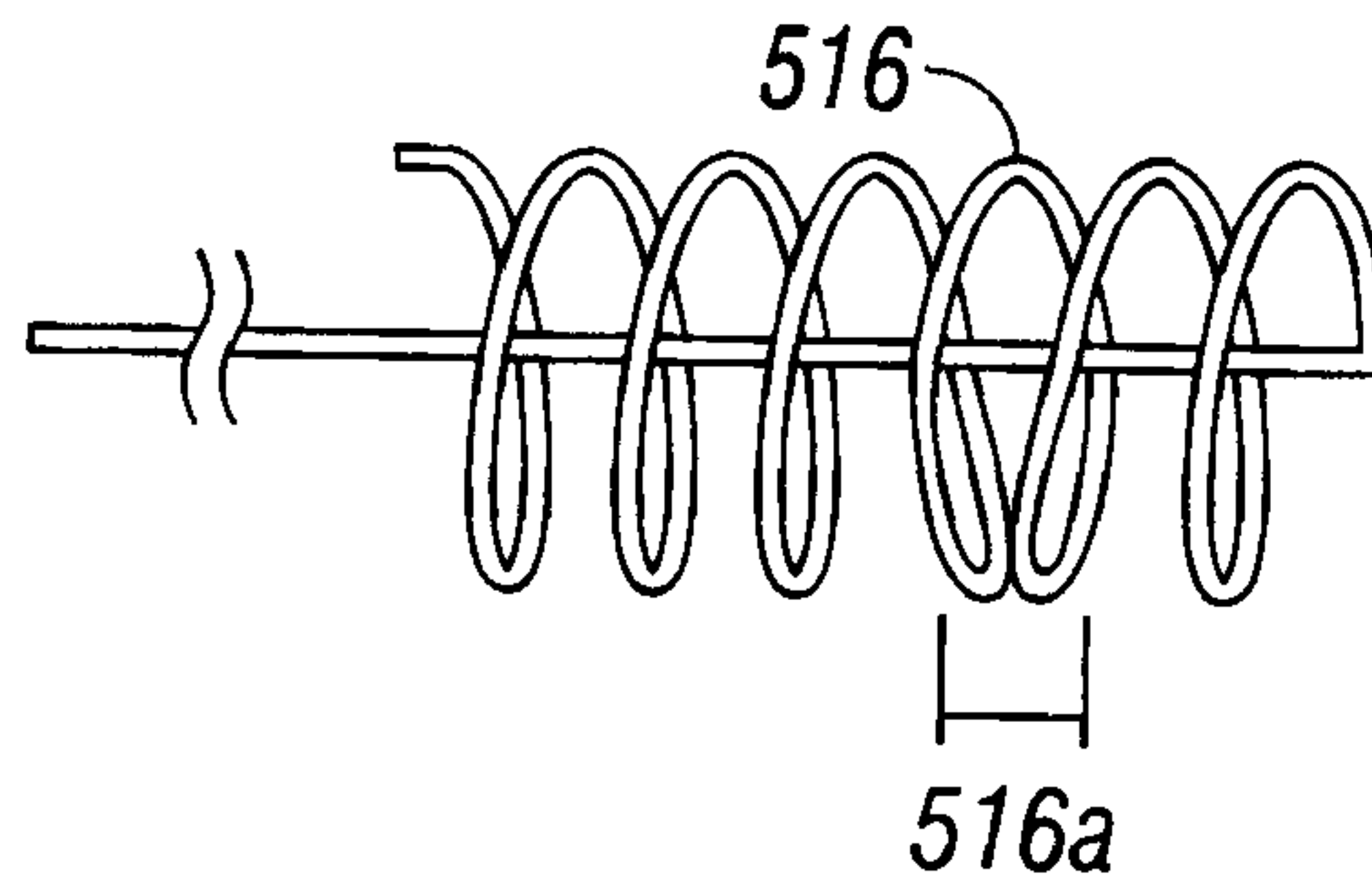


FIG. 9D

