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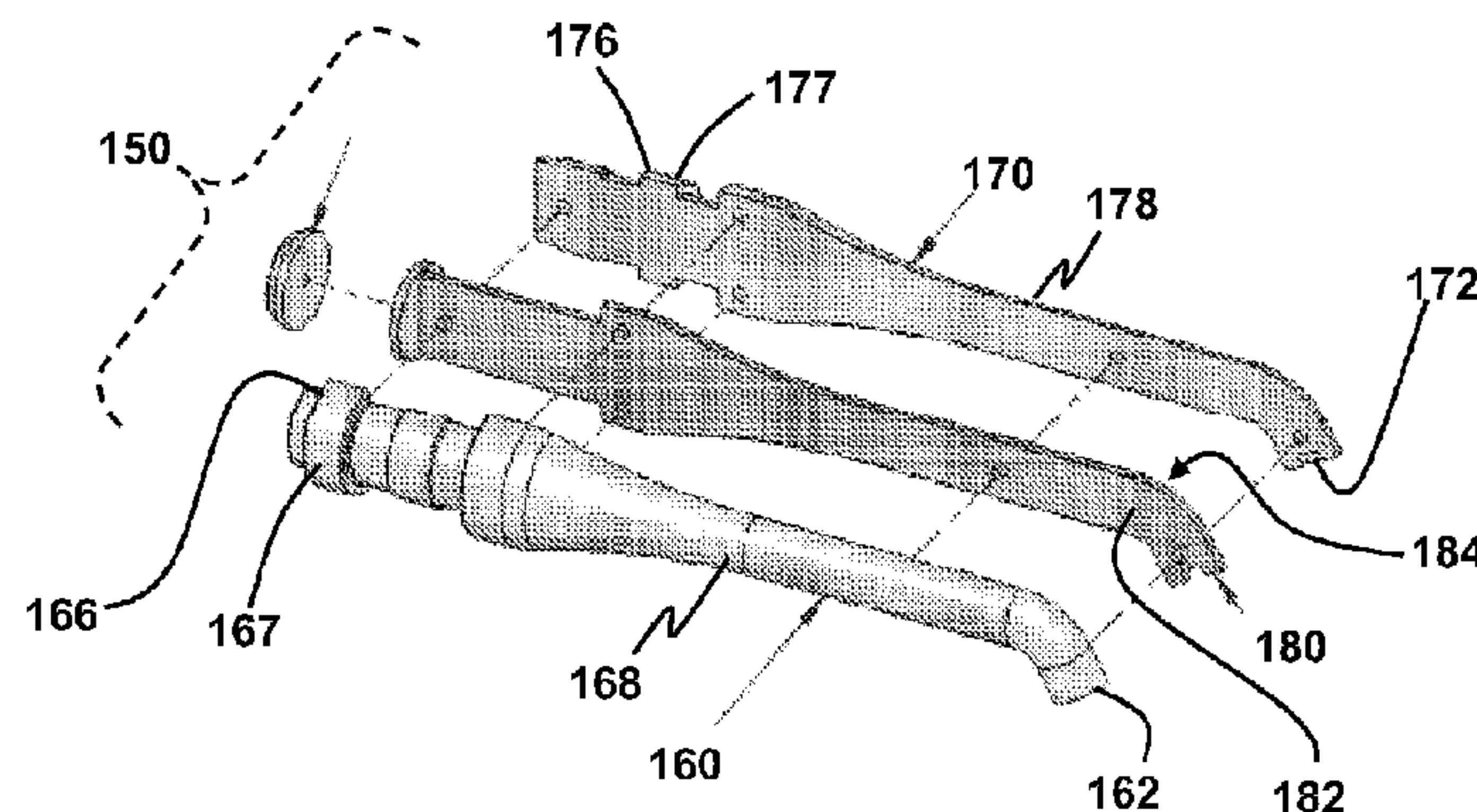
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(54) Title: LIGHT-EMITTING WAND WITH ELECTRICALLY-CONDUCTIVE HEAT SINKS



(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

A light-emitting wand is configured for selective cooperative coupling with a handset. The wand extends between longitudinally opposed wand-body proximal and distal ends, the distal end being configured to retain a light-emitting element. Extending in mutual parallel alignment between the proximal and distal ends are electrically-conductive first and second core members. Each core member has, at the distal end, a light-source contact configured for electrical contact with a respective pole of the light-emitting element and, at the proximal end, a power-source contact configured for electrical contact with a respective terminal of an electrical-power source. The core members are maintained in mutual electrical isolation and overmolded with an electrically-insulative material through which the power-source contacts are exposed in order to enable selective electrical connection with electrical-power source terminals. In addition to carrying electrical current, the core members serve as heat sinks to dissipate the thermal output of the light-emitting element.

