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(71) Applicant(s)
HLT, Inc.

(72) Inventor(s)
Gainor, John P.;Wilson, Robert F.;Nelson, Dale K.;Czyscon, Joseph S.;Thunstrom, Kyle

(74) Agent / Attorney
Phillips Ormonde Fitzpatrick, L 16 333 Collins St, Melbourne, VIC, 3000, AU

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(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **HLT, INC.** [US/US]; 7351 Kirkwood Lane North, Suite 104, Maple Grove, MN 55369 (US).

(72) Inventors; and

(71) Applicants (for US only): **GAINOR, John, P.** [US/US]; 1396 Knollwood Lane, Mendota Heights, MN 55118 (US). **WILSON, Robert, F.** [US/US]; 3107 West Owasso Boulevard, Roseville, MN 55113 (US). **NELSON, Dale, K.** [US/US]; 9860 Rich Valley Boulevard, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077 (US). **CZYSCON, Joseph, S.** [US/US]; 13915 54th Avenue North, Plymouth, MN 55446 (US). **THUNSTROM, Kyle** [US/US]; 6583 Taiga Circle, Eden Prairie, MN 55346 (US).

(74) Agent: **SWANSON, Shane, S.**; Inskeep Intellectual Property Group, Inc., 2281 W. 190th Street, Suite 200, Torrance, CA 90504 (US).

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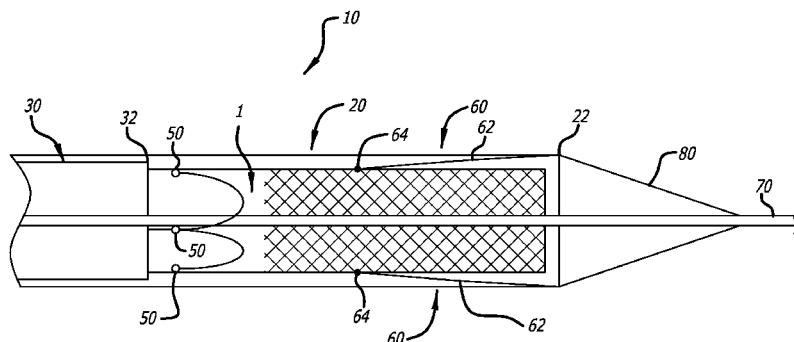


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A delivery device usable to deliver an inverting implant is provided that includes a positioning mechanism that automatically initiates the inversion process once a predetermined length of the implant has exited a delivery catheter. The positioning mechanism allows the implant to be safely and accurately deployed with reduced operator experience and in a greater variety of target locations.

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INVERSION DELIVERY DEVICE AND METHOD FOR A PROSTHESIS

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a divisional of Australian patent 2012255753 entitled *Inversion Delivery Device and Method for a Prosthesis*, which claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 61/486,682 filed May 16, 2011 entitled *Inversion Delivery Device and Method For A Prosthesis*, which is hereby incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. This application also claims priority from US 13/473,475, which is hereby incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] There has been a significant movement toward developing and performing cardiovascular surgeries using a percutaneous approach. Through the use of one or more catheters that are introduced through, for example, the femoral artery, tools and devices can be delivered to a desired area in the cardiovascular system to perform many number of complicated procedures that normally otherwise require an invasive surgical procedure. Such approaches greatly reduce the trauma endured by the patient and can significantly reduce recovery periods. The percutaneous approach is particularly attractive as an alternative to performing open-heart surgery.

[0003] Valve replacement surgery provides one example of an area where percutaneous solutions are being developed. A number of diseases result in a thickening, and subsequent immobility or reduced mobility, of heart valve leaflets. Such immobility also may lead to a narrowing, or stenosis, of the passageway through the valve. The increased resistance to blood flow that a stenosed valve presents can eventually lead to heart failure and ultimately death.

[0004] Treating valve stenosis or regurgitation has heretofore involved complete removal of the existing native valve through an open-heart procedure followed by the implantation of a prosthetic valve. Naturally, this is a heavily invasive procedure and inflicts great trauma on the body leading usually to great discomfort and considerable

recovery time. It is also a sophisticated procedure that requires great expertise and talent to perform.

[0005] Historically, such valve replacement surgery has been performed using traditional open-heart surgery where the chest is opened, the heart stopped, the patient placed on cardiopulmonary bypass, the native valve excised and the replacement valve attached. A proposed percutaneous valve replacement alternative method on the other hand, is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,168,614 (the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference) issued to Andersen et al. In this patent, the prosthetic valve is mounted on a stent that is collapsed to a size that fits within a catheter. The catheter is then inserted into the patient's vasculature and moved so as to position the collapsed stent at the location of the native valve. A deployment mechanism is activated that expands the stent containing the replacement valve against the valve cusps. The expanded structure includes a stent configured to have a valve shape with valve leaflet supports begins to take on the function of the native valve. As a result, a full valve replacement has been achieved but at a significantly reduced physical impact to the patient.

[0006] However, this approach has decided shortcomings. One particular drawback with the percutaneous approach disclosed in the Andersen '614 patent is the difficulty in preventing leakage around the perimeter of the new valve after implantation. Since the tissue of the native valve remains within the lumen, there is a strong likelihood that the commissural junctions and fusion points of the valve tissue (as pushed apart and fixed by the stent) will make sealing around the prosthetic valve difficult. In practice, this has often led to severe leakage of blood around the stent apparatus.

[0007] Other drawbacks of the Andersen '614 approach pertain to its reliance on stents as support scaffolding for the prosthetic valve. First, stents can create emboli when they expand. Second, stents are typically not effective at trapping the emboli they dislodge, either during or after deployment. Third, stents do not typically conform to the features of the native lumen in which they are placed, making a prosthetic valve housed within a stent subject to paravalvular leakage. Fourth, stents are subject to a tradeoff

between strength and compressibility. Fifth, stents cannot be retrieved once deployed. Sixth, stents have an inherent strength that is not adjustable.

[0008] As to the first drawback, stents usually fall into one of two categories: self-expanding stents and balloon expandable stents. Self-expanding stents are compressed when loaded into a catheter and expand to their original, non-compressed size when released from the catheter. These are typically made of Nitinol. Balloon expandable stents are loaded into a catheter in a compressed but relaxed state. These are typically made from stainless steel or other malleable metals. A balloon is placed within the stent. Upon deployment, the catheter is retracted and the balloon inflated, thereby expanding the stent to a desired size. Both of these stent types exhibit significant force upon expansion. The force is usually strong enough to crack or deform thrombosis, thereby causing pieces of atherosclerotic plaque to dislodge and become emboli. If the stent is being implanted to treat a stenosed vessel, a certain degree of such expansion is desirable. However, if the stent is merely being implanted to displace native valves, less force may be desirable to reduce the chance of creating emboli. An additional concern related to displacing an aortic valve is the risk of conduction disturbances (i.e. left bundle branch block) due to the close proximity of the conduction pathways to the native valve structure. Excessive radial force applied at the native valve site increases the risk of irritation or damage to the conduction pathway and heart block.

[0009] As to the second drawback, if emboli are created, expanded stents usually have members that are too spaced apart to be effective to trap any dislodged material. Often, secondary precautions must be taken including the use of nets and irrigation ports.

[0010] The third drawback is due to the relative inflexibility of stents. Stents typically rely on the elastic nature of the native vessel to conform around the stent. Stents used to open a restricted vessel do not require a seal between the vessel and the stent. However, when using a stent to displace native valves and house a prosthetic valve, a seal between the stent and the vessel is necessary to prevent paravalvular leakage.

Due to the non-conforming nature of stents, this seal is hard to achieve, especially when displacing stenosed valve leaflets.

[0011] The fourth drawback is the tradeoff between compressibility and strength. Stents are made stronger or larger by manufacturing them with thicker members. Stronger stents are thus not as compressible as weaker stents. Most stents suitable for use in a valve are not compressible enough to be placed in a thin catheter, such as a 18Fr catheter. Larger delivery catheters are more difficult to maneuver to a target area and also result in more trauma to the patient.

[0012] The fifth drawback of stents is that they are not easily retrievable. Once deployed, a stent may not be recompressed and drawn back into the catheter for repositioning due to the non-elastic deformation (stainless steel) or the radial force required to maintain the stent in place (Nitinol). Thus, if a physician is unsatisfied with the deployed location or orientation of a stent, there is little he or she can do to correct the problem.

[0013] The sixth drawback listed above is that stents have an inherent strength and are thus not adjustable. As previously stated, stronger stents are made with stronger members. Once a stent is selected and deployed, there is little a physician can do if the stent proves to be too strong or too weak.

[0014] Various embodiments of devices that solve these problems are introduced in U.S. Patent Publication No. 2006/0271166 to Thill et al., entitled "Stentless Support Structure," the contents of which is incorporated herein in their entirety. This publication teaches a braided mesh tube that is capable of folding back and forth into itself to build, in situ, a support structure that is strong enough to hold back the leaflets of a native valve sufficiently to successfully deploy a replacement valve, thus obviating the need for excision of the native valve. Advantageously, because of the inverting nature of these devices, the braided mesh, in an elongated delivery configuration, does not need to possess the strength to accomplish native valve displacement until the inversion process occurs. This allows the mesh tube to be constructed such that, in the elongated delivery state, the tube can be compressed into a very small catheter, such as a 18Fr or

smaller catheter. Such a small catheter significantly reduces patient trauma and allows for easy percutaneous, intraluminal navigation through the blood vessels. It is to be understood that terms like transluminal and percutaneous, as used herein, are expressly defined as navigation to a target location through and axially along the lumen of a blood vessel or blood vessels as opposed to surgically cutting the target vessel or heart open and installing the device manually. It is further to be understood that the term "mesh" as used herein describes a material constructed of one or more braided or woven strands.

[0015] In order to accomplish the folding back and forth feature of this device, there are preformed, circumferential folds in the device. One embodiment has two circumferential folds that are longitudinally spaced apart in the extended configuration. One of these folds is preformed to fold inwardly, and the other is preformed to fold outwardly. These preformed folds, when released out of a catheter, tend to return to a folded configuration that has a z-like cross-section. This cross-section design results not only because the inward pre-formed fold folds inwardly and the outward pre-formed fold folds outwardly, but because these folds reverse longitudinal positions once folded. If the inward preformed fold is distal of the outward preformed fold in the extended position, in the folded position the inward preformed fold will be proximal of the outward preformed fold. This design allows a valve on a distal end of the device to be drawn into the device when folded, without requiring the valve itself to be inverted or everted. In one embodiment having two preformed folds, the inversion process thus results in a three-layered configuration that could be significantly shorter than the extended length, depending on the spacing of the folds.

[0016] In the development of the devices described in the aforementioned publication, U.S. Pat. Pub. 2006/0271166, it was found that, occasionally, it was advantageous to use an additional device to hold the outermost layer of the implant axially in place while inversion of a layer was being effected. This gave rise to the delivery tool shown and described in U.S. Patent Publication 2008/0082165 to Wilson et al., entitled "Delivery Tool For Percutaneous Delivery Of A Prosthesis." This delivery tool includes an expandable mesh region that, when axially compressed, flares outwardly to form a bulbous or rounded structure of increased radius. Further axial compression creates a flat, disc-like surface.

In use, the device is extended through an implant prior to releasing the implant from the delivery catheter. The device is then expanded to the disc-like configuration and pulled proximally to act as a backstop at a desired target location, against which the implant is delivered. Thus, the disc-like device prevents axial migration of the implant in a distal direction if and when distal force is placed on the implant during inversion of the second or subsequent layers into the first layer.

[0017] It has been found, however, that in some cases, depending on target location and patient anatomy, there is insufficient space in a distal axial direction beyond the target location to efficiently use this delivery device. For example, some patients may have limited left ventricular space, which may prohibit the use of the backstop device.

[0018] There is thus a need for a device that is able to prevent axial migration of the aforementioned braided implant devices during inversion, but does not require significant space distally beyond the target location.

[0019] A reference herein to a patent document or any other matter identified as prior art, is not to be taken as an admission that the document or other matter was known or that the information it contains was part of the common general knowledge as at the priority date of any of the claims.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0020] According to the present invention, there is provided a delivery system for an invertible device comprising: a delivery catheter; a pusher catheter slidably disposed within said delivery catheter; a positioning mechanism releasably connecting an invertible device to said delivery system; wherein during advancement of said invertible device out of said delivery catheter, said positioning mechanism initiates inversion of a proximal portion of said invertible device into a distal portion of said invertible device by preventing further advancement of said distal portion of said invertible device.

[0021] The invention further provides a delivery system for an invertible device comprising: a delivery catheter; a pusher catheter slidably disposed within said delivery

catheter; a positioning mechanism comprising: an outer sheath having a first slot; and, a sliding member located within said outer sheath and having a depression, said positioning mechanism comprises a plurality of tethers, each of which having an end sized to fit within said depression of said sliding member, said positioning mechanism releasably connecting an invertible device to said delivery system; said positioning mechanism limiting distal movement of said invertible device during an implant inversion procedure.

[0022] The invention also provides a method for initiating inversion of an invertible device comprising: advancing a first predetermined length of an invertible device distally from a delivery catheter; limiting distal movement of said predetermined length of said invertible device; and, distally advancing a second predetermined length of said invertible device from said catheter so as to invert said second predetermined length into said first predetermined length.

[0023] The invention further provides a method of delivering a support structure to a target site comprising: positioning a distal end of a delivery catheter at said target site; retracting proximally said distal end of said delivery catheter to expose a predetermined length of a support structure ; advancing a proximal end of said support structure distally while preventing distal advancement of a distal end of said support structure, thereby causing a proximal portion of said support structure to invert into said predetermined length; releasing said support structure.