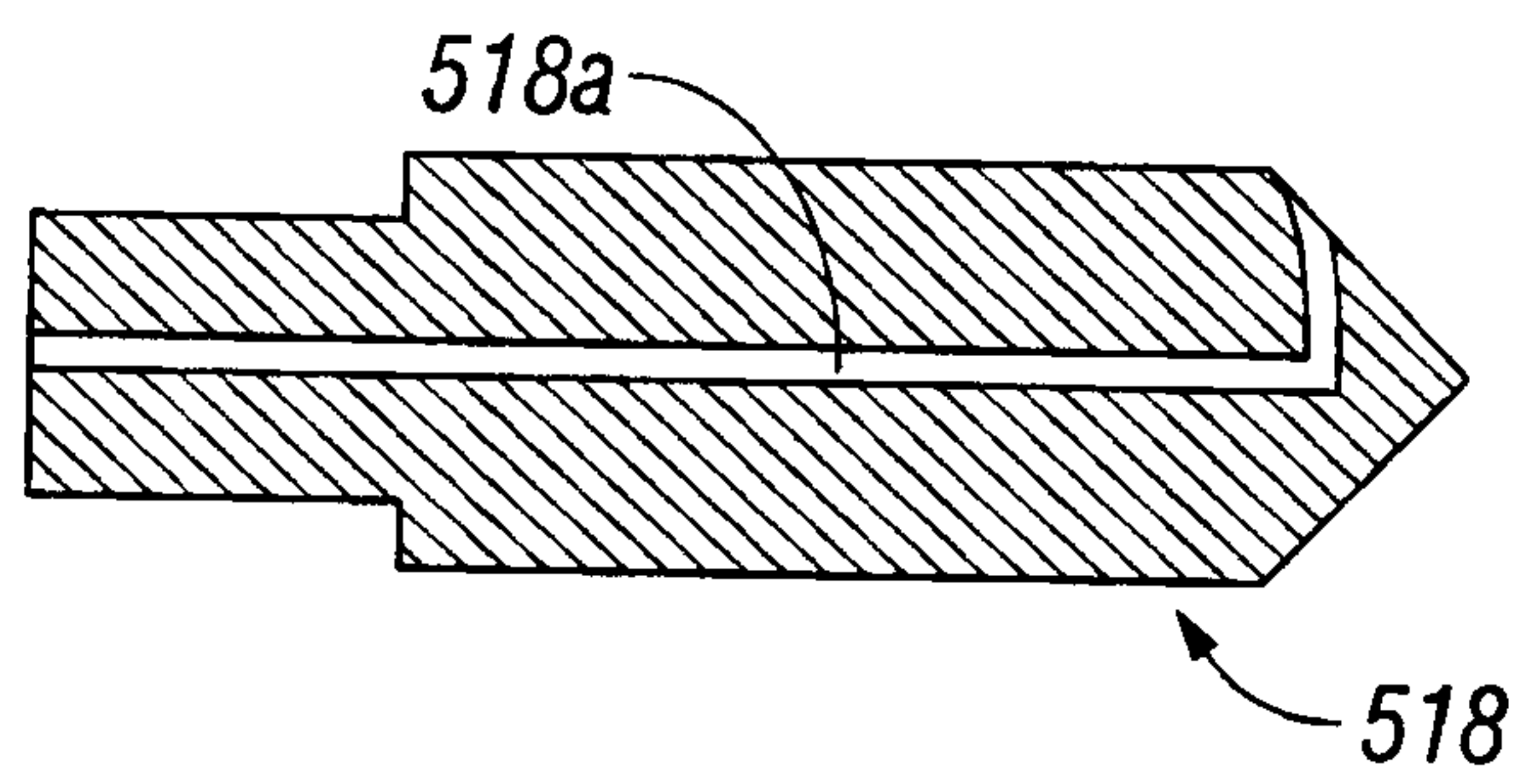


FIG. 9E

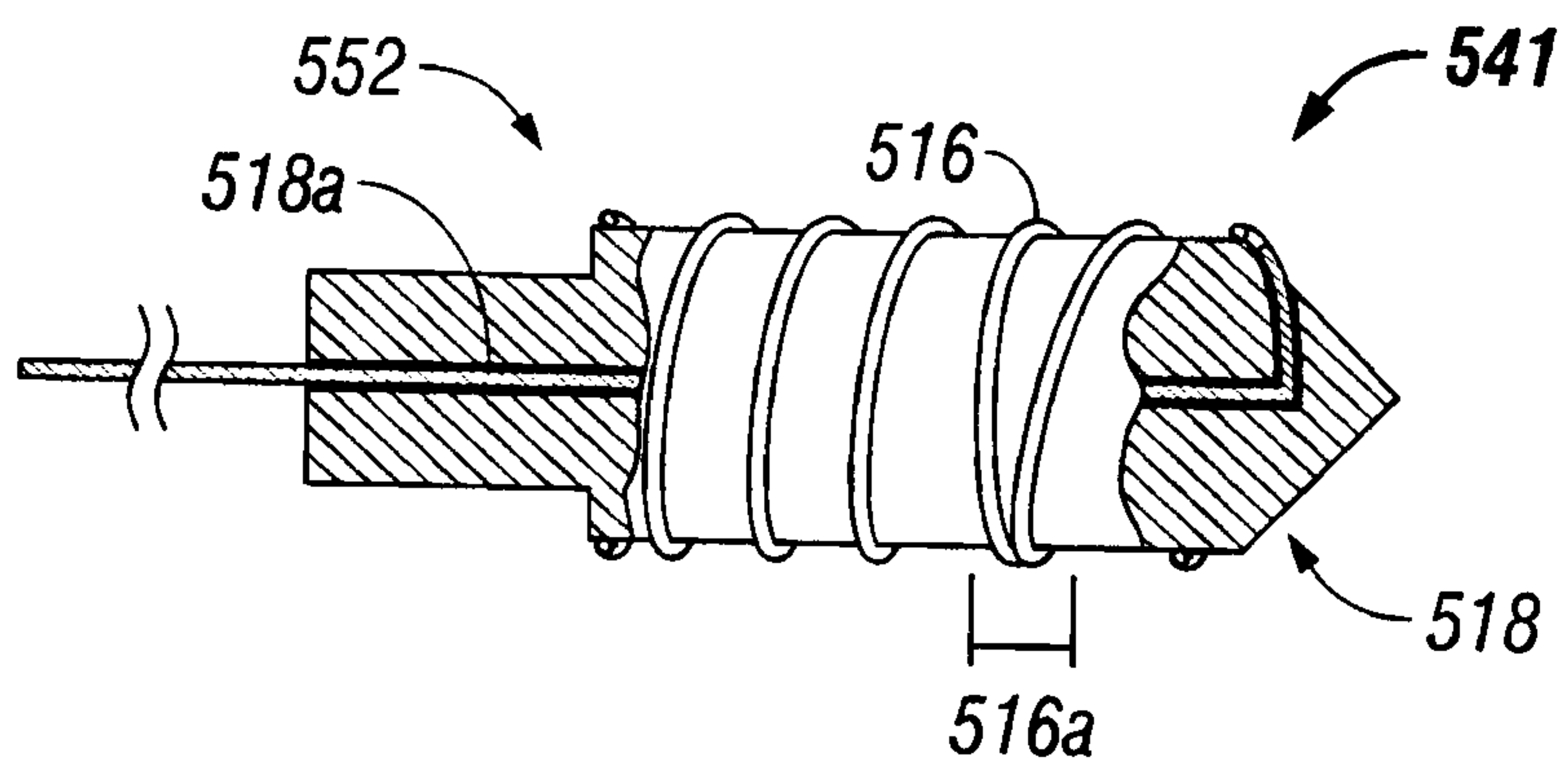