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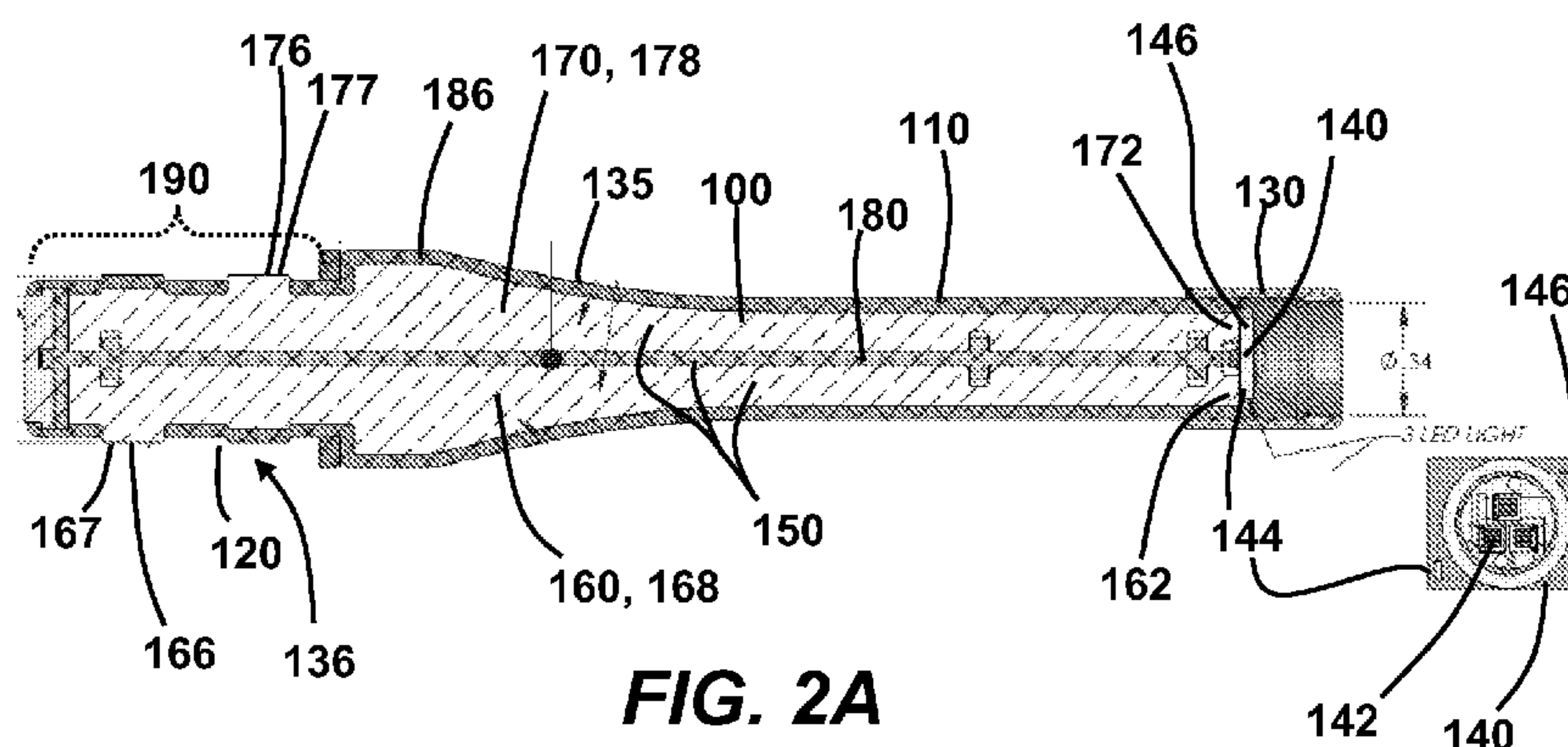
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(54) Title: LIGHT-EMITTING WAND ELECTRICALLY-CONDUCTIVE HEAT SINKS

**FIG. 2A**

(57) Abstract: A light-emitting wand is configured for selective cooperative coupling with a handset. The wand extends between longitudinally opposed wand-body proximal and distal ends, the distal end being configured to retain a light-emitting element. Extending in mutual parallel alignment between the proximal and distal ends are electrically-conductive first and second core members. Each core member has, at the distal end, a light-source contact configured for electrical contact with a respective pole of the light-emitting element and, at the proximal end, a power-source contact configured for electrical contact with a respective terminal of an electrical-power source. The core members are maintained in mutual electrical isolation and overmolded with an electrically-insulative material through which the power-source contacts are exposed in order to enable selective electrical connection with electrical-power source terminals. In addition to carrying electrical current, the core members serve as heat sinks to dissipate the thermal output of the light-emitting element.

LIGHT-EMITTING WAND WITH ELECTRICALLY-CONDUCTIVE HEAT SINKS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to light-emitting wands, and more particularly, but not exclusively, relates to light-emitting wands for curing photosensitive compounds, such as those used in dentistry.

BACKGROUND

Light-emitting wands find various applications across numerous industries such as, by way of non-limiting example, the curing of photosensitive compounds used in dentistry. Traditionally, such wands incorporated a light-emitting element such as an incandescent light bulb. Increasingly, however, light-emitting diodes (LEDs) have replaced incandescent bulbs.

Regardless of the light-emitting element used in a light-emitting wand, the efficient removal of heat generated by the light-emitting element is a widely recognized concern that has been the subject of alternative solutions of varying success. Some solutions have involved the inclusion of fans in the vicinity of the light-emitting element, an arrangement that, while effective, adds undesirable bulk to the wand. In at least one case, a phase change material is encapsulated in a thermally conductive container situated adjacent the light-emitting element and absorbs heat in changing from a first to a second phase. Numerous alternative designs have involved the inclusion of thermally-conductive heat sink material along some portion of the wand length. However, the inclusion of heat sinks along with separate electrical components (e.g., wires) required to deliver electrical current to the light-emitting element has resulted in wands of unwanted mass and larger-than-desired spatial dimensions.

Accordingly, there exists a need for a light-emitting wand that facilitates the effective removal of heat from, and the delivery of electric current to, a light-emitting element situated at a distal end thereof in a more spatially-efficient and mass-efficient manner.

SUMMARY

In one illustrative embodiment, a light-emitting wand is configured for selective cooperative coupling with a handset that serves as a handle and provides electrical power to a light-emitting element retained by the light-emitting wand. The light-emitting wand has an elongated wand body extending along a wand axis between longitudinally opposed proximal and distal ends of the body. The distal end is configured to support a light-emitting element such as, by way of non-limiting example, a light-emitting diode (LED) or a light bulb. In alternative versions, the light-emitting element is one of (i) selectively removable in order to facilitate replacement and (ii) permanently affixed within the distal wand end.

Included within the body of an illustratively configured wand are electrically-conductive first and second core members that extend longitudinally between the proximal and distal ends of the wand. The electrically-conductive first core member has, at the distal end, a first light-source contact configured for electrical connection to a first pole of the light-emitting element and, at the proximal end, a first power-source contact configured for electrical connection to a first terminal of an electrical-power source. Analogously, the electrically-conductive second core member includes at, respectively, the distal and proximal wand ends, a second light-source contact configured for electrical connection to a second pole of the light-emitting element and a second power-source contact configured for electrical connection to a second terminal of the electrical-power source.

The wand is configured to maintain the first and second core members in mutual electrical isolation. In one embodiment, there is disposed between the first and second core members an electrically-insulative partition. In a particular version including an electrically-insulative partition made from a polymeric material such as plastic, the partition is integrally formed with an electrically-insulative overmold that defines a wand-body side wall and encapsulates at least a portion of the length of each of the first and second core members.

In each of various embodiments, the wand body includes a coupling base that is at least partially coextensive with the wand-body proximal end. In one illustrative version, the coupling base is configured for selective receipt and retention by a coupling socket in a handset. The first and second power-source contacts and

overmold are configured such that the power-source contacts are at least partially exposed through the overmold in order to facilitate selective electrical connection to respective terminals of the electrical power source. In accordance with one configuration, at least a portion of the length of the overmold defines a cylindrical side wall portion coinciding with, and partially defining, the coupling base. Each of the power-source contacts presents to the exterior of the overmold a convex arcuate contact surface configured to conform to the cylindrical side wall portion.

In addition to carrying electrical current between the power source and the light-emitting element, the core members serve as heat sinks configured for drawing heat away from the light-emitting element. In one illustrative version, each of the core members is comprised of copper. However, it will be appreciated that numerous alternative materials could substitute for copper in the composition of the core members.