[0024] Still further, the invention provides a device for delivering a support structure to a target site comprising: a delivery catheter containing a support structure; an advancement mechanism capable of axially advancing said support structure through said delivery catheter; a stop mechanism capable of preventing advancement of a distal portion of said support structure past a predetermined distance distal of a distal end of said delivery catheter; a release mechanism.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0025] Figure 1 is a partial cross-sectional view of an embodiment of a delivery device of the present invention with an implant loaded in a distal end thereof;

[0026] Figure 2a is a perspective view of a distal end of an embodiment of a pusher catheter of the present invention;

[0027] Figure 2b is a perspective view of a distal end of an alternative embodiment to that of Figure 2a;

[0028] Figure 3 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a distal end of a release mechanism of the present invention in an open configuration;

[0029] Figure 4 is a perspective view of the mechanism of Figure 3 in a closed configuration;

[0030] Figure 5 is a plan cross-sectional view of an embodiment of a delivery device of the present invention, just prior to an inversion process of an implant;

[0031] Figure 6 is a plan cross-sectional view of an embodiment of a delivery device as shown in Figure 1, just after the implant has been inverted;

[0032] Figure 7-10 are perspective views of a pusher catheter of an embodiment of a delivery device;

[0033] Figure 11 is a plan view of an embodiment of a handle assembly of the invention;

[0034] Figure 12 is an exploded view of an embodiment of a valve retention cable control of the invention;

[0035] Figure 13 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a valve retention cable control of the invention in a closed position;

[0036] Figure 14 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a valve retention cable control of the invention in an open position;

[0037] Figure 15 is a partial perspective view of an embodiment of a handle assembly of the invention showing an embodiment of a pusher catheter control;

[0038] Figure 16 is a partial perspective view of an embodiment of a handle assembly of the invention showing an embodiment of a drive mechanism;

[0039] Figure 17 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a tether release controller of the invention in a closed position;

[0040] Figure 18 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a tether release controller of the invention in an open position;

[0041] Figure 19 is an exploded view of an embodiment of a tether positioning mechanism of the invention;

[0042] Figure 20 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a tether positioning mechanism of the invention in a locked position;

[0043] Figure 21 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a tether positioning mechanism of the invention in an unlocked position;

[0044] Figure 22 is a side view of an embodiment of a delivery device of the present invention in a vessel of a patient;

[0045] Figure 23 is a side view of an embodiment of a delivery device as shown in Figure 22, just after crossing a heart valve;

[0046] Figure 24 is a side view of an embodiment of a delivery device as shown in Figure 22, in which an implant is partially deployed;

[0047] Figure 25 is a side view of an embodiment of a delivery device as shown in Figure 22, in which the tethers are tightened;

[0048] Figure 26 is a side view of an embodiment of a delivery device as shown in Figure 22, just after the implant has been inverted;

[0049] Figure 27 is a side view of an embodiment of a delivery device as shown in Figure 22, just after releasing and withdrawing the tethers from the implant;

[0050] Figure 28 is a side view of an embodiment of a delivery device as shown in Figure 22, just prior to releasing the attachment cables; and,

[0051] Figure 29 is a side view of an embodiment of the implant, just after release of the attachment cables.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0052] Referring now to the Figures and first to Figure 1, there is shown a distal end of a delivery device 10 of the present invention. The delivery device generally includes a delivery catheter 20, and a pusher catheter 30 slidably contained within the delivery catheter 20. The pusher catheter 30 is preferably a multi-lumen catheter containing lumens for slidably containing and maintaining alignment of three attachment cables 40 (hereinafter “valve retention cables”) (see Fig. 3), each of which has a releasable grasping mechanism 50 at a distal end thereof. The delivery device 10 also includes at least one positioning mechanism 60 used to aid the tool or implant 1 in achieving a folded, deployed configuration from an extended, unfolded, navigation configuration. In one embodiment, the at least one positioning mechanism 60 is attached to a distal end of the delivery catheter 20. In another embodiment, the at least one positioning mechanism 60 is slidably contained within the delivery catheter 20, similar to the valve retention cables 40.

[0053] The delivery catheter 20 is an external sheath defining a single lumen for housing the pusher catheter 30, the tool or implant 1, the valve retention cables 40, and the positioning mechanisms 60. The delivery catheter 20, when loaded, houses a tool or implant 1 near its distal end 22. The implant 1 is preferably an implant similar to those taught and described in U.S. Patent Publication No. 2006/0271166. The delivery catheter 20 may be formed with a preset curve at its distal end. Positive results have been achieved with a 180 degree preset curve.

[0054] The pusher catheter 30 may include up to seven lumens. Three lumens slidably house the three valve retention cables 40. In an embodiment used over-the-wire, a fourth lumen accommodates a guidewire. In yet another embodiment, three additional lumens slidably house three positioning mechanisms, described below.

[0055] Figures 2a and 2b show two similar embodiments of the pusher catheter 30 of the present invention defining seven lumens. The pusher catheter 30 includes a central guidewire lumen 32, and three lumens 34 that contain either the valve retention cables 40 or the positioning mechanisms described below. The remaining three lumens 36 house the remaining valve retention cables or positioning mechanisms. In order to save on space, the lumens 36 may be formed as external indentations, thereby relying on the inner wall of the delivery catheter 20 to complete the lumen and contain the remaining valve retention cables or positioning mechanisms. In a preferred embodiment, the lumens 34 contain the valve retention cables 40 and the lumens 36 contain the positioning mechanisms 60. In this embodiment, the pusher catheter 30 may continue to be advanced even if the positioning mechanisms 60 can no longer be advanced.

[0056] In one embodiment, the positioning mechanisms are small enough to fit three valve retention mechanisms, and an associated containment sheath, in a single lumen 36, leaving two other lumens 36 unused or available for use as irrigation channels.

[0057] The releasable grasping mechanisms 50 may be similar to those shown and described in U.S. Pat. Pub. 2008/0082165 (at Figs. 5-8). Another embodiment of releasable grasping mechanisms is shown in Figures 3 and 4. The grasping mechanisms 50 are attached to commissural points on an implant 1 when the device 10 is loaded. The grasping mechanism 50 provide the ability to retract the implant back into the device 10 in the event that the physician feels doing so is appropriate.

[0058] Figure 3 shows a grasping mechanism 50 in an open configuration. The grasping mechanism 50 includes a hook 52 that slides within a mouth 54. The hook 52 defines a recess 56 sized to accommodate a component, such as a commissural point or a braid, of the tool or implant 1. The mouth 54 defines a slot 58 that is also sized to accommodate the component. Figure 4 shows that when the grasping mechanism 50 is

in a closed configuration, the recess 56 and the slot 58 together define a passage 59 that traps the component therein.

[0059] The grasping mechanism 50 is attached to a distal end of an valve retention cable 40. The valve retention cable 40 includes a wire 42 attached to the hook 52 and an elastomeric sheath 44 that is attached to the mouth 54. The wire 42 and the hook 52 are slidably contained within the sheath 44 and the mouth 54. The sheath 44 is elastomeric such that it is capable of being compressed longitudinally. This feature prevents accidental release of a tool or component contained within the passage 59. For example, when pulling a tool or implant back into the delivery sheath 20 during a retrieval, a load is placed on the wire 42, causing the wire to stretch. If the sheath 44 were not compressed, the wire 42 could stretch enough to cause the hook 52 to exit the mouth 54, thereby assuming the open configuration of Figure 3. However, because the sheath 44 is compressed when the hook 52 is drawn into the mouth 54 during closing, the sheath 44 elongates when the wire 42 is stretched, thereby maintaining the closed configuration of Figure 4.

[0060] The positioning mechanisms 60 aid in inverting the tool or component 1. In one embodiment, shown in Figures 1, 5 and 6, the positioning mechanisms 60 connect the the delivery catheter 20 with a first inversion pre-fold point (also referred to herein as an “aortic flare”) on the implant 1.

[0061] The positioning mechanisms 60 may comprise a plurality of tethers 62 and connectors 64. The tethers 62 may be any resilient strand-like material, flexible enough to invert from a navigation configuration to a deployment configuration. In the navigation configuration, as shown in Figure 1, the tethers extend proximally from the distal end of the delivery catheter 20, to the connectors 64. In the deployment configuration, shown in Figures 5 and 6, the tethers 62 extend distally from the distal end of the delivery catheter 20 to the connectors 64. In one embodiment, the connectors 64 are able to grasp any individual braid or strand of an implant 1. In another embodiment, the connectors 64 are designed to grasp the intersection of two braids or strands. In yet another embodiment, the connectors 64 are able to grasp discrete attachment points (e.g. wire loops, sutures, etc.), that have been integrated into the mesh implant or tool 1.

The length of the tethers 62 are at least the length of the material of the implant 1 that extends distally of the connectors 64 when the implant 1 is loaded into the delivery catheter 20. This way, the implant 1 remains completely within the delivery catheter 20 in the navigation configuration.

[0062] In another embodiment, the positioning mechanisms 60 are similar in construction to the valve retention cables 40 and releasable grasping mechanism 50. However, because the strength requirements of the positioning mechanisms 60 are less than those of the valve retention cables 40 and their releasable grasping mechanisms 50, the positioning mechanisms 60 may be smaller in diameter, thereby allowing a smaller overall delivery device 10. Rather than being attached to the distal end of the delivery catheter 20, as described above, the positioning mechanisms 60 of this embodiment are slidably contained within the lumens 36 of the pusher catheter 30 shown in Figure 2.

[0063] Referring to Figures 5 and 6, the device 10 is designed to be able to pass over a guidewire 70 during navigation. A conical or otherwise tapered dilator tip 80 abuts against the distal end 22 of the delivery catheter 20 and is flush therewith. The dilator 80 allows the device 10 to be passed through the vasculature with minimal trauma. The dilator 80 is not physically attached to the delivery catheter 20, such that it is easily moved distally during delivery of the implant 1 to avoid interference with the deployment of the implant 1.

[0064] Having described the various components of the present invention, the various steps and configurations that occur during navigation and deployment of an implant can now be explained. Figure 1 shows the navigation configuration of the device 10. In the navigation configuration, the implant 1 is loaded into the distal end of the delivery catheter 20 such that the implant 1 is in an elongated, non-folded state. The pusher catheter 30 is positioned within the delivery catheter 20 with its distal end 22 proximal of the implant 1. The valve retention cables 40 extend distally from the pusher catheter 30 and are connected to commissural points of the implant 1 with the releasable grasping mechanisms 50. The conical dilator 80 abuts against the distal end

22 of the delivery catheter 20. During navigation, the entire device 10 and implant 1 travel over a guidewire 70 to the target location.

[0065] Figure 5 shows the initial stages of deployment of the implant 1. The target location has been reached and the delivery catheter 20 is retracted while the pusher catheter 30 and valve retention cables (40)remain stationary relative to the target location. Retracting the delivery catheter 20 causes the pusher catheter 30 to push the implant 1 out of the distal end 22 of the delivery catheter. As the implant 1 exits the delivery catheter 20 the implant 1 expands and the positioning mechanisms 60 are advanced through the delivery catheter 20 until the tethers 62 become taut, or in the case of the positioning mechanisms that are slidably contained within the lumens of the pusher catheter 30, the positioning mechanisms 60 can no longer be advanced.

[0066] As seen in Figure 6, further advancement of the pusher catheter 30 causes implant material that is proximal of the connectors 64 to invert into the implant material that is distal of the connector 64. This is because the positioning mechanisms 60 are taut and do not allow further distal advancement of the implant 1. As such, the inversion of the implant 1 is urged by the preformed fold in the implant, the expansion of the memory metal making up the implant 1, and the restraint provided by the positioning mechanisms 60. Notably, the transition of the implant from initial advancement to inversion happens automatically and is dictated by the length of the tethers 64. As such, operator experience is not required to initiate inversion. Nor is there any reliance on anatomical structure to provide friction against the implant to initiate inversion.

[0067] Once the implant 1 has been fully deployed, the implant 1 is fully functional prior to release. This allows verification of proper operation of the implant 1 via one or more imaging modalities prior to full release of the implant 1. If proper operation is not achieved, the grasping mechanisms 50 can be used to pull the implant 1 back into the delivery catheter 20 such that the implant may be either removed or redeployed. If proper operation is verified, the connectors 64 are actuated to release the braids or strands of the implant 1. The pusher catheter 30 and the delivery catheter 20 are withdrawn slightly while maintaining connection with the implant 1 and the device 10 via the releasable grasping mechanism. Subsequently, the grasping mechanisms 50 are

actuated to release the commissural points of the implant 1. The pusher catheter 30 is retracted into the delivery catheter 20 and the delivery catheter 20 and the guidewire 70 are withdrawn from the patient.

[0068] Figures 7-21 illustrate another embodiment of a delivery device 100 that is generally similar to the previously described delivery device 10, especially where noted with similar element numbers. However, the delivery device 100 includes a positioning tether assembly 110, the distal end of which is seen best in Figures 7-10, having a sliding release mechanism for releasing a connection to the implant 1.

[0069] More specifically, the positioning tether assembly 110 includes a plurality of tethers 104 that are each arranged in a generally closed loop. These looped tethers 104 pass through portions of the implant 1 and therefore can maintain the implant 1 in a desired position during a procedure (e.g., can prevent distal movement of the implant 1). The tethers can be disconnected from the implant 1 by releasing one end of each of the tethers 104, effectively opening the loop shape. In this respect, withdrawal of the positioning tether assembly 110 also pulls the tethers 104 out of and away from the implant 1.

[0070] The release mechanism of the positioning tether assembly 110 is triggered by advancing a sliding member 114 to the position seen in Figures 8 and 10 from the retracted position seen in Figures 7 and 9. Note that the tethers 104 are connected to a distal end 114B of the sliding member 114 (e.g., either fixed in place or pass through the member 114 back to the proximal end of the positioning tether assembly 110), but for illustrative purposes are not shown as such in Figures 9 and 10. Initially, the free ends 104B of the tethers 104 are located within a depression 114A of the sliding member 114 and are captured by a first slot 112A of an outer tether sheath 112. When the sliding member 114 is advanced, the depression 114A is positioned beneath a wider, second slot 112B, which allows the free ends 104B of the tethers 104 to be released.

[0071] As best seen in Figure 9, the free ends 104B of the tethers 104 have a generally larger size or diameter than the remaining portion of the tether 104 and can have a variety of different shapes, such as rounded, spherical or even square. The first

slot 112A has a width that is large enough to accommodate the diameter of the tether 104 but is smaller than the diameter of the free ends 104B, thereby allowing the tether 104 to laterally slide within the slot 112A without the free ends 104B from traversing through.

[0072] The second slot 112B is positioned distal to the first slot 112A and has a width that is larger than the free ends 104B. In this respect, once the depression 114A aligns under this second slot 112B, as seen in Figure 10, the free ends 104B are released, thereby allowing the tethers 104 to assume a generally linear configuration, similar to that in Figure 8.

[0073] While two slots are shown, a single slot may alternately be used in another embodiment. Specifically, the single slot may be similar in size to slot 112A, but extends to the distal end of the tether sheath 112. In this respect, the free ends 104B are released when the depression 114A is advanced outside of the tether sheath 112.

[0074] The positioning tether assembly 110 may be constructed with an overall outside diameter that is small enough to be slidingly contained in one of the lumens 34 or 36 of the pusher catheter 30 shown in Figure 2a or 2b.

