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(54) **Title:** FIBER OPTIC CONNECTOR OF A FIBER OPTIC CONNECTION TERMINATION SYSTEM

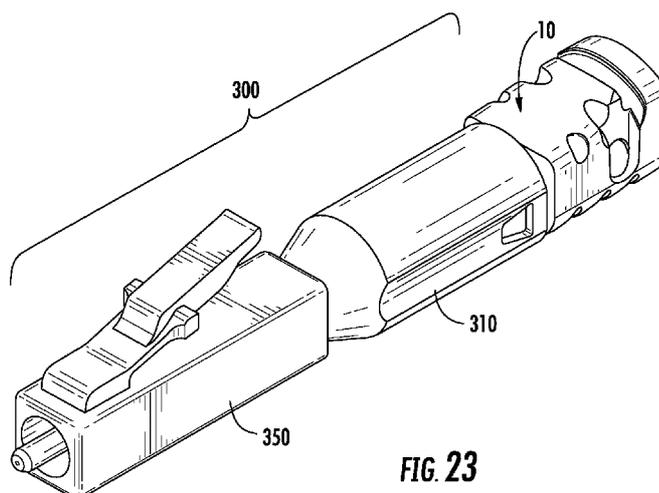


FIG. 23

(57) **Abstract:** Termination systems and devices disclosed herein use an optical fiber handler that attaches to the optical fiber or buffer layer of an optical fiber and cooperates with other components such as one or more fiber preparation tools for preparing the optical fiber and/or making the optical connection, thereby providing a simple, reliable, and easy termination for the optical fiber (i.e. optical connection). For instance, the handler may cooperate with one or more of the following a strip tool, strip/clean tool, cleave tool for preparing the end of the optical fiber(s), and/or a mechanical splice connector for making the optical connection. More specifically, a fiber optic connector (300) for making a mechanical splice with an optical fiber secured in an optical fiber handler (10) is disclosed. The fiber optic connector provides the craft with a simple, fast and reliable way for terminating the optical fiber.



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FIBER OPTIC CONNECTOR OF A FIBER OPTIC CONNECTION TERMINATION SYSTEM

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/295,482 filed on January 15, 2010, the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0002] The disclosure is directed to a fiber optic connector of a termination system for making a fiber optic connection in a quick, easy, and reliable manner. Specifically, the fiber optic connector disclosed cooperates with an optical fiber handler that attaches to an optical fiber or buffer layer of the optical fiber and may cooperates with other components for preparing the optical fiber.

[0003] Optical fiber is increasingly being used for a variety of applications in both public and private networks for broadband voice, video, data transmission, and the like. Benefits of optical fiber use include extremely wide bandwidth and low noise operation. With the increasing and varied use of optical fibers, it is important to provide efficient methods of interconnecting and reconfiguring optical fiber pathways. Fiber optic connectors that mate using an adapter have been developed for this purpose. It is important that fiber optic connectors not significantly attenuate or alter the transmitted signal. Fusion-splicing is one method of providing an optical connector on an end of a cable. Specifically, a factory-polished optical fiber connector pigtail may be fusion-spliced to an end of a fiber optic cable. However, fusion splicing requires a fusion splicer and training for the craftsman.

[0004] To overcome the need for a fusion splicer and training, fiber optic connectors were developed that allow a mechanical splice in the field. However, the quality of the mechanical splice can vary widely depending on the design of fiber optic connector, preparation of the optical fiber, alignment of the fibers, installation by the craft, etc. For instance the craft may need to remove buffer layers from the optical fiber and then remove a coating on the optical fiber. Thereafter, the optical fiber may require cleaving to the appropriate length for insertion into the mechanical splice connector. If the optical

attenuation of the field splice is too high, the craftsman needs to reconnect the fiber optic connector to achieve a desirable result. For these reasons, termination of fiber optic cables with a simple, reliable, and easy to assemble manner is challenging, especially for the unskilled craftsman. Thus, there is an unresolved a need for a robust fiber optic cable termination that is simple, reliable, and easy to assemble.