Representative, non-limiting embodiments are more completely described and depicted in the following detailed description and the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows a light-emitting wand cooperatively coupled with a handset;

FIG. 1A depicts the light-emitting wand and handset of FIG. 1 decoupled from
5 one another;

FIG. 2 is a right-side view of an illustrative light-emitting wand in isolation;

FIG. 2A is a sectional view of the light-emitting wand of FIG. 2 as viewed into
the curvo-planar Section IIA indicated in FIG. 2;

FIG. 3 is an exploded view of the core assembly details of the light-emitting
10 wand shown in FIGS. 2 and 2A;

FIG. 3A is a left-side view of the assembled core assembly of FIG. 3;

FIG. 3B is a top view of the assembled core assembly of FIGS. 3 and 3A; and

FIG. 4 is a top view of a light-emitting wand comprising an overmolded core
assembly.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following description of variously embodied light-emitting wands and handsets configured for cooperative coupling therewith is illustrative in nature and is therefore not intended to limit the invention or its application of uses. The various implementations, aspects, versions and embodiments described in the summary and detailed description are in the nature of non-limiting examples falling within the scope of the appended claims and do not serve to constrain the maximum scope of the claims.

Referring initially to FIGS. 1 and 1A, an illustrative light-emitting wand **100** is selectively coupleable and separable from a handset **200**. The handset **200** serves as a handle and delivers electrical power to the light-emitting wand **100**. Although the ultimate source of electrical power to the wand **100** is of no particular consequence, alternatively embodied handsets **200** either (i) house a self-contained power source, such as a battery or (ii) have power delivered to them from an external source, such as a power cord configured for plugging into an electrical socket.

As shown more clearly in FIG. 1A, in which the wand **100** is separated from the handset **200**, and FIG. 2, which shows the right side of a wand **100** in isolation, the wand **100** has an elongated wand body **110** that extends along a wand axis **A_w** between longitudinally opposed wand-body proximal and distal ends **120** and **130**. The distal end **130** is configured for retention of a light-emitting element **140** such as, by way of non-limiting example, a single light-emitting diode **142** (LED) or an assembly of two or more light-emitting diodes **142**.

Referring to the sectional and exploded views of, respectively, FIGS. 2A and 3, the wand body **110** includes a core assembly **150** comprising electrically-conductive first and second core members **160** and **170** that longitudinally extend in mutual parallel alignment between the wand-body proximal and distal ends **120** and **130**. The first core member **160** has, at the distal end **130**, a first light-source contact **162** configured for electrical connection to a first pole **144** of the light-emitting element **140** and, at the proximal end **120**, a first power-source contact **166** configured for electrical connection to a first terminal of an electrical-power source. The second core member **170** includes at, respectively, the distal and proximal wand-body ends **130** and **120**, a second light-source contact **172** configured for electrical connection to a second pole

146 of the light-emitting element **140** and a second power-source contact configured for electrical connection to a second terminal of the electrical-power source.

The core assembly **150** of the wand **100** is configured to maintain the first and second core members **160** and **170** in mutual electrical isolation. With continued
5 reference to FIGS. 2A and 3, an electrically-insulative partition **180** is situated between the first and second core members **160** and **170**. In one illustrative version, the partition **180** is a standalone component “preformed” from a polymeric material such as plastic. The partition **180** is situated between the first and second core
10 members **160** and **170**, and the core members **160** and **170** are urged toward one another to form a core assembly **150** as shown in the right-side and top views of, respectively, FIGS. 3A and 3B, in which the first core member **160** is in contacting engagement with a first side **182** of the partition **180** and the second core member **170** is in contacting engagement with a second side **184** of the partition **180**. The core
15 assembly **150** is then sealed in an overmold **186** of electrically-insulative material such as plastic, by way of non-limiting example, to form the wand body **100**, as shown in previously-referenced FIGS 2 and 2A, and the top view of FIG. 4. In an alternative version, the core members **160** and **170** are placed in a mold (not shown) such that a gap is maintained between them. An electrically-insulative material is then introduced (e.g., injected) into the mold to integrally form the partition **180** and the overmold **186**
20 in a single molding step. In either case, as shown in FIGS. 2, 2A and 4, the overmold defines a wand-body side wall **135** that encapsulates at least a portion of the length of each of the first and second core members **160** and **170**.

In the illustrative depictions of FIGS. 1A, 2 and 2A, for example, a portion of the wand-body side wall **135** defined by the overmold **186** defines a coupling base **190**
25 that is at least partially coextensive with the wand-body proximal end **120**. As shown in FIGS. 1 and 1A, the coupling base **190** is configured for selective receipt and retention by a coupling socket **220** defined in the handset **200**. As shown most clearly in FIGS. 1A, 2, 2A and 4, the overmold **186** and the first and second power-source contacts **166** and **176** are configured such that the power-source contacts **166** and
30 **176** are at least partially exposed through the overmold **186** in order to facilitate selective electrical connection to (e.g., contact with) respective terminals of the electrical power source **230** in the handset **200**. More specifically, in the embodiments variously depicted in the drawings, at least a portion of the length of the overmold **186**

defines a cylindrical side wall portion **136** coinciding with, and partially defining, the coupling base **190**. The first and second power-source contacts **166** and **176** present to the exterior of the overmold **186**, respectively, convex arcuate first and second contact surfaces **167** and **177** configured to conform to the cylindrical side wall portion **136**. The convex arcuate first and second contact surfaces **167** and **177** are configured for contacting engagement with corresponding concave arcuate first and second power-delivery contacts **267** and **277** defined within the coupling socket **220** of the handset **200** and constituting, or leading to, respective first and second terminals **232** and **234** of a power source **230**, as indicated primarily in phantom in FIG. 1A. In FIG. 1A, the power source **230** is illustratively depicted as a battery **231**. However, as previously explained, the power source **230** could deliver electrical current through, for example, a power cord and electrical outlet such as a wall or floor socket (not shown).

In addition to carrying electrical current between the power source **230** and the light-emitting element **140**, the first and second core members **160** and **170** serve as, respectively, first and second heat sinks **168** and **178** configured for dissipating the thermal output of the light-emitting element **140**. Factoring into the capacity of each of the core members **160** and **170** to draw heat away from the light-emitting element **140** are the shape, mass, specific heat, and thermal conductivity of the core members **160** and **170**. In addition, the extent to which each of the core members **160** and **170** is overmolded factors into its capacity to dissipate heat.