[0075] Figures 11-22 show the proximal end or handle assembly 200 of the delivery device 100. The handle assembly generally includes valve retention cable control group 210, a pusher catheter control 250, a drive mechanism 260, irrigation ports 280, and a tether control assembly 300.

[0076] The valve retention cable control group 210 includes a plurality of valve retention cable controls 212, housed in a recess 214 of the handle 200, and a locking pin 216. The individual valve retention cable controls 212 are best seen in Figures 12-14.

[0077] Figure 12 shows an exploded view of an individual valve retention cable control 212. The control 212 includes a housing 218, to which is attached a proximal end of the elastomeric sheath 44 of the retention cable 40 (see Fig. 3). Slidably contained within the housing 218 is a thumb slide 220, which is connected to the wire 42

of the retention cable 40. Behind the thumb slide 220 is a spring-loaded catch 222. In operation, pulling the thumb slide rearward toward the catch 222 pulls the wire 42 relative to the sheath 44, thereby retracting the hook 52 into the mouth 54 at the distal end of the cable 40. The catch 222 maintains the retention cable 40 in a closed position. The hook 52 can be quickly released from the mouth 54 by depressing the catch 222.

[0078] Figure 14 shows the thumb slide 220 in the forward, open position. The corresponding open position of the distal end of the cable 40 is also shown. Figure 15 shows the thumb slide 220 in the rearward, closed position. The corresponding closed position of the distal end of the cable 40 is also shown. Furthermore, a locking pin 216 has been inserted through the housing 218 and the thumb slide 220 to prevent accidental release of the implant 1 held in the mouth 54 of the retention cable 40.

[0079] Referring back to Figure 11, it is shown that there are three controls 212 arranged in the handle 200. It can also be seen that a single locking pin 216 passes through the handle 200 and all three controls 212. This locking pin 216 is a precautionary feature that ensures none of the controls 212 are inadvertently opened. Once the valve position and operation have been verified, the physician is then able to unlock all three controls 212 by removing the single pin 216.

[0080] Figure 15 is a partial view of the handle 200 of the device 100. Figure 15 shows the pusher catheter control 250, which is shown as a sliding ring 250 that slides over the handle 200. The ring 250 is connected through a slot 252 in the side of the handle 200 to the pusher catheter 30. When the ring 250 is advanced to its most distal position, it may be rotated to lock the pusher catheter relative to the valve retention cables 40.

[0081] The drive mechanism 260 is shown in Figure 16. The drive mechanism 260 includes a lead-screw 262 and a threaded nut combination 264. The threaded nut combination 264 includes a nut 266 contained within a knob 268 and a quick release 270. Rotation of the knob 268 causes the nut 266 to act against the lead-screw 262. The knob 268 is axially fixed relative to the handle 200. The lead-screw 262 is slidingly

contained within the handle 200. As such, when the nut 266 acts against the lead-screw 262, the lead-screw 262 advances or retracts in the handle 200. The lead-screw 262 is connected at its distal end to the delivery catheter 20. The rotatable threaded nut combination 264 thus allows precise control over the relative motion between the pusher catheter 30 and the delivery catheter 20. The quick release 270 may be in the form of a button or lever that disengages the nut 266 from the threads of the lead-screw 262 to allow the pusher catheter 30 and valve retention cables 40 to be quickly retracted into the delivery catheter 20.

[0082] It has been found that retracting an implant back into the delivery catheter 20 is more successful when done quickly. A slow retraction increases the risk that the catheter may buckle. As such, the handle 200 has been designed to effect a quick retraction of an implant back into the device 100 when necessary. This is accomplished by ensuring the ring 250 is rotated into the locked position so that when the handle is retracted relative to the delivery catheter , the pusher catheter 30 and the valve retention cables 40 are fixed relative to each other and thus retracted simultaneously. Depressing the quick release 270 while pulling on the knob 268 while holding the delivery catheter 20 stable causes the implant to be quickly drawn back into the delivery catheter 20.

[0083] The various components of the tether control assembly 300 are shown in Figures 17-21. The tether control assembly 300 generally includes a tether release controller 310 and a tether positioning mechanism 340.

[0084] The tether release controller 310 is shown in Figures 17 and 18 and includes a housing 312 and a control knob 314. The housing 312 is fixed to the proximal end of the outer tether sheath 112 (See Figures 9 and 10) of the positioning tether assembly 110. The control knob 314 is able to slide axially, relative to the housing 312, and is attached to the proximal end of sliding member 114 (Figures 9 and 10). Thus, when the control knob 314 is in the forward position shown in Figure 18, the tethers are released. When the control knob 314 is in the rearward position shown in Figure 17, the tethers ends are trapped in the first slot 112A of the outer tether sheath 112. In the embodiment shown in the Figures, the control knob 314 can be turned in the closed

position, thereby locking it closed. Also includes is a clip 320 which may be used to prevent the control knob 314 from advancing to the open position in the event it is accidentally actuated. The clip 320 is easily removed when it is desired to release the tethers.

[0085] Figures 19-21 show the tether positioning mechanism 340. The tether positioning mechanism is a slide-lock that includes a housing 342, a lever 344, and a clamp block 346. The housing 342 passes over the outer tether sheath 112 and keeps the tether sheath positioned between the lever 344 and the clamp block 346. When the lever 344 is lowered to the closed position, shown in Figure 20, the outer tether sheath 112, and the tethers contained therein, are clamped between the lever 344 and the block 346, and cannot slide. Thus the tether positioning mechanism 340 is fixed relative to the outer tether sheath 112. When the lever 344 is in the open position, the tether positioning mechanism 340 is able to slide over the outer tether sheath 112.

[0086] Figures 22-29 illustrate how the delivery device 100 can be used to deliver an implant 1 according to the present invention. First, an implant 1 is loaded into the delivery device 100. After the selected valve is rinsed, each of the three valve retention cables 40 are individually attached to each of three wire form eyelets on the implant. This is accomplished by opening the valve retention cable control 212, pushing the thumb slide 220 forward to expose the hook 52 from the mouth 54. The hook 52 is placed through the wire form eyelet and the thumb slide 220 is retracted rearwardly until it engaged the catch 222. Doing so locks the slide 220 and closes the hook 52 into the mouth 54. It also compresses the outer elastomeric sheath 44 of the valve retention cable 40 to maintain interference between the hook 52 and the mouth 54, even if a pulling force is placed on the cable sufficient to stretch the cable, thereby preventing accidental release during a retrieval procedure.

[0087] After all three valve retention cables 40 are attached, the position tethers 104 are attached to the implant 1. (Alternatively, the position tethers 104 may be attached prior to the valve retention cables 40). This is accomplished by threading each of the three tethers 104 through the center of the implant and through a ventricular loop of the implant's support structure at 120 degree intervals from the inside to the outside of the

implant. Once all three tethers 104 have been threaded, they are passed back up through the valve and the three tethers 104 are locked within the slot 112A of the outer tether sheath 112. Locking is accomplished by pulling the control knob 314 and rotating it to the locked position shown in Figure 17.

[0088] Next the pusher catheter 30 is pushed forward to capture the valve retention cables 40. At the distal-most position of the pusher catheter control ring 250, the ring 250 is rotated to lock the position of the pusher catheter 30 relative to the valve retention cables 40.

[0089] The implant 1 is now ready for loading into the delivery catheter 20. The delivery catheter 20 is advanced by rotating the drive knob 268 toward the user, and the implant 1 is slowly drawn into the distal end of the delivery catheter 20. While the implant 1 is being loaded, the position of the implant is noted so an observation can be made as to when the implant has achieved the orientation in which the implant would be exposed enough from the delivery catheter 20 to be able to invert into itself. At this point the tether positioning mechanism 340, which is in the unlocked position, is slid down the sheath 112 until it contacts the delivery catheter manifold 282 (Figure 11) and the lever 344 is moved to the locked position.

[0090] Continued loading of the implant into the delivery catheter 20 causes the tethers 104 and the tether sheath 112 to retract and the tether positioning mechanism 340 to move proximally relative to the delivery catheter manifold 282. The implant is fully loaded when the dilator tip 80 has been partially retracted into the delivery catheter 20 and there is a smooth transition between the dilator tip and the delivery catheter tip.

[0091] As seen in Figure 22, a guidewire 70 is placed across the native aortic valve of the patient and extends out through the vascular introducer at the femoral artery access site. The proximal end of the guidewire is inserted into the dilator tip 80 of the loaded delivery system and the system is advanced over the guidewire until the guidewire is visible through the proximal end of the delivery system. The proximal end of the guidewire is then held stationary in order to maintain the position of the wire in the left ventricle of the patient and the delivery system is advanced into the vasculature

through the introducer and across the native aortic valve 4 (seen best in Figure 23). The guidewire passes through lumen 32 of the pusher catheter 30.

[0092] Turning to Figure 24, the delivery sheath 20 is proximally retracted to expose a portion of the implant 1 and the tethers 104. This is accomplished by rotating the drive knob 268. As the implant 1 becomes exposed, it self-expands outward against the native valve 4. During deployment, the operator maintains the implant position within the native valve of the patient. If, however, the implant is pulled too high or pushed too low relative to the native valve, the implant can be recaptured by reversing the direction of the drive knob 268 rotation, which draws the implant back into the sheath 20 for repositioning.

[0093] As shown in Figure 25, next, the implant 1 is folded or inverted on itself by restraining the implant with the tethers 104 and pushing a proximal portion of the implant in a distal direction with the pusher catheter 110. More specifically, when the first layer of the implant has been deployed, the tether positioning mechanism 340 will have reached the delivery catheter manifold. This freezes the position of the ventricular loops (the distal end) of the implant such that further advancement of the implant will result in a shortening and flaring of the implant in preparation for valve invention.

[0094] This flaring aspect of the valve deployment has been described as the anchoring phase, as the implant has expanded to contact the native valve tissue and the aortic flare of the device provides substantial resistance to migration. Once the anchoring phase has begun, the delivery catheter 20 is advanced through the access site and the patient vasculature. Doing so aligns the distal tip of the delivery catheter coaxial to the native valve with the curve of the delivery catheter 20 filling the outer curvature of the native aortic arch.

[0095] After the catheter 20 has been advanced, continued deployment of the valve using the drive knob is used to produce implant invention. The act of inverting the implant also deploys the tissue valve component of the implant. Once the implant has been inverted the valve begins to function, but that function is somewhat constrained due to the proximity of the tethers and the valve control cables.

[0096] After inversion has been accomplished, the user releases the tethers. First the tether positioning mechanism 340 is released by releasing the lever 344, separating it from the clamp block 346. The tether positioning mechanism 340 is free to float along the outer tether sheath 112. The drive knob 268 is rotated to further back the delivery catheter 20 away from the implant. Once the delivery catheter 20 is fully retracted, the tethers 104 can be removed by rotating and releasing the tension in the control knob 314 of the tether release controller 310. Gently pulling on the tether release controller 310 will separate the tethers 104 from the implant.

[0097] Once the tethers 104 have been removed, only the valve retention cables 40 remain connected to the implant 1, as seen in Figure 28. As previously discussed, these cables 40 are attached to a proximal feature on the implant (e.g., the commissural points) and allow the physician to completely retract the implant 1 back into the delivery device 100 if a problem arises during the delivery procedure. Specifically, in order to observe full valve function without releasing the implant, the physician begins by rotating the ring 250 away from the operator and sliding the ring 250 in a proximal direction, retracting the pusher catheter 30. With the pusher catheter 30 retracted, the prosthetic valve now begins to function fully. The remaining attachment of the delivery system to the implant via the valve retention cables 40 has little effect on the functionality of the implant.

[0098] Once satisfied, the physician next releases the implant by pulling the locking pin 216 at the proximal end of the handle assembly 200. With the locking pin 216 removed, each of the three valve retention cable controllers 212 can be sequentially released. This is accomplished by depressing the catch 222 and sliding the thumb slide 220 forward, releasing the implant 1. Each cable can be individually retracted into the delivery catheter after it has been disengaged. When all three cables are released, the valve is fully implanted and the delivery system may be removed from the vascular introducer of the patient.

[0099] Finally, the delivery device 100 and guidewire 70 is removed from the patient, leaving only the functioning valve implant 1, as seen in Figure 29.

[00100] Although the invention has been described in terms of particular embodiments and applications, one of ordinary skill in the art, in light of this teaching, can generate additional embodiments and modifications without departing from the spirit of or exceeding the scope of the claimed invention. Accordingly, it is to be understood that the drawings and descriptions herein are proffered by way of example to facilitate comprehension of the invention and should not be construed to limit the scope thereof.

[00101] Where any or all of the terms "comprise", "comprises", "comprised" or "comprising" are used in this specification (including the claims) they are to be interpreted as specifying the presence of the stated features, integers, steps or components, but not precluding the presence of one or more other features, integers, steps or components.

The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A delivery system for an invertible device comprising:
 - a delivery catheter;
 - a pusher catheter slidably disposed within said delivery catheter;
 - a positioning mechanism releasably connecting an invertible device to said delivery system;wherein during advancement of said invertible device out of said delivery catheter, said positioning mechanism initiates inversion of a proximal portion of said invertible device into a distal portion of said invertible device by preventing further advancement of said distal portion of said invertible device.
2. The delivery system of claim 1, wherein said positioning mechanism further comprises a plurality of tethers.
3. The delivery system of claim 2, wherein said plurality of tethers are connected to said pusher catheter.
4. The delivery system of claim 2, wherein said plurality of tethers are connected to a delivery sheath of said delivery catheter.
5. The delivery system of claim 2, wherein said plurality of tethers are connected to a middle region of said invertible device.
6. The delivery system of claim 2, wherein said plurality of tethers are connected to said distal portion of said invertible device.
7. The delivery system of claim 2, wherein said plurality of tethers each have a first end that is selectively releasable from said positioning mechanism.
8. The delivery system of claim 7, further comprising a tether release mechanism that selectively engages and releases said first end of each of said plurality of tethers.