SUMMARY

[0005] Termination systems and devices disclosed herein use an optical fiber handler that attaches to the optical fiber or buffer layer of an optical fiber and cooperates with other components such as one or more fiber preparation tools for preparing the optical fiber and/or making the optical connection, thereby providing a simple, reliable, and easy termination for the optical fiber (i.e., optical connection). For instance, the handler may cooperate with one or more of the following a strip tool, strip/clean tool, cleave tool for preparing the end of the optical fiber(s), and/or a mechanical splice connector for making the optical connection.

[0006] Additional features and advantages will be set forth in the detailed description which follows, and in part will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art from that description or recognized by practicing the embodiments as described herein, including the detailed description that follows, the claims, as well as the appended drawings.

[0007] It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description present embodiments, and are intended to provide an overview or framework for understanding the nature and character as it is claimed. The accompanying drawings are included to provide a farther understanding, and are incorporated into and constitute a part of this specification. The drawings illustrate various embodiments, and together with the description serve to explain the principles and operation.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0008] **FIG. 1** is a perspective view of one explanatory optical fiber handler that is attached to an optical fiber;

[0009] **FIGS. 2-4** show various views of the optical fiber handler of **FIG. 1**;

[0010] **FIG. 5** is an exploded view of the optical fiber handler of **FIG. 1**;

[0011] **FIGS. 6 and 7** respectively show a perspective and rear end view of the optical fiber handler of **FIG. 1** with the optical fiber inserted therein and before securing the same;

[0012] **FIG. 8** is a perspective view of an optical fiber stripper;

[0013] **FIGS. 9-11** illustrate the use of the optical fiber stripper of **FIG. 8** being used with the optical fiber handler of **FIG. 1** to strip one or more coatings from the optical fiber;

[0014] **FIG. 12** depicts a bottom portion of the optical fiber stripper of **FIG. 8** showing the internal details along with the optical fiber handler of **FIG. 1** disposed therein;

[0015] **FIG. 13** depicts a top portion of the optical fiber stripper of **FIG. 8** showing the internal details along with the optical fiber handler of **FIG. 1** disposed therein;

[0016] **FIG. 14** depicts a cross-sectional view of the optical fiber stripper of **FIG. 8** being used to strip one or more coatings of an optical fiber secured in the optical fiber handler of **FIG. 1**;

[0017] **FIGS. 14A-14E** respectively show details of a fiber slot and stripping edges of the optical fiber stripper of **FIG. 8**;

[0018] **FIGS. 15-22** illustrate the use of the optical fiber stripper of **FIG. 8** being used with another optical fiber handler for preparing and making a mechanical splice with a suitable optical fiber connector;

[0019] **FIG. 23** is a perspective view of an optical fiber connector with the optical fiber holder of **FIG. 1** attached thereto;

[0020] **FIG. 24** is a partially exploded view of an optical fiber connector that interfaces with an optical fiber holder for making a mechanical splice;

[0021] **FIGS. 25A-25F** depicts various detailed views of the ferrule holder of **FIG. 24**;

[0022] **FIG. 26** is a detailed perspective view of the splice parts of **FIG. 24**;

[0023] **FIGS. 27A-27D** depicts various detailed views of the housing of **FIG. 24** that can active one or more splice components of the optical fiber connector;

[0024] **FIGS. 28-30** depict perspective views of different types of optical fiber connectors according to the concepts disclosed herein; and

[0025] FIGS. 31A-31F depicts various view of another optical fiber handler in both the open and closed positions.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0026] Reference will now be made in detail to the preferred embodiments, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings. Whenever possible, like reference numbers will be used to refer to like components or parts. Embodiments described herein are explanatory methods and devices for preparing and/or terminating an end portion of a fiber optic cable. Moreover, the concepts disclosed advantageously allow for easily repeatable and reliable terminations by the craft. Reference will now be made in detail to the preferred embodiments, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings. Whenever possible, like reference numbers will be used to refer to like components or parts.