In one illustrative version, each of the core members **160** and **170** is comprised of copper. However, it will be appreciated that numerous alternative materials could substitute for copper in the composition of the core members **160** and **170**. It will be furthermore appreciated that electrical conductivity – and, perhaps electrical conductivity as a function of temperature -- is also to be considered in selecting material(s) from which to fabricate the core members **160** and **170**. When the light-emitting element **140** comprises one or more light-emitting diodes (LEDs) **142**, thermal output can be considerable. In the version of FIG. 2A, the illustrative light-emitting element **142** is an “LED engine” containing three light-emitting diodes **142**. An enlarged and rotated detail of the LED engine is depicted adjacent the wand-body distal end **130** in FIG. 2A.

The foregoing is considered to be illustrative of the principles of the invention. Furthermore, since modifications and changes to various aspects and

implementations will occur to those skilled in the art without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention, it is to be understood that the foregoing does not limit the invention as expressed in the appended claims to the exact constructions, implementations and versions shown and described.

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What is claimed is:

1. A light-emitting wand comprising:

an elongated wand body extending along a wand axis between
longitudinally opposed wand-body proximal and distal ends, the distal end
being configured to support a light-emitting element;

an electrically-conductive first core member extending between the
proximal and distal ends and having, at the distal end, a first light-source
contact configured for electrical connection to a first pole of the light-emitting
element and, at the proximal end, a first power-source contact configured for
electrical connection to a first terminal of an electrical-power source;

an electrically-conductive second core member extending between the
proximal and distal ends and having, at the distal end, a second light-source
contact configured for electrical connection to a second pole of the light-
emitting element and, at the proximal end, a second power-source contact
configured for electrical connection to a second terminal of the electrical-power
source; wherein

(i) the wand body comprises an electrically-insulative partition situated
between, and configured to mutually electrically isolate, the first and
second core members; and

(ii) each of the first and second core members is a heat sink configured
for drawing heat away from the light-emitting element.

2. The light-emitting wand of claim 1 wherein the wand body further comprises
an electrically-insulative overmold that defines a wand-body side wall and
encapsulates at least a portion of the length of each of the first and second
core members.

3. The light-emitting wand of claim 2 wherein the overmold is integrally formed
with the partition.

4. The light-emitting wand of claim 3 wherein the power-source contact of
each of the first and second core members is exposed through the wand-body

side wall in order to facilitate selective electrical connection to, respectively, the first and second terminals of the electrical power source.

5. The light-emitting wand of claim 4 wherein (i) at least the portion of the length of the overmold through which the first and second power-source contacts are exposed defines a cylindrical side wall portion and (ii) each of the power-source contacts presents to the exterior of the overmold a convex arcuate contact surface configured to conform to the cylindrical side wall portion.

6. The light-emitting wand of claim 2 wherein the power-source contact of each of the first and second core members is exposed through the body side wall in order to facilitate selective electrical connection to, respectively, the first and second terminals of the electrical power source.

7. The light-emitting wand of claim 6 wherein (i) at least the portion of the length of the overmold through which the first and second power-source contacts are exposed defines a cylindrical side wall portion and (ii) each of the power-source contacts presents to the exterior of the overmold a convex arcuate contact surface configured to conform to the cylindrical side wall portion.

8. The light-emitting wand of claim 7 wherein the power-source contacts are longitudinally offset from one another such that the contact surface of one of power-source contacts is more proximate the distal end of the wand body than is the contact surface of the other power-source contact.

9. The light-emitting wand of claim 6 wherein the power-source contacts are longitudinally offset from one another such that the contact surface of one of power-source contacts is more proximate the distal end of the wand body than is the contact surface of the other power-source contact.

10. The light-emitting wand of claim 2 wherein the light-emitting element comprises a light-emitting diode

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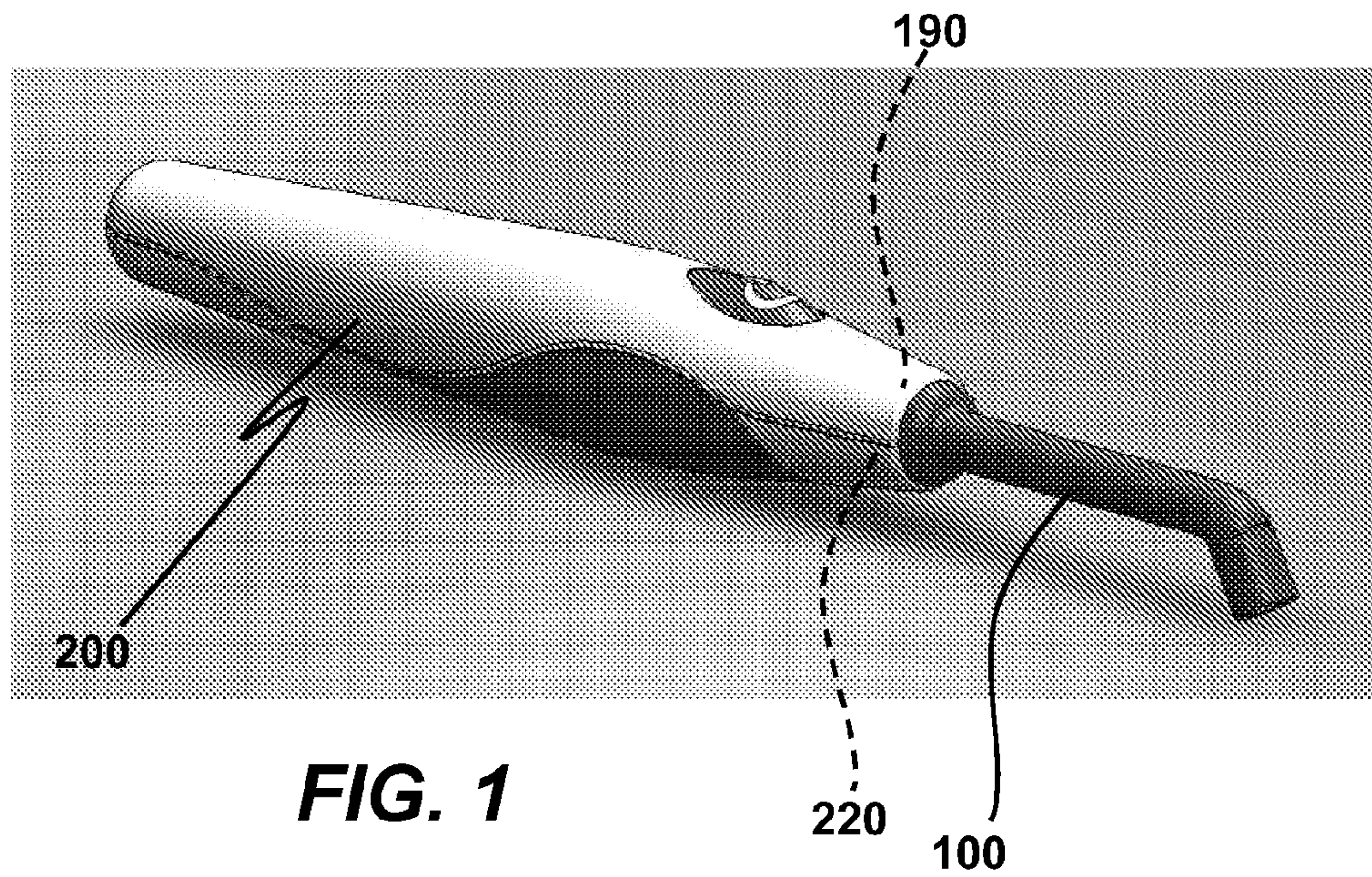