9. A delivery system for an invertible device comprising:
 - a delivery catheter;
 - a pusher catheter slidably disposed within said delivery catheter;
 - a positioning mechanism comprising:
 - an outer sheath having a first slot; and,
 - a sliding member located within said outer sheath and having a depression,
 - said positioning mechanism comprises a plurality of tethers, each of which having an end sized to fit within said depression of said sliding member,
 - said positioning mechanism releasably connecting an invertible device to said delivery system; said positioning mechanism limiting distal movement of said invertible device during an implant inversion procedure.
10. The delivery device of claim 9, wherein said positioning mechanism comprises a plurality of tethers that are each connected near a distal end of said invertible device and to said delivery catheter.
11. The delivery device of claim 9, wherein said positioning mechanism comprises a plurality of tethers that are each connected to said invertible device and to said delivery catheter.
12. The delivery device of claim 9, further comprising a plurality of attachment cables that are releasably connected to a proximal end of said invertible device.
13. A method for initiating inversion of an invertible device comprising:
 - advancing a first predetermined length of an invertible device distally from a delivery catheter;
 - limiting distal movement of said predetermined length of said invertible device;
 - and,

distally advancing a second predetermined length of said invertible device from said catheter so as to invert said second predetermined length into said first predetermined length.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein said limiting distal movement of said predetermined length of said invertible device is performed with a plurality of tethers.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising releasing said positioning mechanism from said invertible device.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein said limiting distal movement of said predetermined length of said invertible device further comprises tensioning a plurality of tethers connected to said invertible device.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising releasing a first set of ends of said plurality of tethers.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising releasing a plurality of attachment cables from said invertible device.

19. A method of delivering a support structure to a target site comprising:
positioning a distal end of a delivery catheter at said target site;
retracting proximally said distal end of said delivery catheter to expose a predetermined length of a support structure;
advancing a proximal end of said support structure distally while preventing distal advancement of a distal end of said support structure, thereby causing a proximal portion of said support structure to invert into said predetermined length;
releasing said support structure.

20. A device for delivering a support structure to a target site comprising:
 - a delivery catheter containing a support structure;
 - an advancement mechanism capable of axially advancing said support structure through said delivery catheter;
 - a stop mechanism capable of preventing advancement of a distal portion of said support structure past a predetermined distance distal of a distal end of said delivery catheter;
 - a release mechanism.

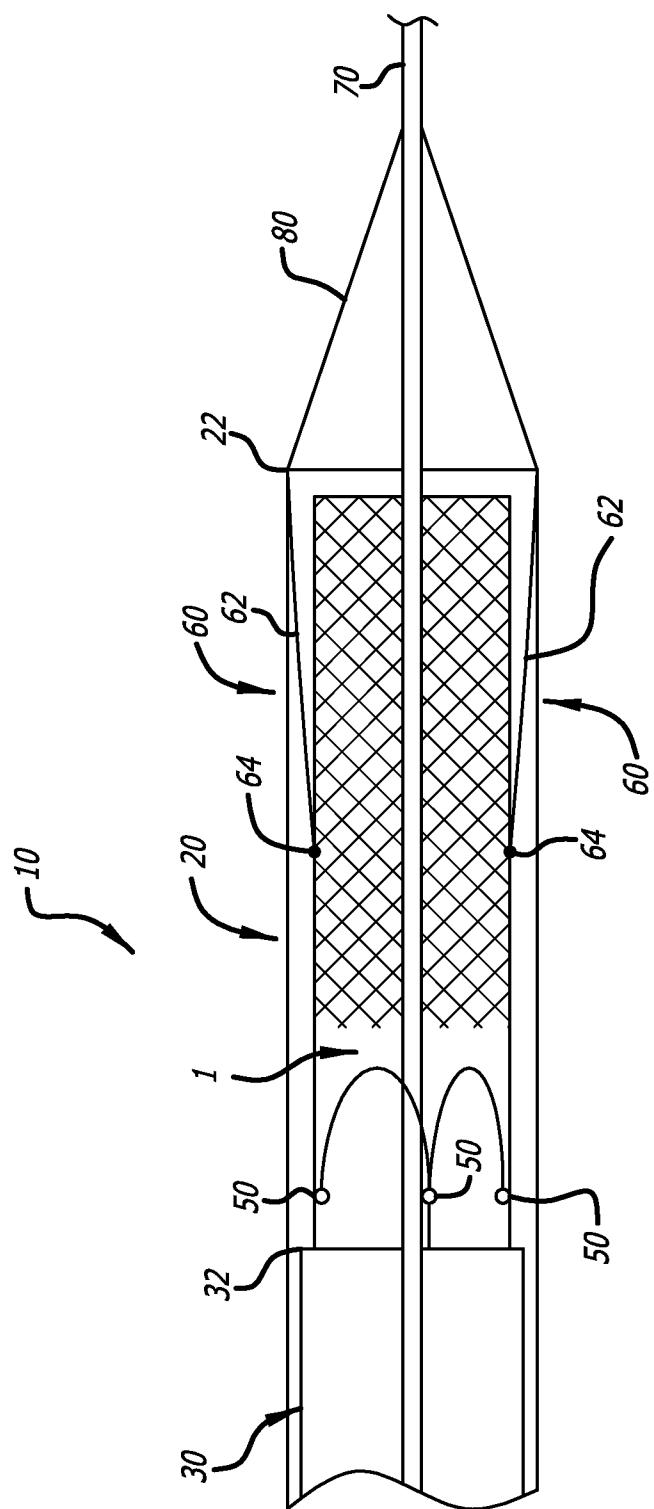


FIG. 1

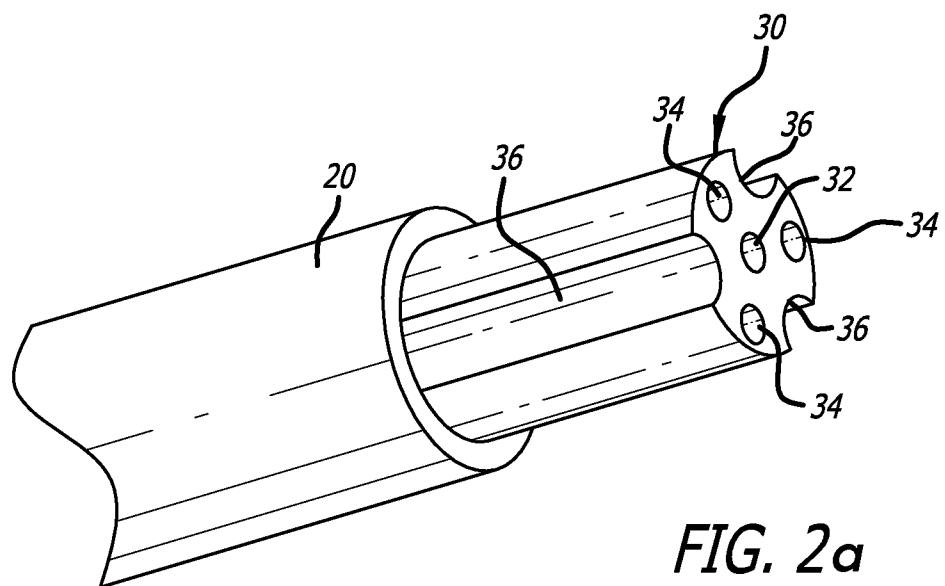


FIG. 2a

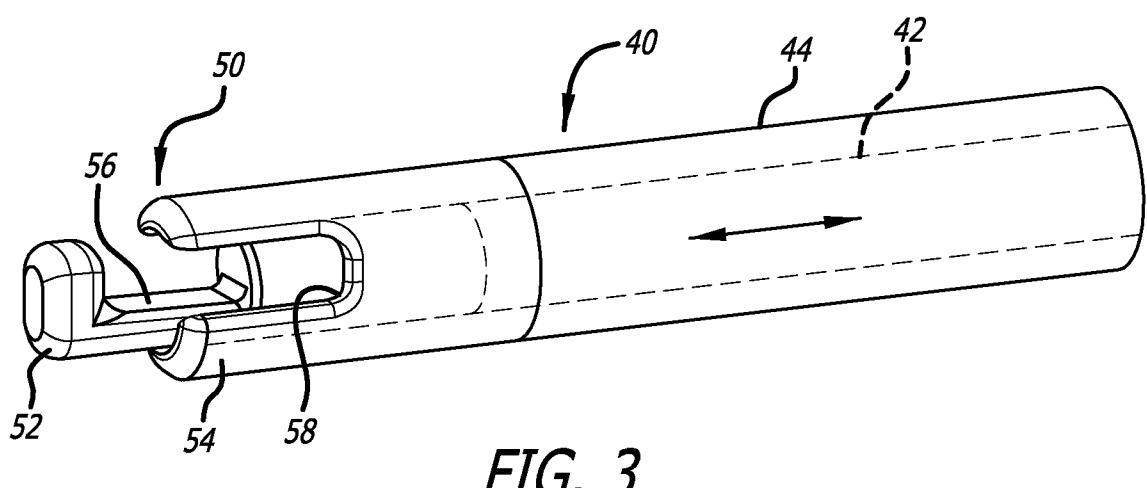
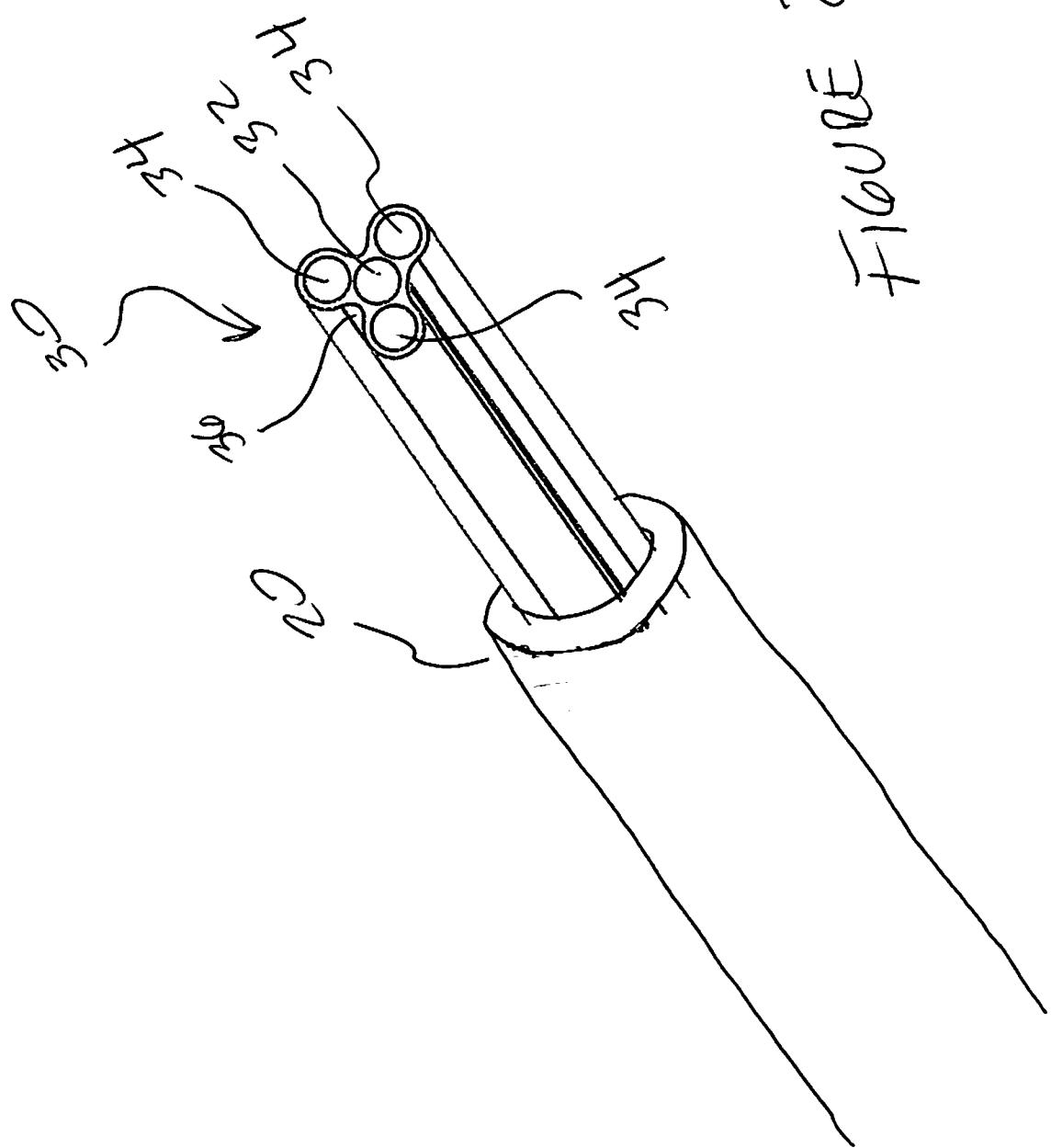
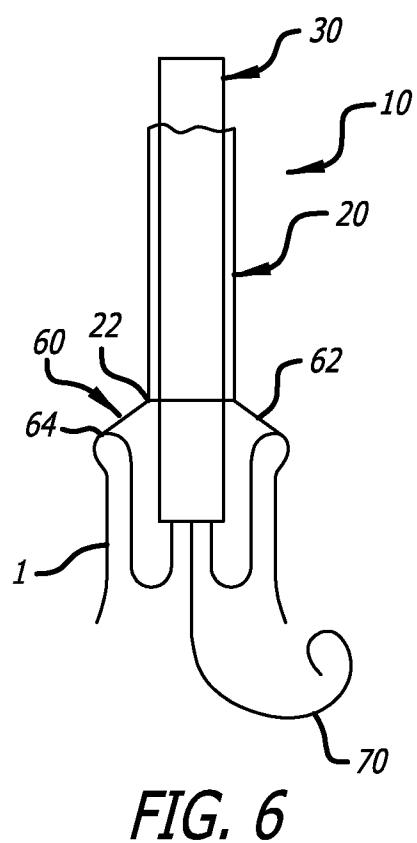
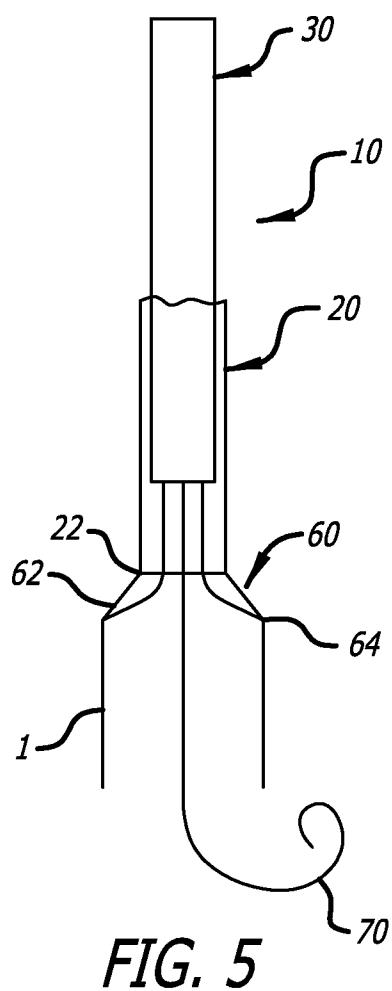
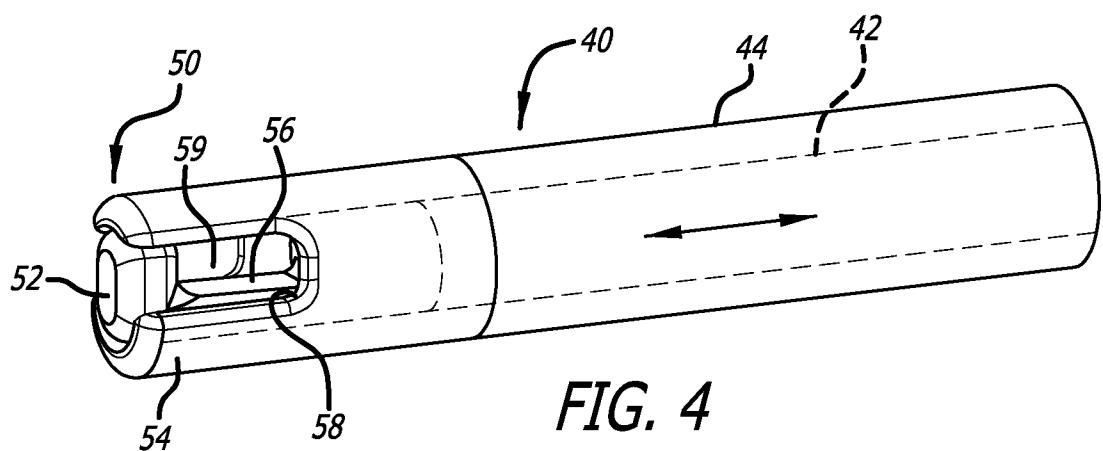