[0027] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of explanatory optical fiber handler 10 (hereinafter handler) that secures one or more optical fibers 30 thereto. Optical fiber 30 may include one or more protective layers such as a buffer layer 34 disposed over optical fiber 30, but other constructions are possible having a cable jacket or the like. As shown in FIG. 1, optical fiber 30 has buffer layer 34 already removed from the portion that extends beyond the front end (i.e., the left side) of handler 10 and is ready for cleaving to a suitable length for termination as will be discussed herein.

[0028] Handler 10 is advantageous, because it makes field termination simple, quick and reliable for the craft. As shown, handler 10 is secured to buffer layer 34 of optical fiber 30 and the optical fiber 30 extends from a front end of the handler 10, thereby allowing the handler 10 to engage one or more other devices (e.g., fiber preparation tools) for optical fiber preparation and/or termination as discussed herein. By way of example, typical method steps include inserting the optical fiber into the handler, securing the optical fiber to the optical fiber handler, stripping the buffer and/or optical fiber coating(s), and cleaving the optical fiber to length. Thereafter, handler 10 can interface with an optical fiber connector for making a mechanical splice and becoming part of the termination. Thus, the handlers disclosed herein are useful for making preparation of the optical fiber and termination of the same simple, easy, and repeatable even for untrained

personnel. In other variations, handler **10** can be secured directly to the optical fiber or to a cable jacket.

[0029] **FIGS. 2-4** show various views of handler **10** secured to optical fiber **30** and **FIG. 5** depicts an exploded view of the same. More specifically, **FIGS. 2-4** respectively depict a side view, a front end view and a rear end view of handler **10**. Handler **10** includes a first portion **12** and a second portion **14** that are attached together. The second portion **14** can pivot relative to the first portion **12** (or vice versa) and the handler **10** defines a passageway (not numbered) extending therethrough from a first end **11** to a second end **13** of the handler **10** for receiving optical fiber **30** therein. Handler **10** can secure the at least one optical fiber **30** thereto by pivoting the first portion **12** relative to the second portion **14** for clamping onto the optical fiber, buffer layer, etc. Specifically, handler **10** has a pivot point **16** adjacent to one end and a latching portion **18** adjacent to the other end for securing the first portion **12** to the second portion **14**. In this embodiment, pivot point **16** is adjacent to a rear end and latching portion **18** is adjacent to a front end of handler **10**; however, this arrangement could be reversed in other embodiments. Moreover, locating the pivot point **16** on the opposite end of the latching portion **18** provides mechanical advantage so that the handler **10** can be closed to secure the optical fiber thereto without using a tool. In other words, the craft can easily secure handler **10** to the optical fiber **30** using finger pressure. Further, a part of the first portion **12** fits within a part of the second portion **14** when the handler is either the open or closed position, thereby creating a relatively compact design.

[0030] In this embodiment, first portion **12** of handler **10** includes at least one pivot boss **12a** at the pivot point **16**. Likewise, second portion **14** of handler **10** includes at least one pivot retaining feature **14a** such as a pivot aperture at the pivot point **16** for receiving the pivot boss **12a**. More specifically, this embodiment includes two pivot bosses **12a** disposed on opposite sides of first portion **12** that cooperate with the two pivot retaining features **14a** on opposite sides of second portion **14**, thereby allowing first portion **12** to snap-fit together with second portion **14**. Pivot retaining features **14a** may be any suitable feature such as an aperture, recess, or the like. Consequently, the first portion **12** and second portion **14** can pivot at the pivot point between an open position and a closed position. First portion **12** also includes at least one latching boss **12b** that

cooperates with a latching retaining feature **14b** of second portion **14** such as a latching window or recessed portion to keep the handler in a closed position when desired. Specifically, this embodiment includes two latching bosses **12b** disposed on opposite sides of first portion **12** that cooperate with the two latching retaining features **14b** on opposite sides of second portion **14**, thereby allowing first portion **12** to snap-fit with second portion **14** when pivoted to a closed position.