FIG. 1

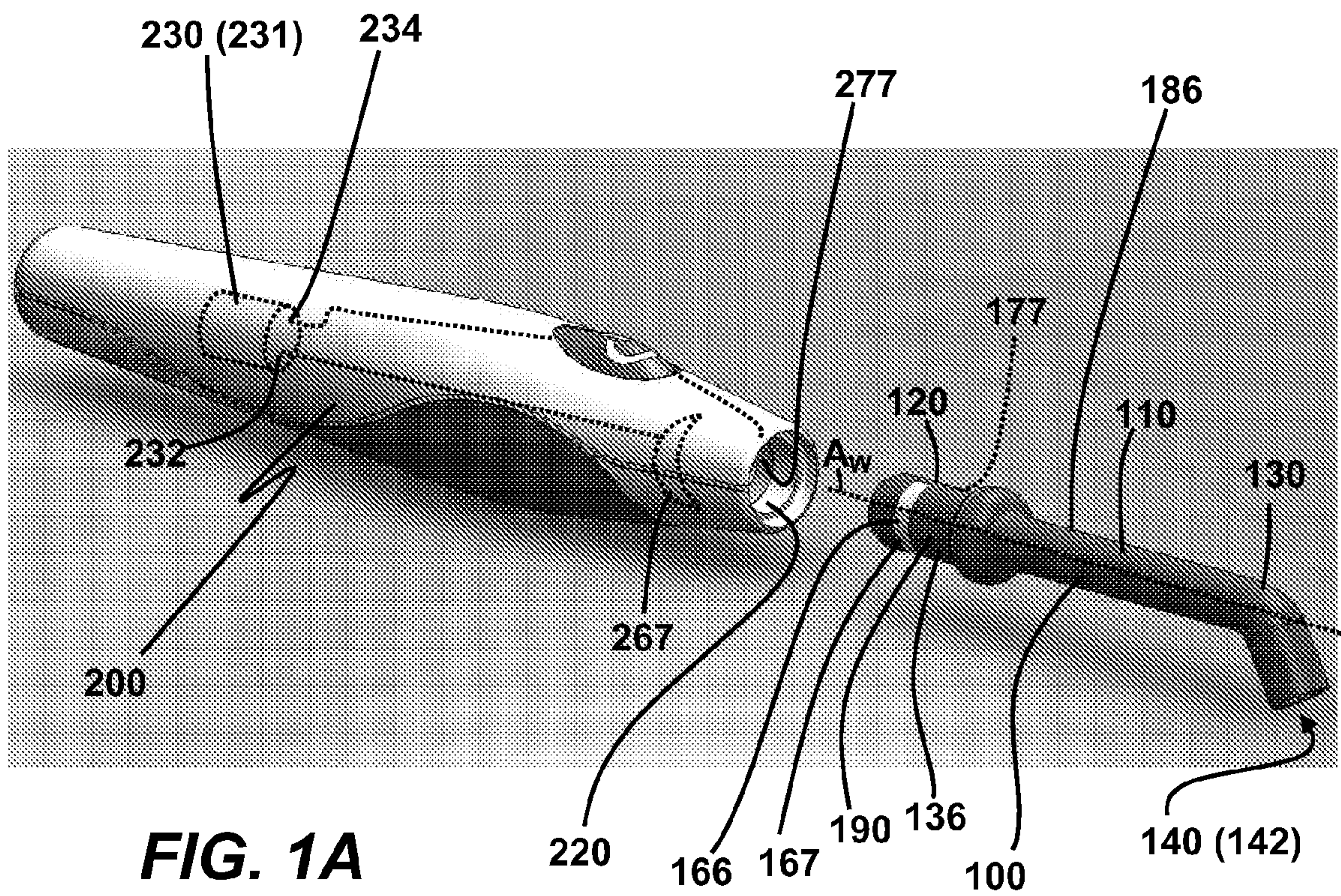


FIG. 1A

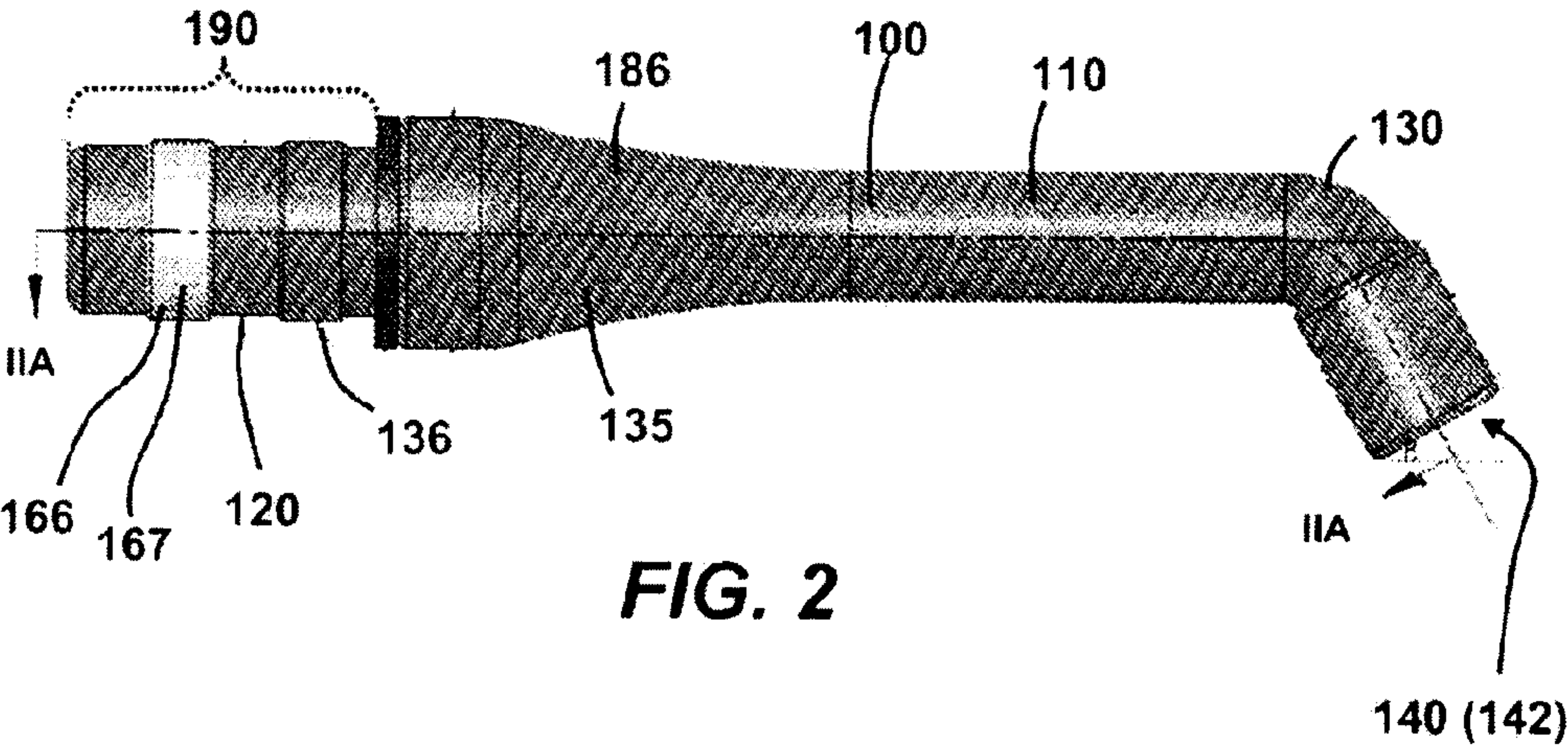