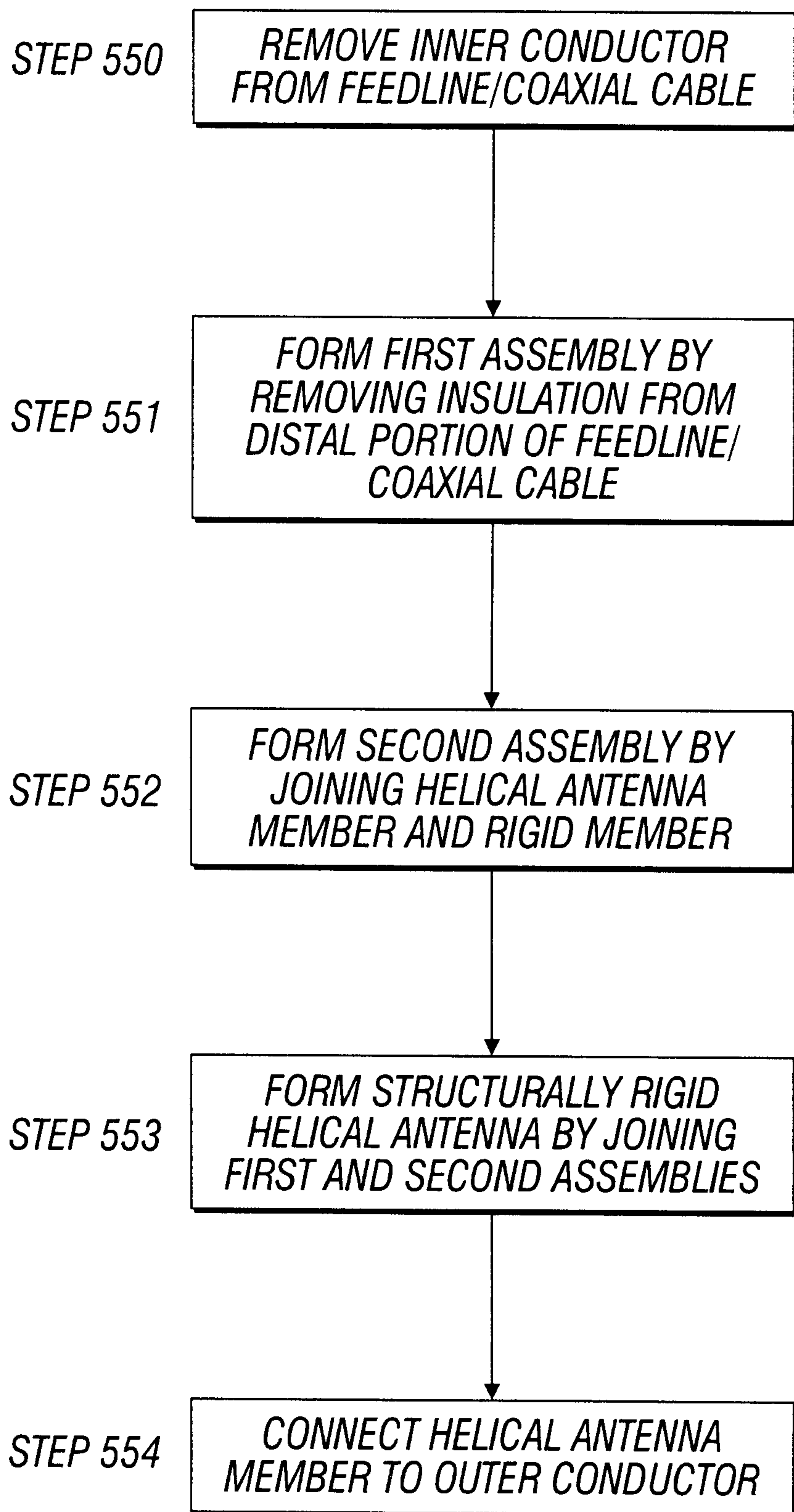


FIG. 9F

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