[0031] In this embodiment, handler **10** arranges the pivot axis of pivot point **16** so that it is generally perpendicular to the passageway for the optical fiber. However, other embodiments could pivot the first and second portions along a pivot axis that is generally parallel to the passageway for the optical fiber such as connecting the first and second portions using a living hinge or two separate pieces that snap-fit together. Additionally, handler **10** includes a shape and/or gripping surface (not numbered) such as flared at the rear end along with scallops in both portions for sure gripping of the handler by the craft. Likewise, the shape, design, and functionality allow the craft to easily prepare the termination in low-light conditions since viewing the process is not necessary once familiar with the termination procedure.

[0032] Handler **10** may be configured to secure a bare optical fiber, a coated optical fiber, or an upcoated optical fiber such as a buffered optical fiber. In other words, the passageway (not numbered) of handler **10** defines a clamping portion **15** that may be sized for securing an optical fiber having the optical fiber coating removed (e.g., a 125 micron optical fiber), an optical fiber with the coating thereon such as a 250 micron optical fiber (i.e., with the coating applied during the drawing process still on the optical fiber) or an upcoated optical such as a 900 micron optical fiber (i.e., a coating applied over the optical fiber coating), but other suitable sized optical fibers may be secured by the handler as desired. In this embodiment, the clamping portion **15** is configured to accommodate a variety of sizes such as 250 micron optical fiber or an upcoated optical fiber. Other embodiments could be sized for clamping to a cable jacket of the optical fiber. As shown, clamping portion **15** is formed by an arcuate portion **15a** (i.e., a grooved portion) on first portion **12** and an arcuate portion **15b** on second portion **14** that cooperate to clamp the optical fiber. In this embodiment, the arcuate portion **15a** (i.e., grooved portion) runs over a majority of the length of first portion **12** for helping center

and guide the optical fiber **30** into the handler **10**. Additionally, first portion **12** has a tapered portion (not numbered) at the rear end for guiding the insertion of the optical fiber into the passageway and arcuate portion **15a** as best shown in **FIGS. 4 and 7**.

[0033] Handler **10** may also include a keying feature **20** such as a slot or protrusion for orientating or preliminary alignment of the handler with another structure such as a fiber preparation tool or a fiber optic connector. Likewise, keying feature **20** makes sure that the parts have the correct orientation with other structures and/or limits rotation for providing mechanical robustness/inhibiting damage. Keying feature **20** may be disposed on either the first portion **12** or the second portion **14**. In this embodiment, keying feature **20** is a slot disposed on the second portion **14**. Handler **10** also includes at least one boss **17** for attaching the handler **10** to another structure such as the optical fiber connector or fiber preparation tool. In this embodiment, boss **17** is disposed on second portion **14** at an outer surface of the handler **10**. Moreover, handler **10** can cooperate with at least one fiber preparation tool for preparing the at least one optical fiber for termination as discussed below. By way of example, handler **10** may interface with an optical fiber stripper for removing one or more coatings from an optical fiber secured by the handler.

[0034] Additionally, optical fiber handlers may include an optional fiber guide for protecting the optical fiber extending from the same. This embodiment includes a fiber guide **19** as best shown in **FIG. 5**. Fiber guide **19** is movable along a longitudinal direction of handler **10** and into a cavity of first portion **12**. In other words, fiber guide **19** is retractable into first portion **12** as a small force is applied to the same. Moreover, fiber guide **19** may be biased in an outward direction (i.e, sticking out of the handler) using a resilient member **22**.

[0035] **FIGS. 6 and 7** respectively show a perspective and rear end view of handler **10** in the open position with the optical fiber **30** inserted therein. Simply stated, with the handler **10** in the open position the optical fiber **30** is inserted into the passageway a suitable distance. After optical fiber **30** is inserted into handler **10** the second portion **14** is pivoted downward to the closed position as represented by the arrow for securing optical fiber **30** therein. Additionally, **FIG. 6** shows fiber guide **19** biased in the outward direction.