FIG. 2

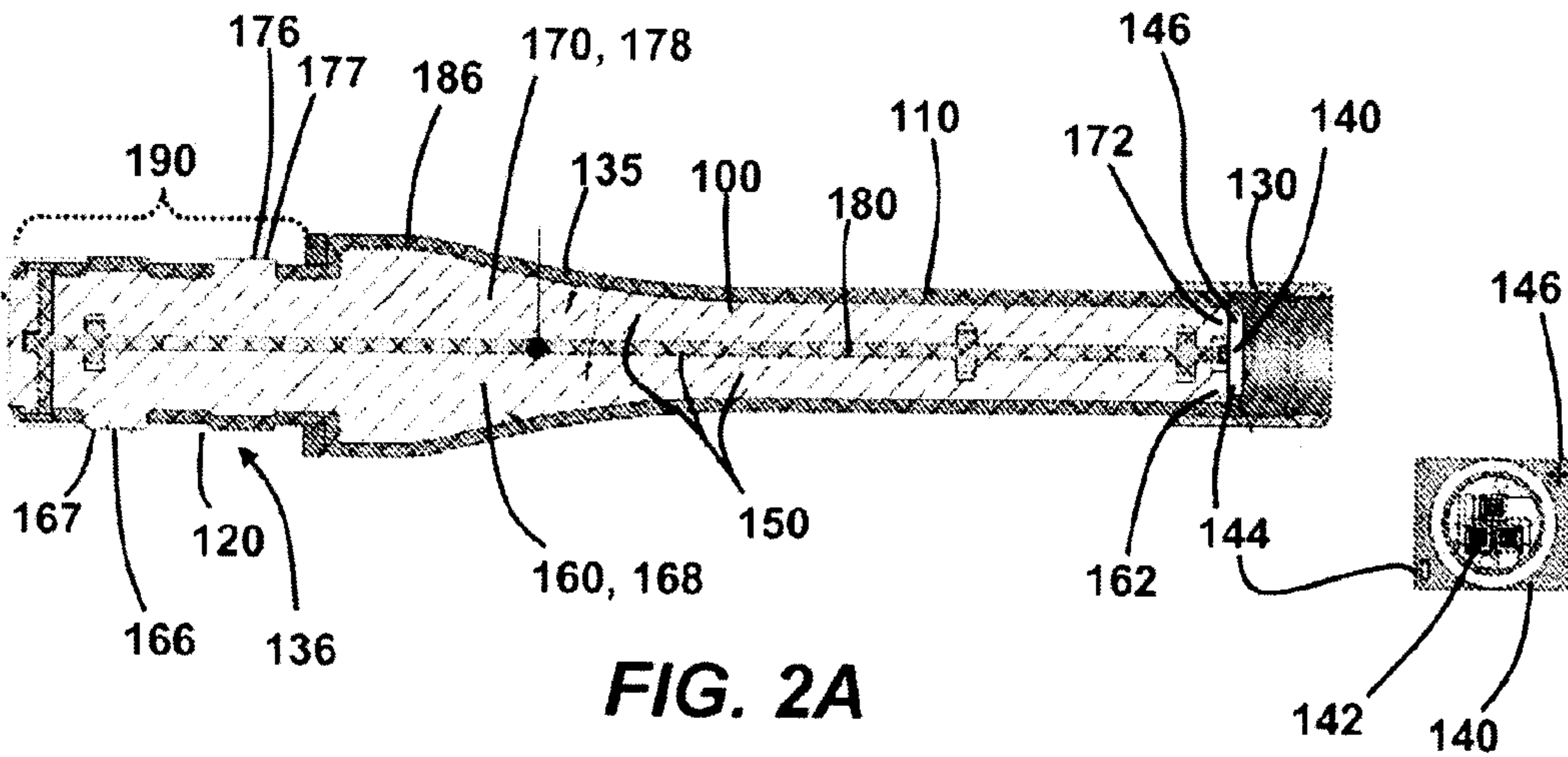
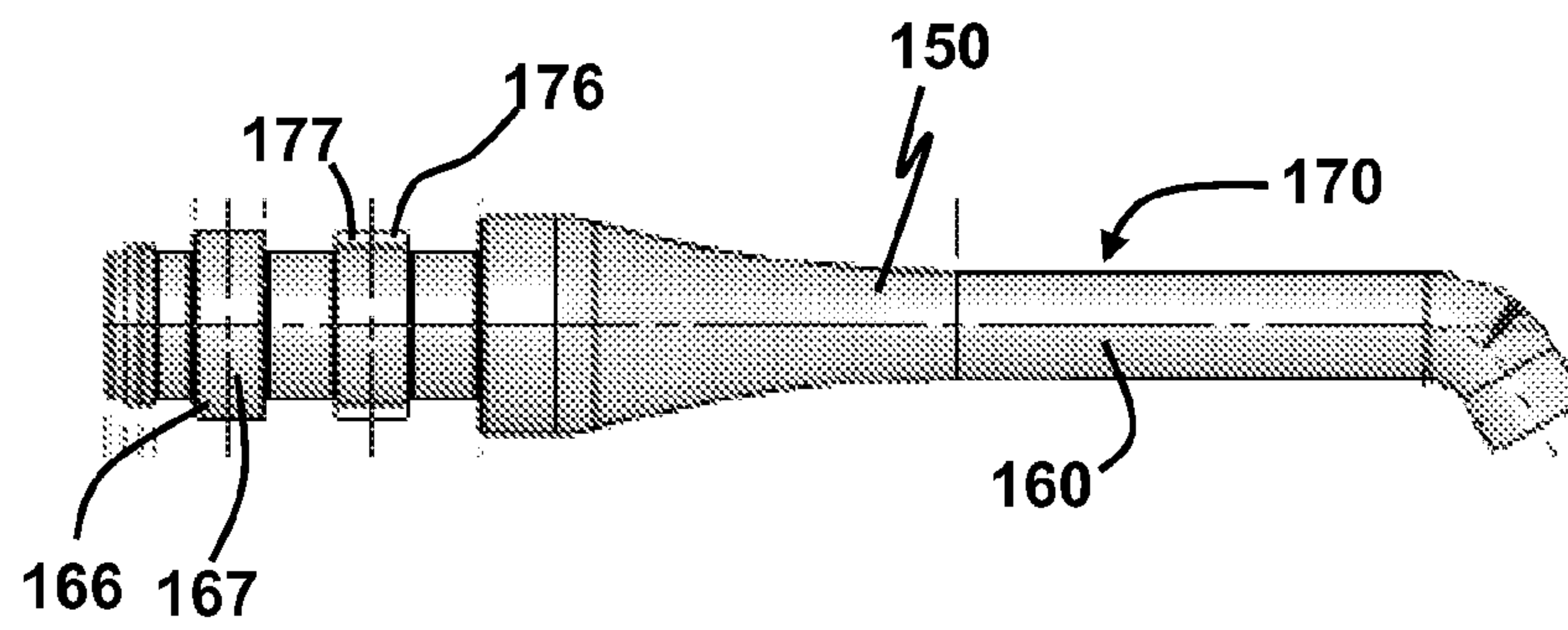