FIG. 3

FIGURE 2b





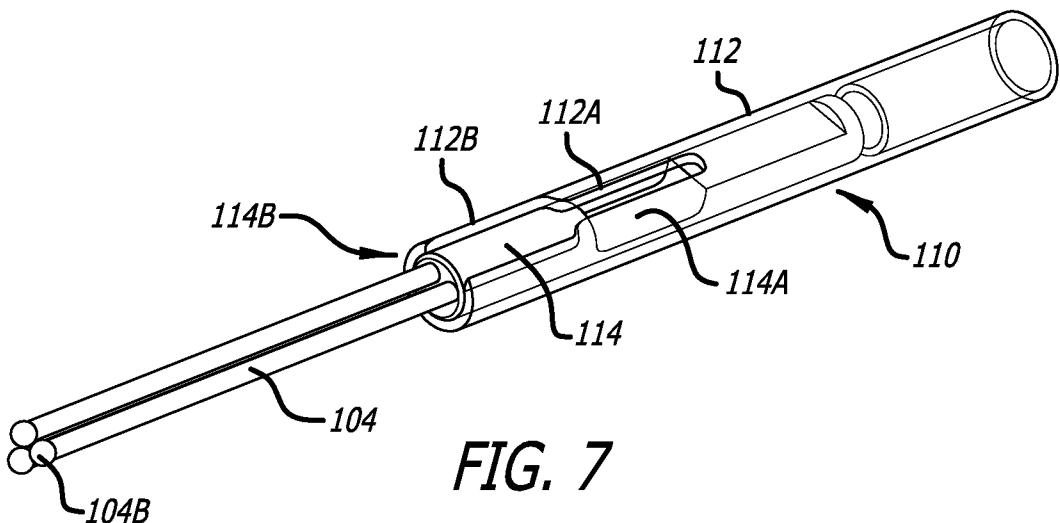


FIG. 7

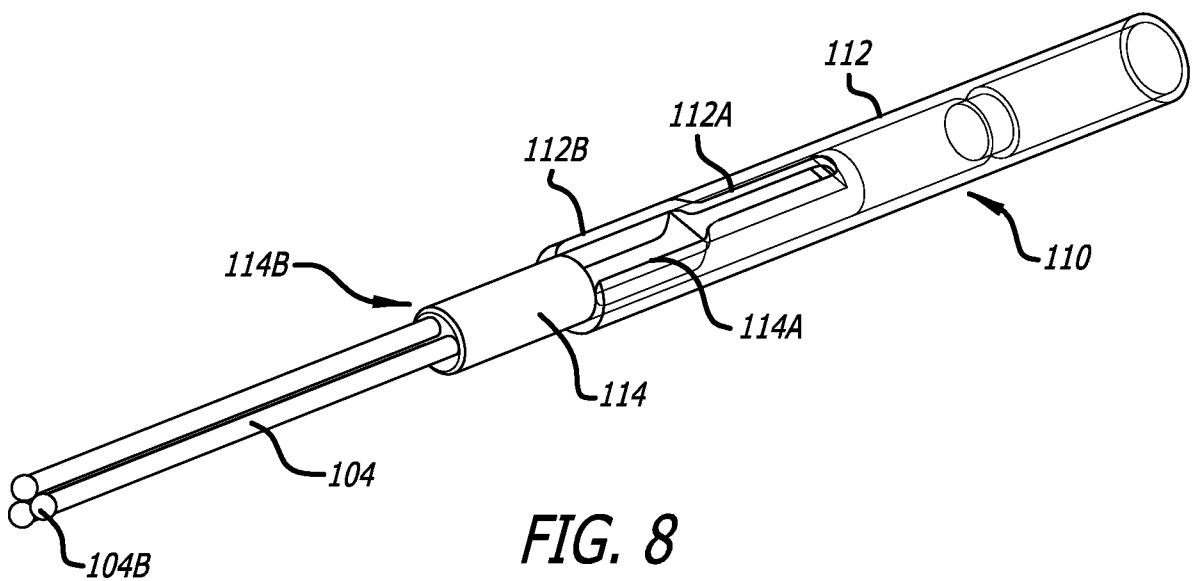


FIG. 8

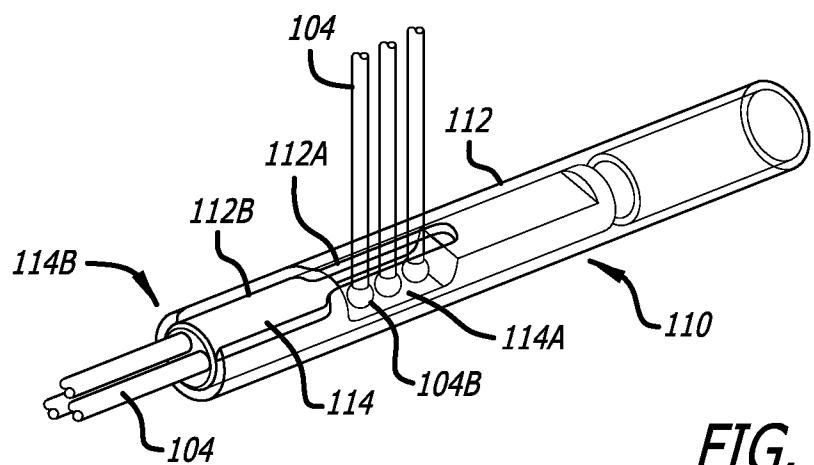


FIG. 9

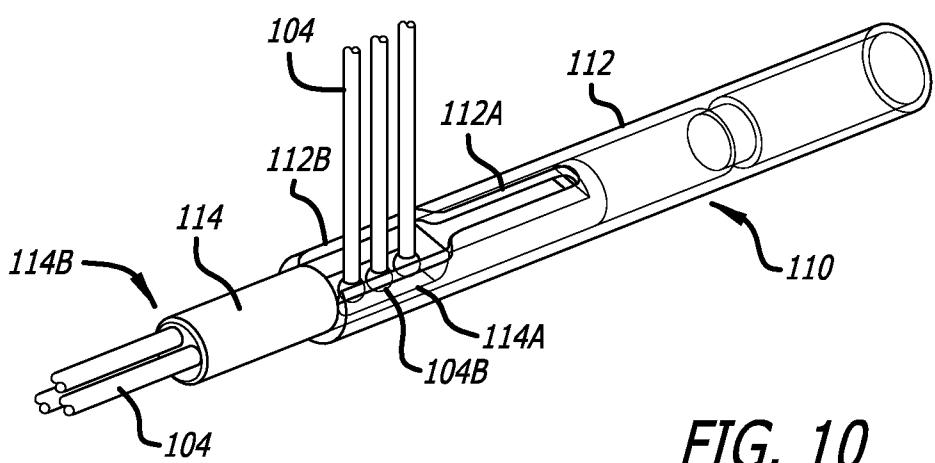


FIG. 10

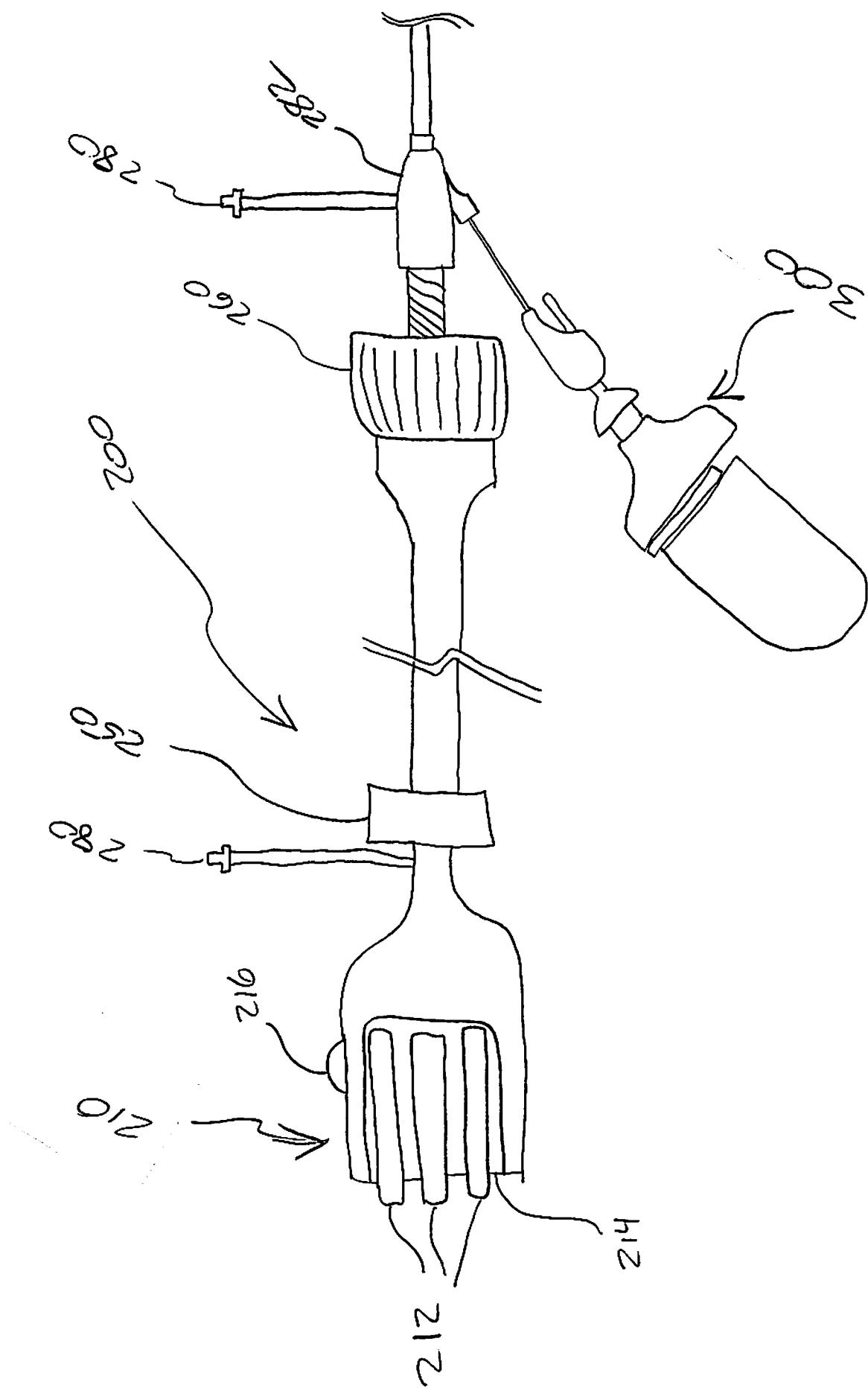
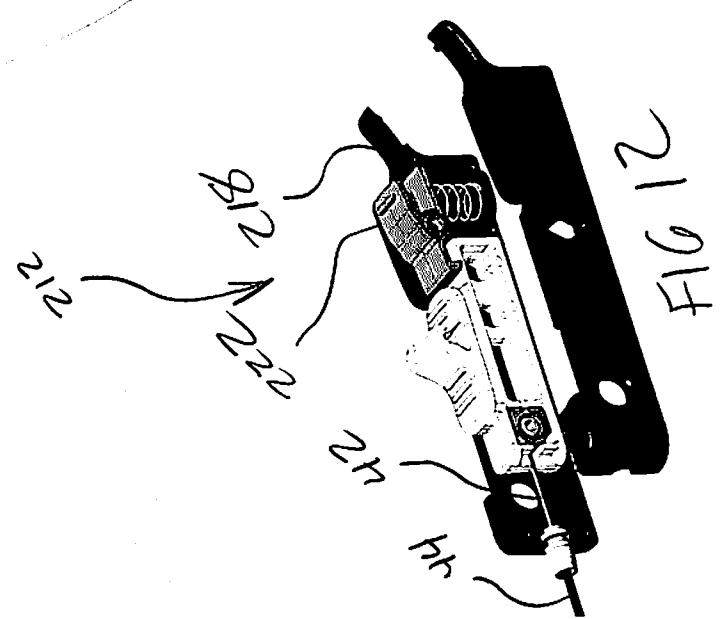