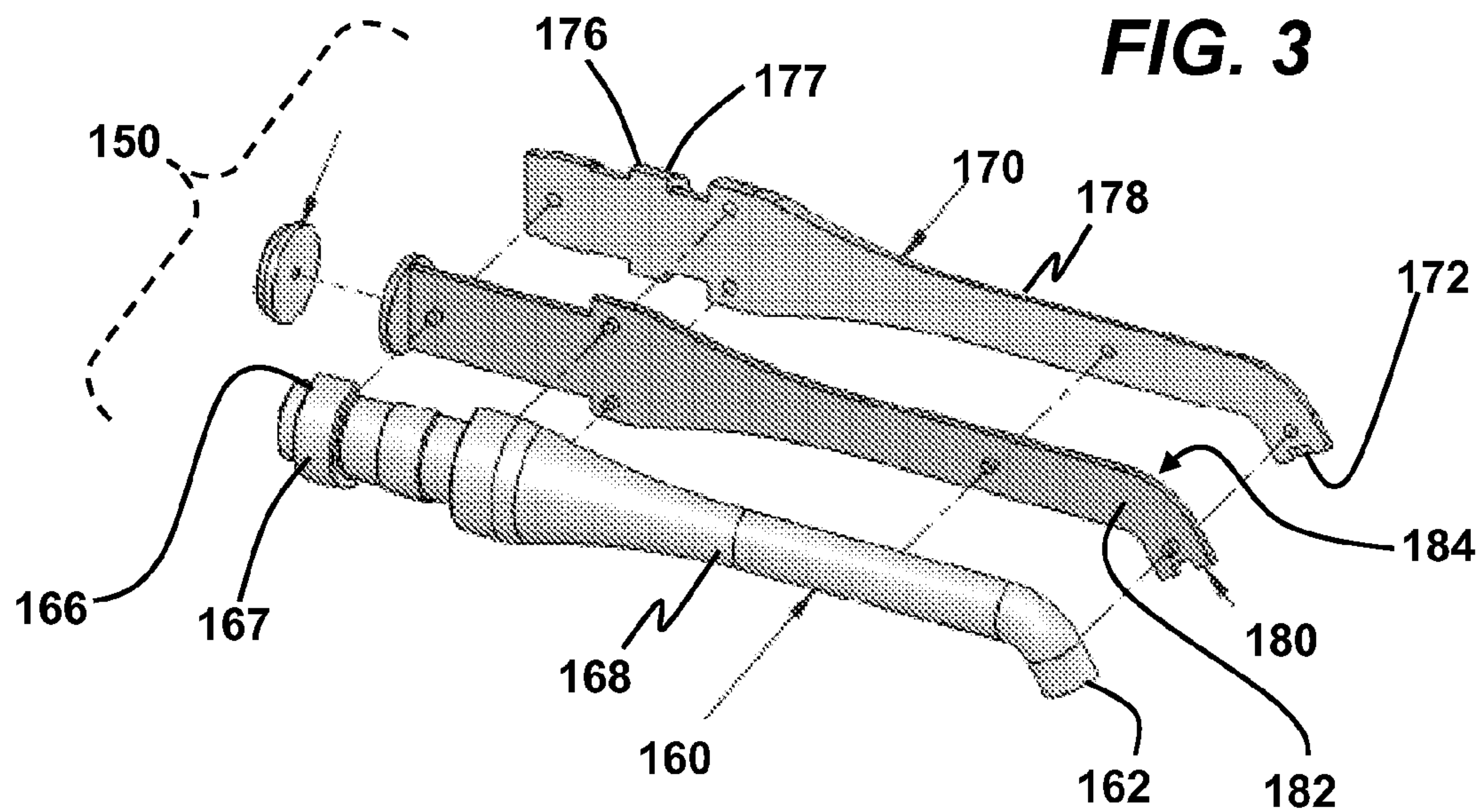
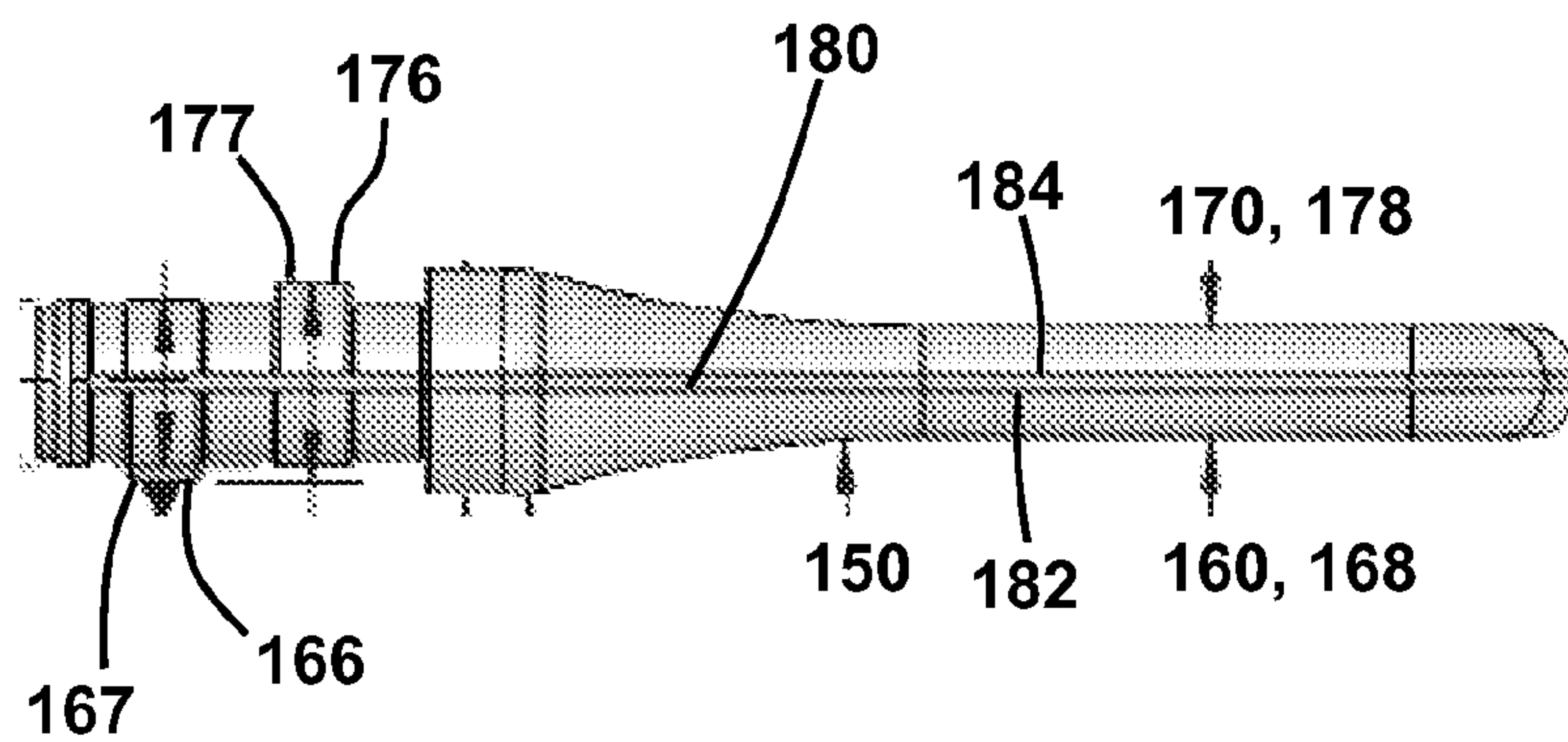


FIG. 2A

**FIG. 3A****FIG. 3B**

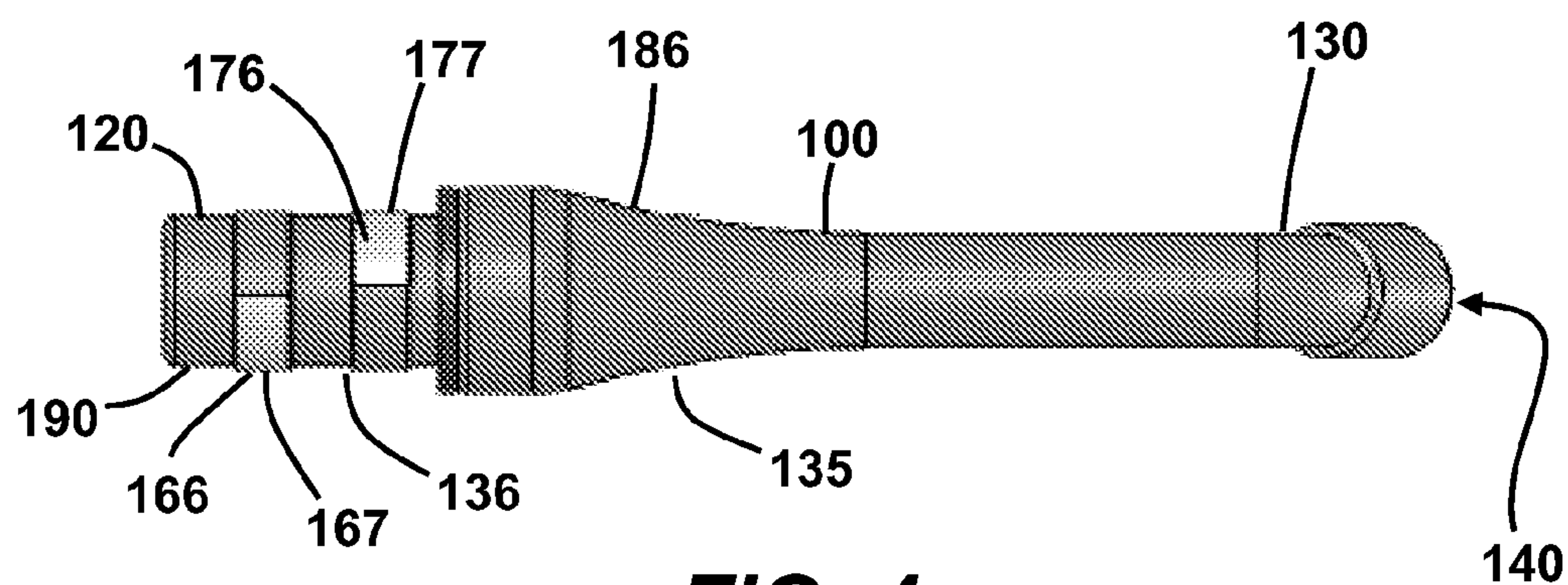


FIG. 4