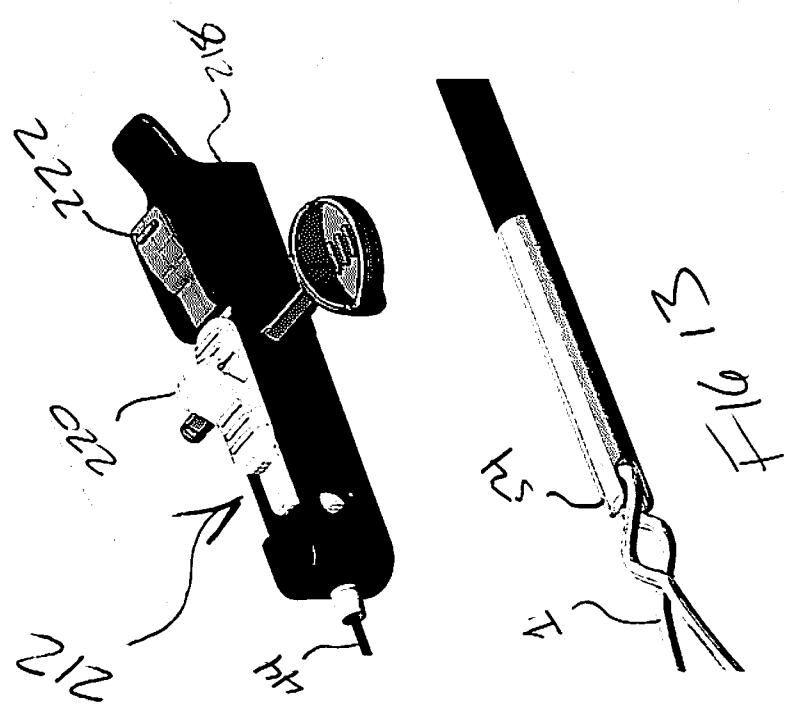
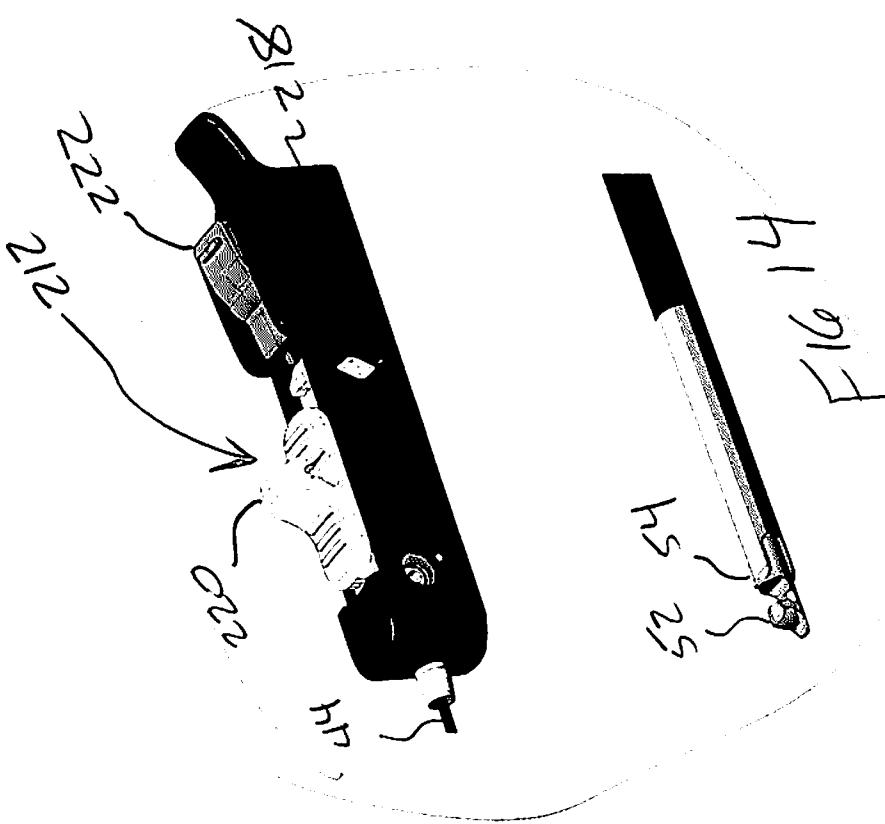
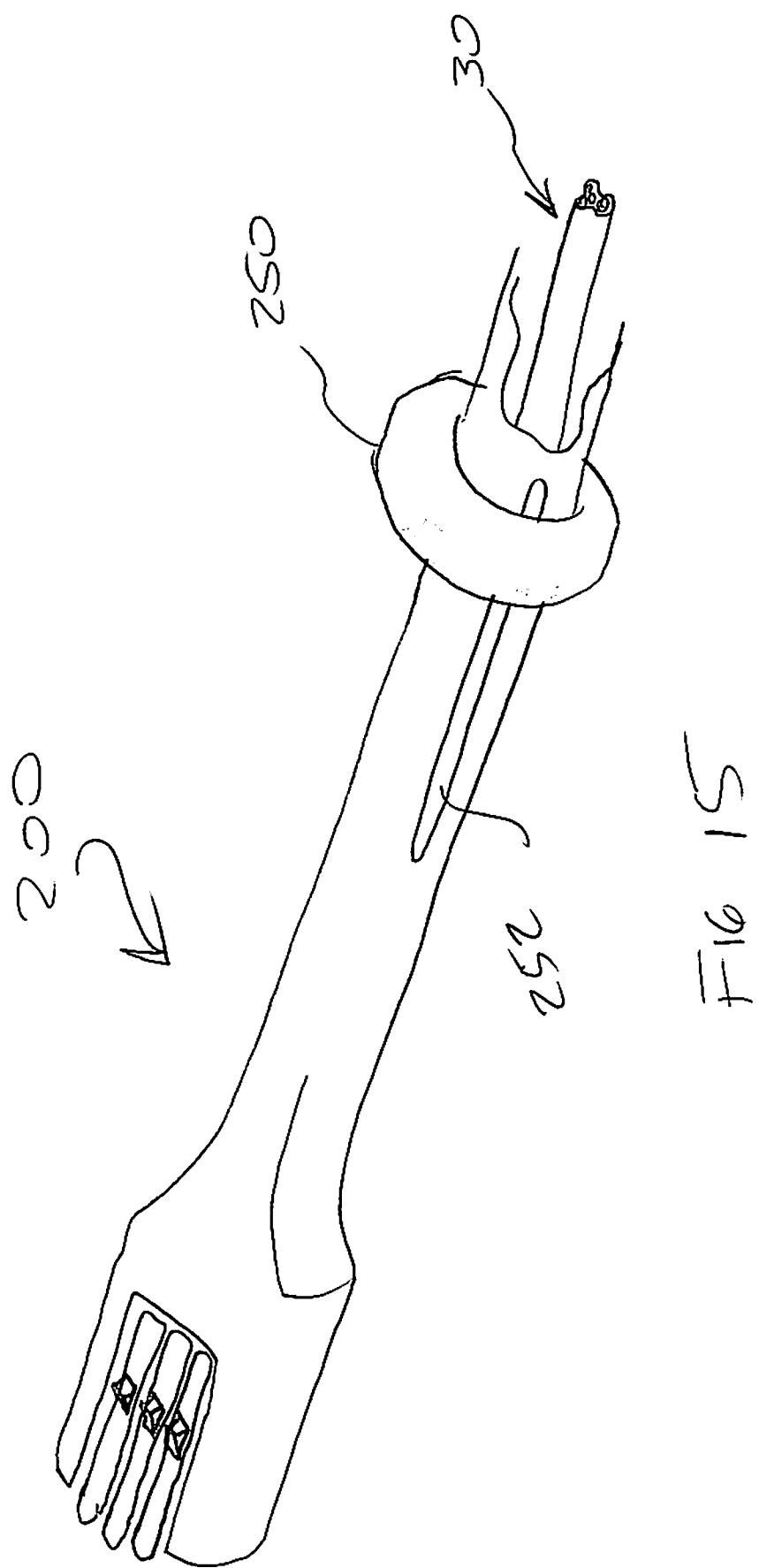


FIGURE 11





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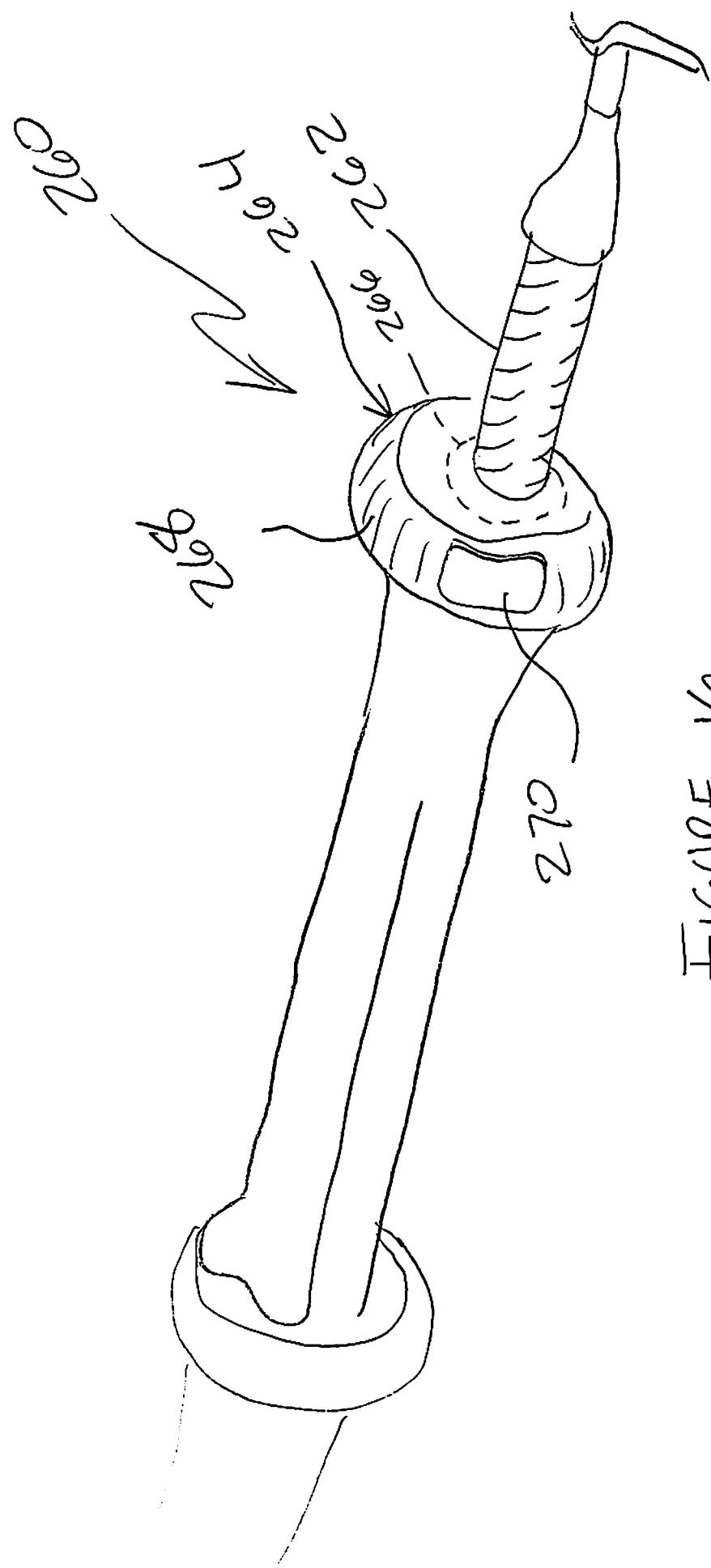


FIGURE 16

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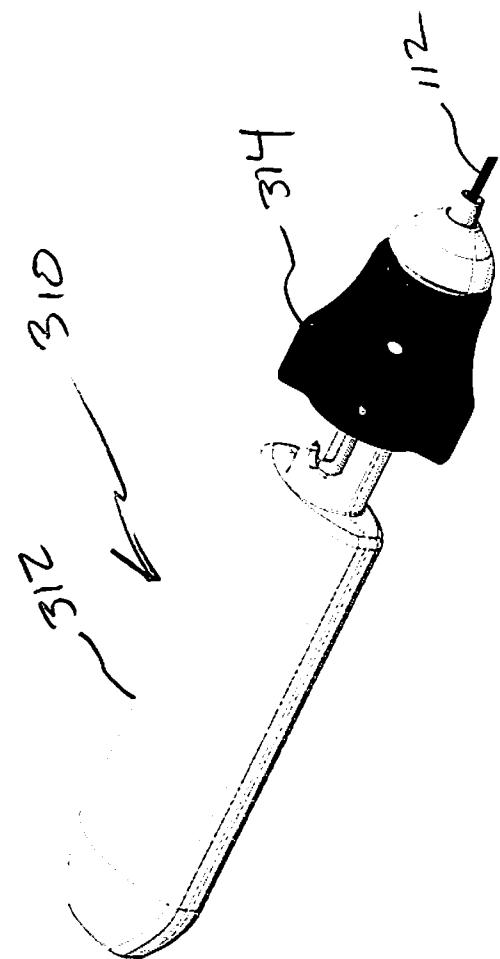


FIGURE 18

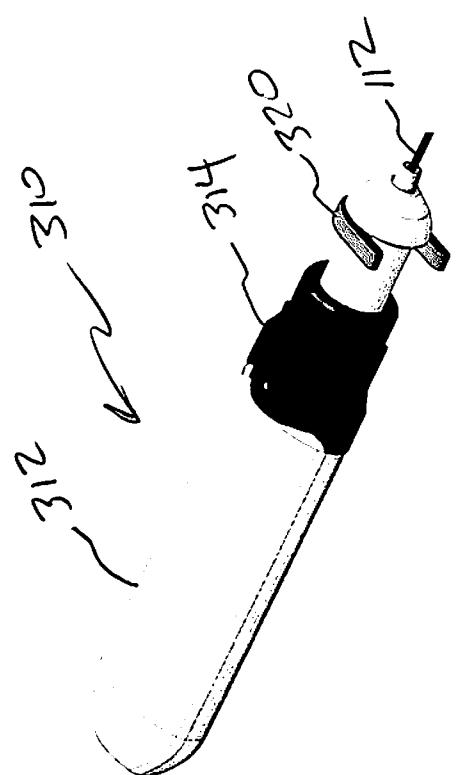
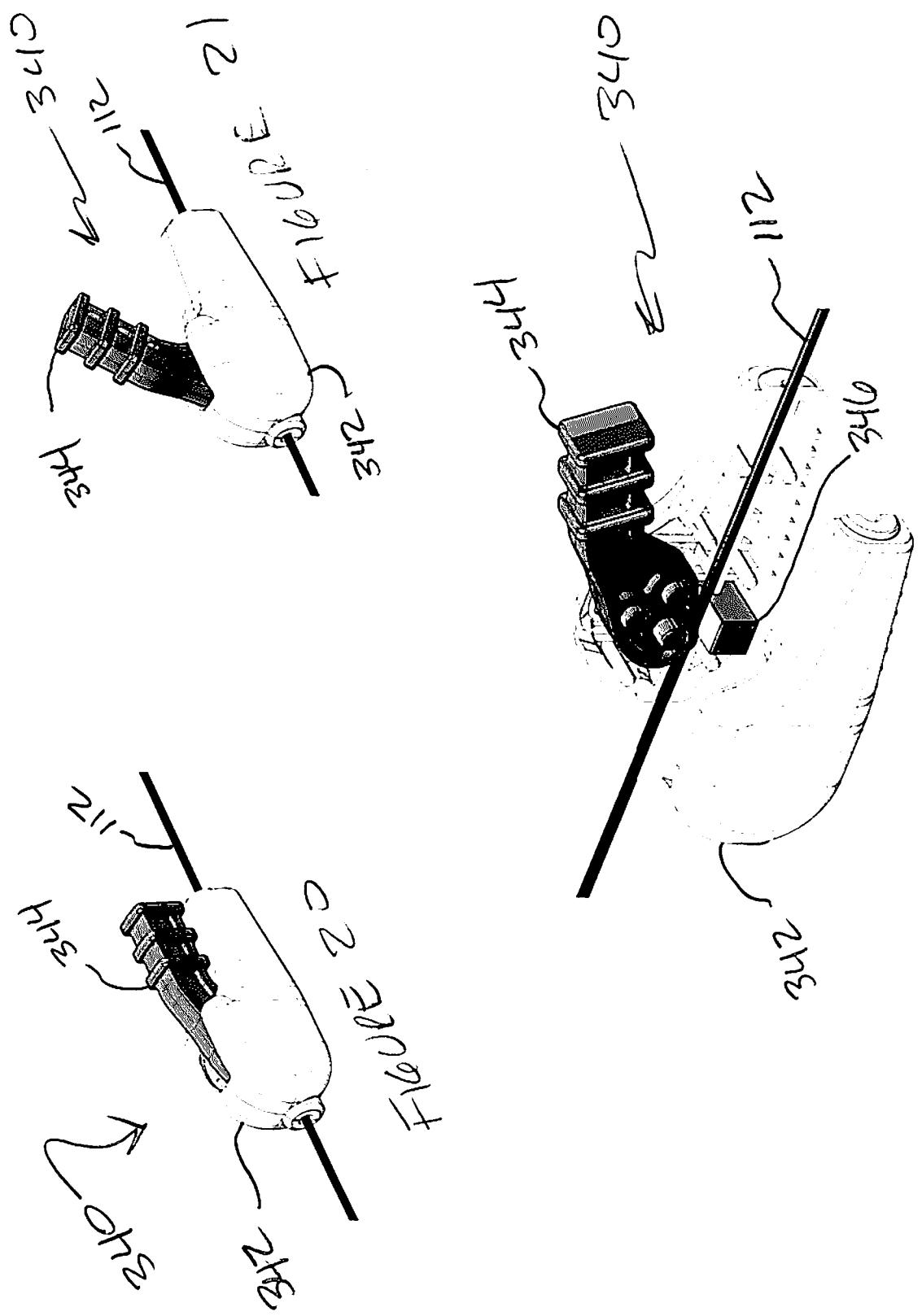


FIGURE 17



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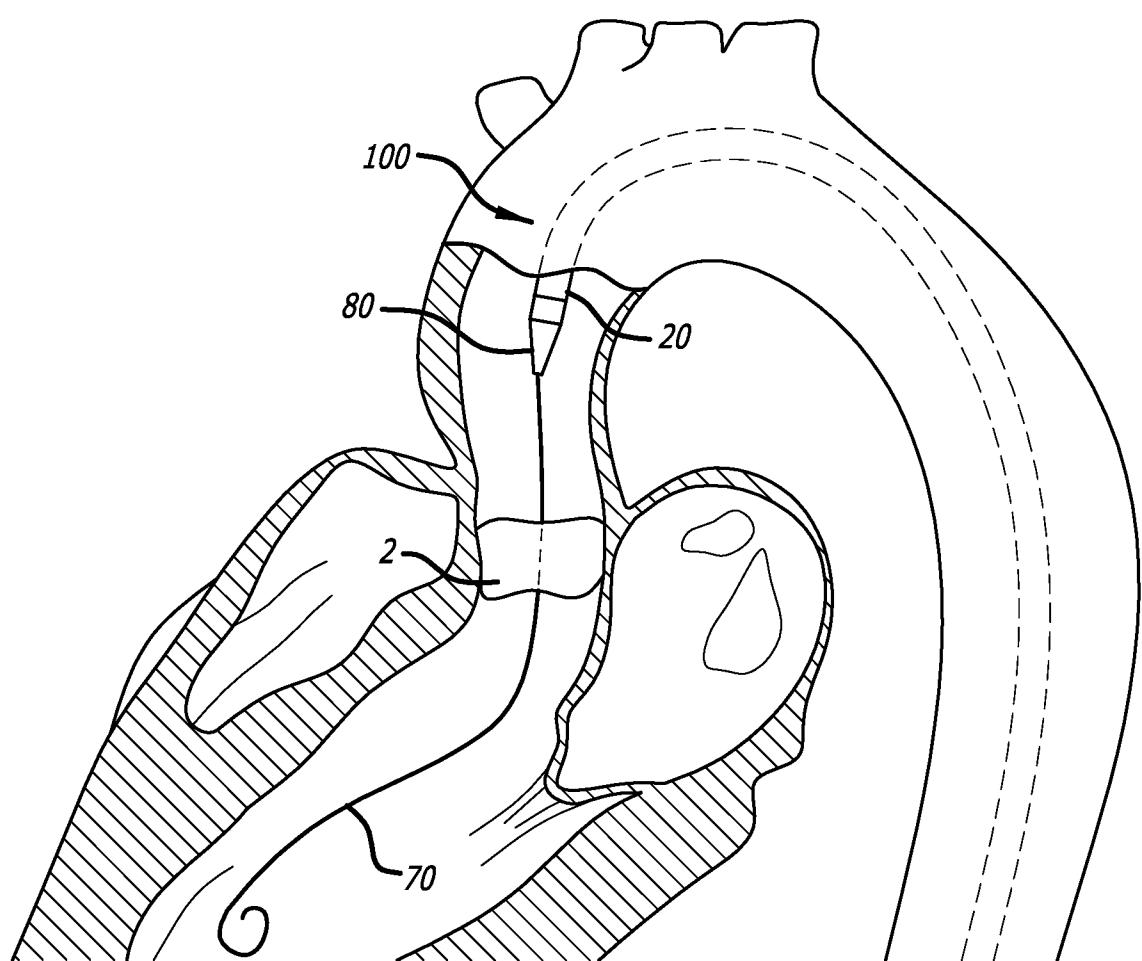


FIG. 22

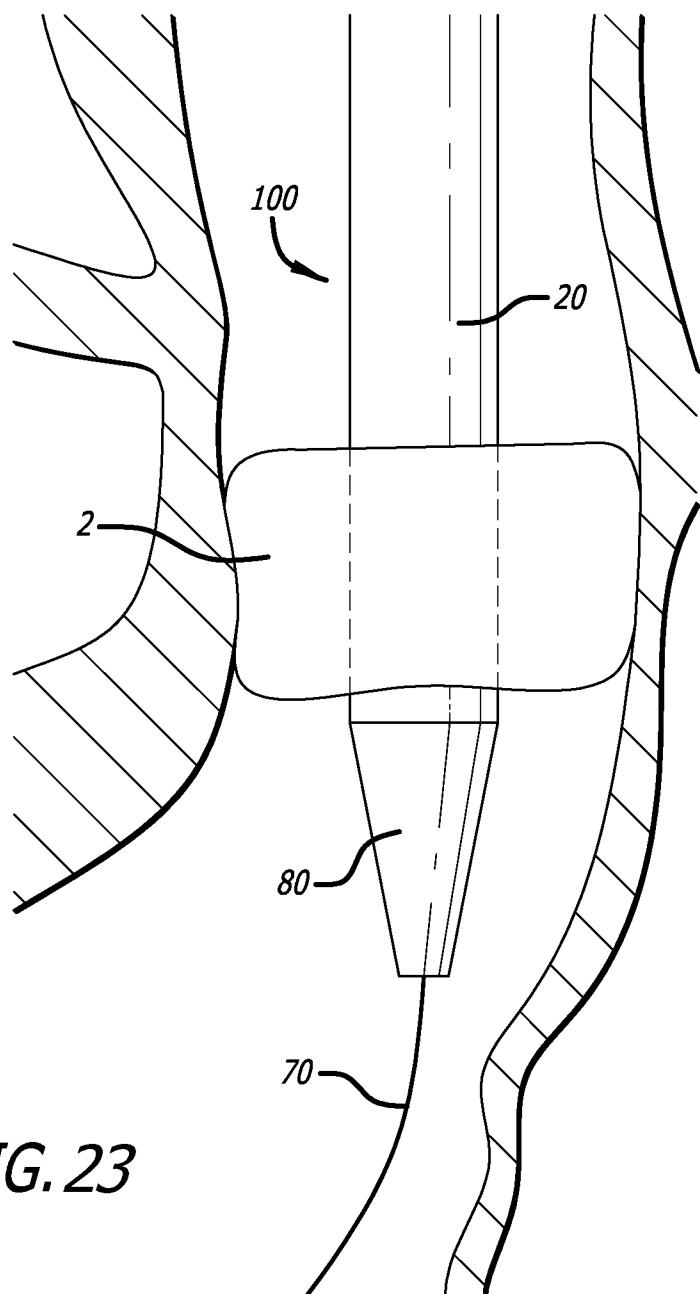
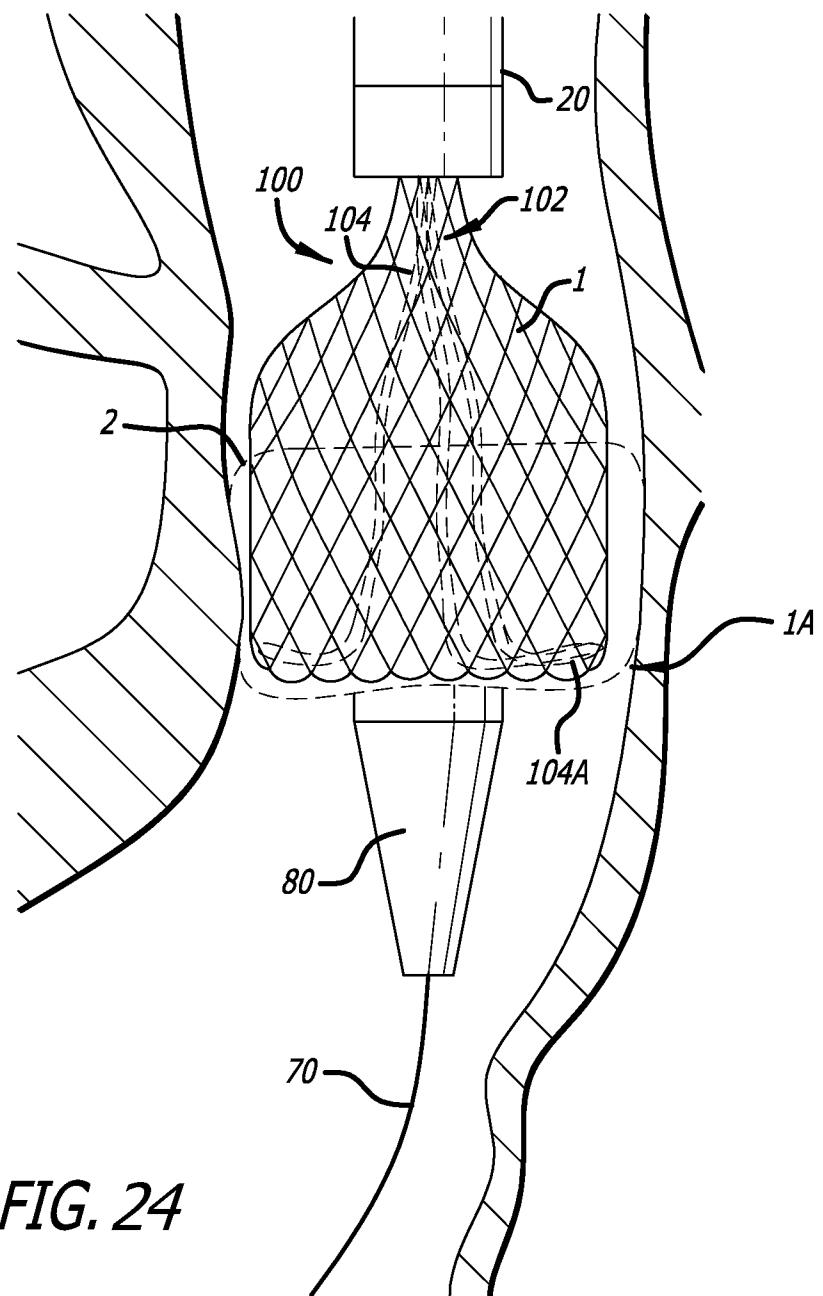


FIG. 23



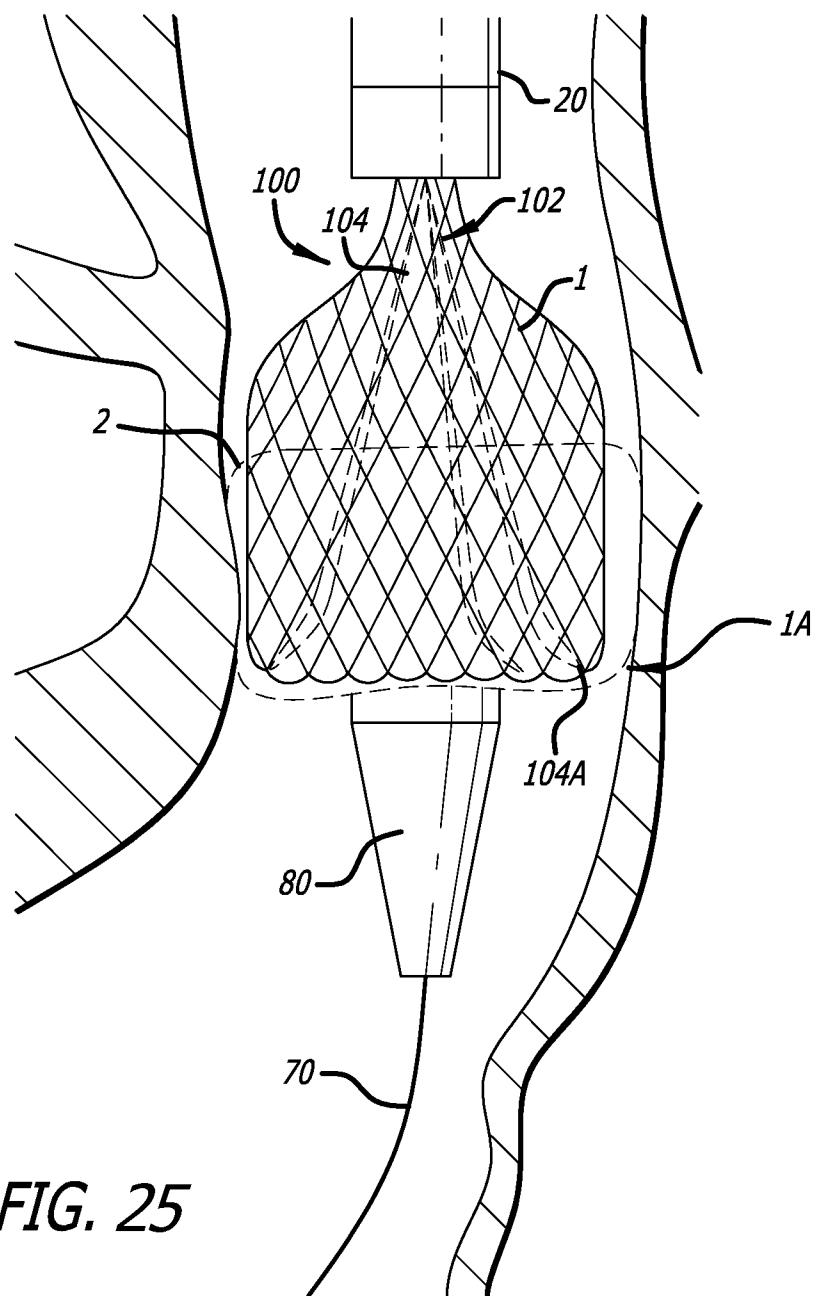
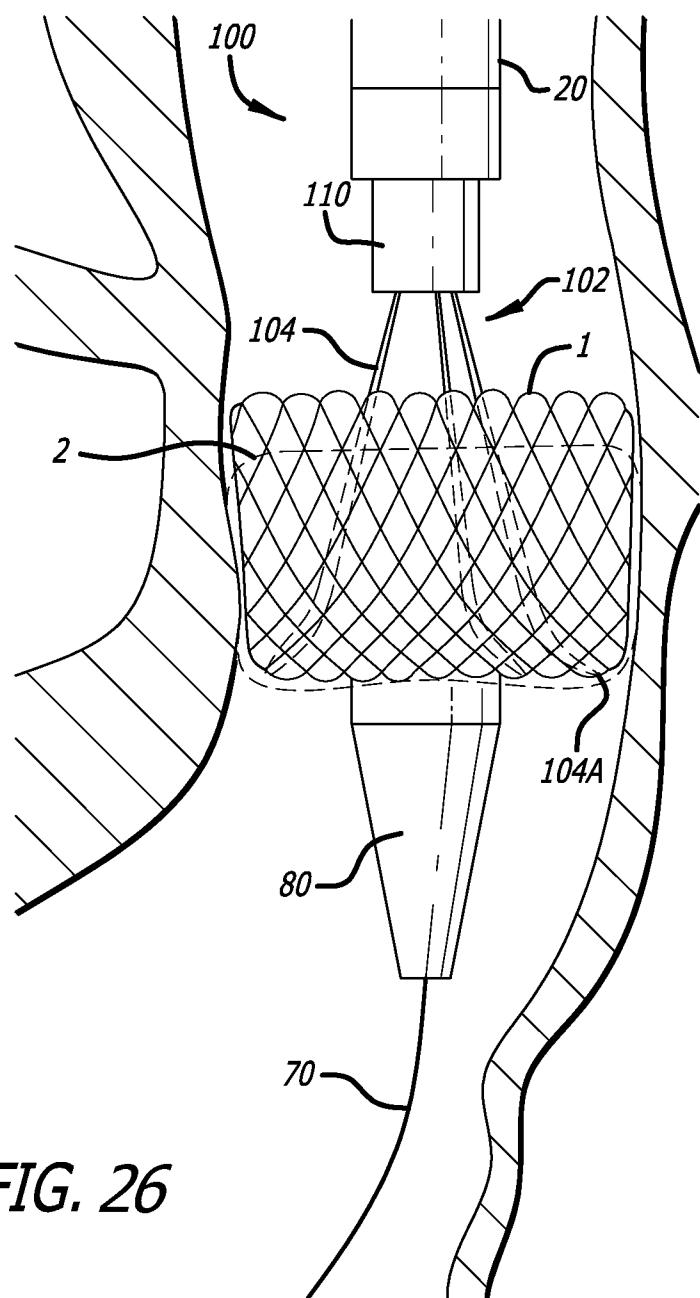


FIG. 25



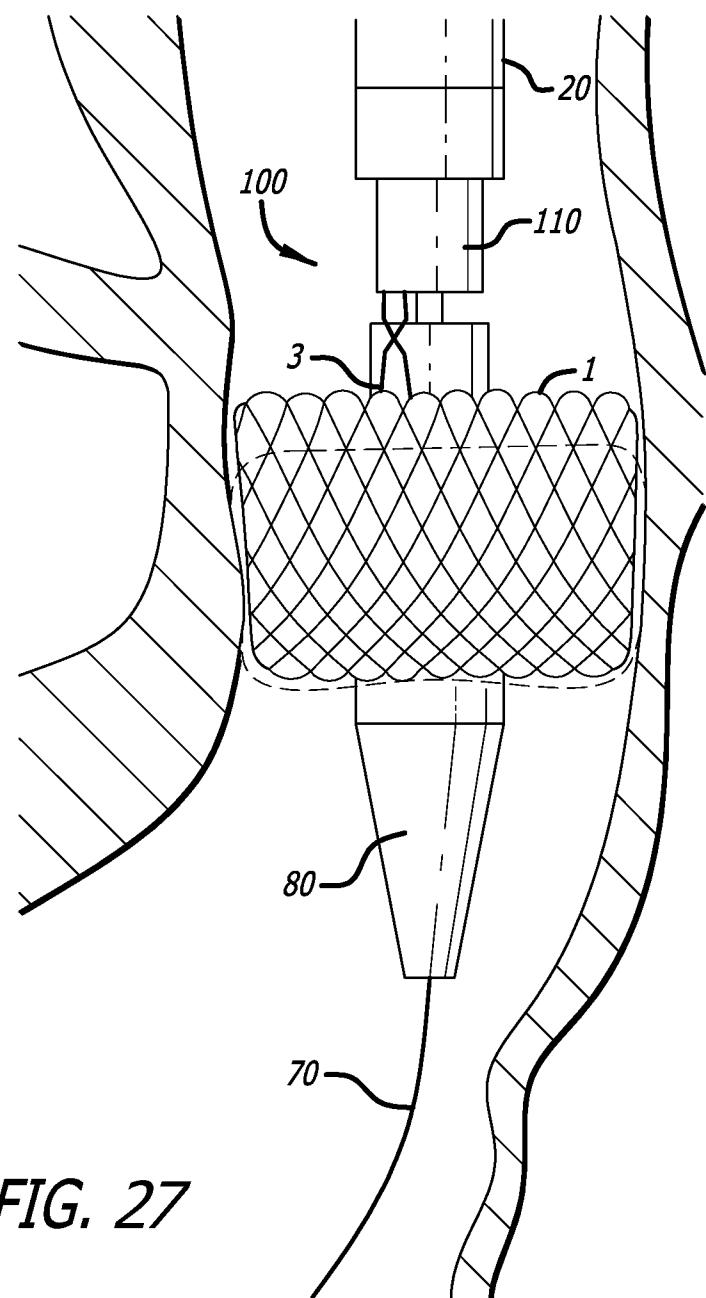


FIG. 27

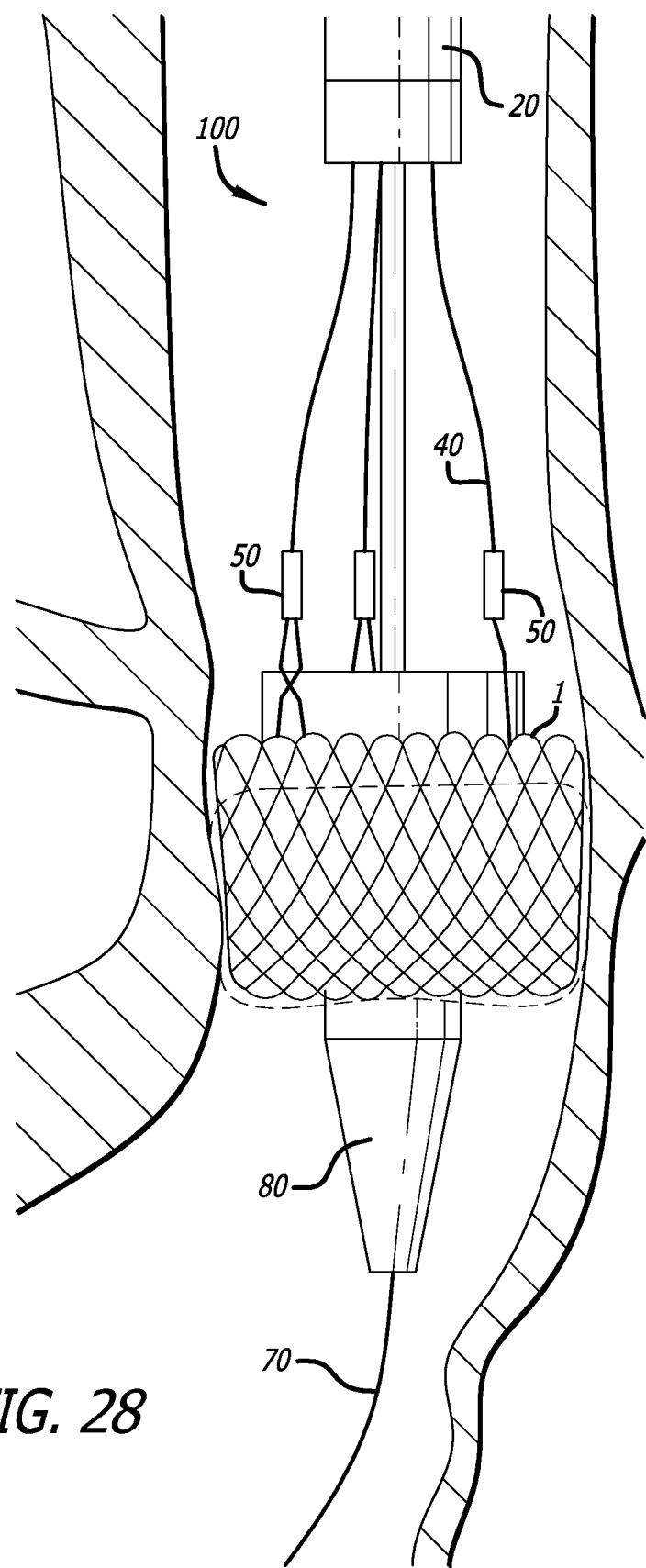


FIG. 28

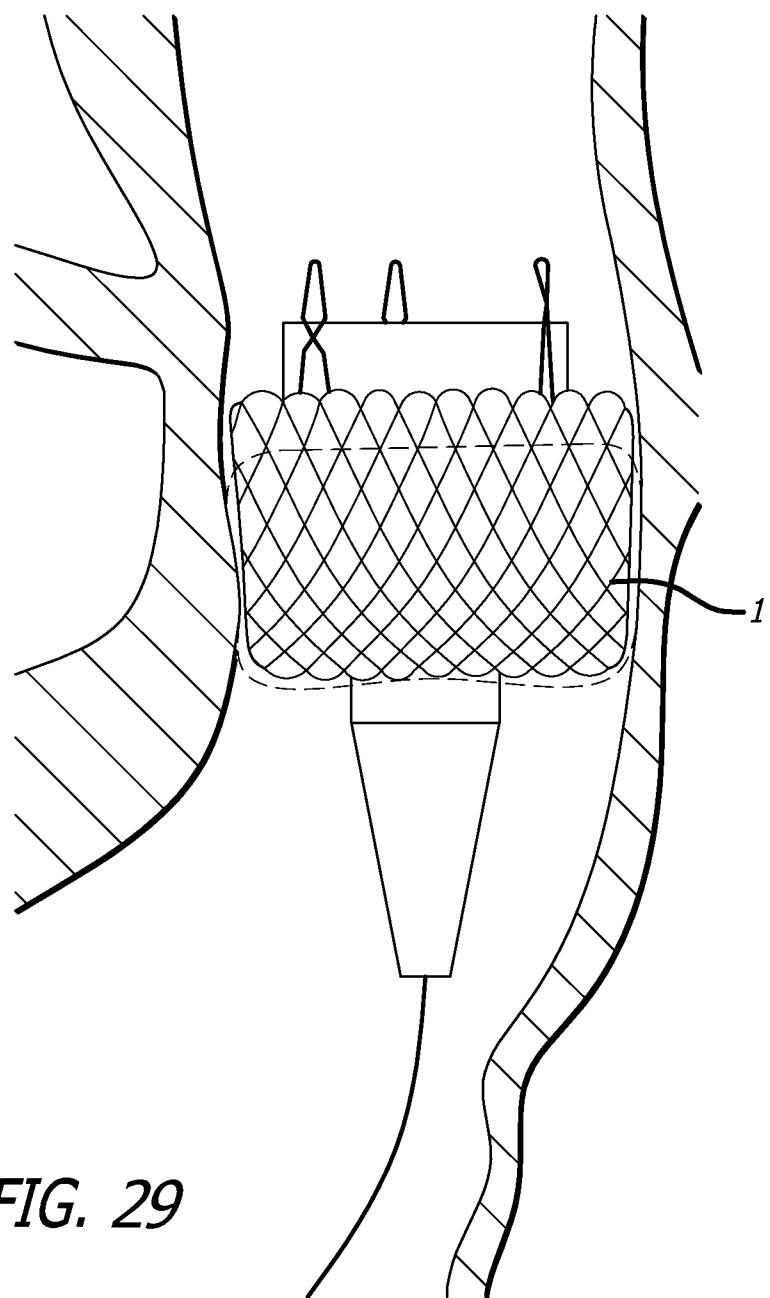


FIG. 29