[0036] FIG. 8 is a perspective view of an optical fiber stripper 50 (hereinafter stripper) used for removing one or more coatings from optical fiber 30. For instance, stripper may be used for removing the buffer layer 34 and/or a coating (not visible) on optical fiber 30. Stripper 50 includes a top portion 52 and a bottom portion 54. The bottom portion 52 attaches to the top portion 54 and can translate relative to the bottom portion 52 from an open position (FIG. 8) to a closed position to grip the optical fiber therein. For instance, stripper 50 includes a plurality of latches 53 for attaching the top portion 54 to the bottom portion 52. Additionally, stripper 50 can cooperate with handler 10 at a receiving end 51. Still further, stripper 50 may include a keying feature 58 for orientating handler 10 at receiving end 51 using keying feature 20 of the handler 10 (i.e., the keying feature 58 and keying feature 20 are aligned for orientating the structures).

[0037] FIGS. 9-11 illustrate the use of stripper 50 being used with handler 10 to strip one or more coatings from the optical fiber. FIG. 9 illustrates the handler 10 being pre-loaded or staged in the stripper 50 (i.e., a fiber preparation tool) for ease by the craft in stripping one or more coatings from the optical fiber 30. Additionally, the handler 10 can have a light friction fit or positive engagement with the stripper 50 for retaining the same if pre-loaded therein. However, handler 10 does not need to be pre-loaded within stripper 50. Likewise, other suitable alternative tools or methods may be used to strip, cleave, or otherwise prepare the optical fiber for termination or may be performed before securing the optical fiber to the handler. Specifically, FIG. 9 depicts the handler 10 pre-loaded in stripper 50 where both the handler 10 and the stripper 50 are in the open position before one or more coatings are stripped from the optical fiber 30. After optical fiber 30 is inserted into the handler 10 and into the stripper 50 by a suitable distance such as extending to the far end of the stripper 50, the stripper 50 can be closed by moving the top portion 54 and bottom portion 52 together. The overall length of stripper 50 can be selected to function as a stripping gauge or fiber measurement guide. In other words, when the craft views the optical fiber lining up with or extending from a far end of the stripper 50 they know a suitable length of the optical fiber is being stripped for the termination and connectorization process (i.e., cleaving and connectorization). Moving the top portion 54 and bottom portion 52 together also closes the handler 10 and secures the optical fiber 30 to the handler 10 as shown in FIG. 10. Additionally, moving the top

portion **54** and bottom portion **52** together brings the optical fiber **30** into the proper location within the stripper **50** for stripping the one or more coatings therefrom as discussed below. Thereafter, the handler **10** can be pulled away from stripper **50** to remove the one or more coatings from the optical fiber as shown in **FIG. 11**.

[0038] **FIGS. 12 and 13** respectively depict the bottom portion **52** and top portion **54** of stripper **50** along with the handler **10** disposed in each portion therein showing the respective internal details of the portions. One of the top portion **54** or the bottom portion **52** includes a fiber slot **56** and the other portion includes a pushing surface **58** for advancing the optical fiber into the fiber slot **56**. A first stripping edge **60** is disposed adjacent to the fiber slot **56** toward the receiving end **51**. Likewise, a second stripping edge **60** is disposed adjacent to the pushing surface **58** toward the receiving end **51**. In this embodiment, the top portion **54** and bottom portion **52** translate in a linear direction (i.e., in the direction of the fiber slot **56**) when pushed together, but other embodiments can translate the portions in another direction such as rotational or the like. For instance, the top portion and bottom portion may translate in a rotational manner about a living hinge connecting respective sides of the portions. Additionally, stripper **50** includes a stop **59** so that handler **10** is inserted a predetermined distance relative to stripping edges **60**. In this embodiment, stop **59** allows abutment of the front end of handler **10** adjacent to the stripping edges **60** as shown.

[0039] **FIGS. 14A-14E** depict views of stripper **50** cooperating with handler **10** to strip one or more coatings from the optical fiber **30**. When top portion **54** and bottom portion **52** are closed onto the optical fiber, the pushing surface **58** pushes the optical fiber into the fiber slot **56**. **FIG. 14A** shows a detailed cross-sectional view of fiber slot **56** and pushing surface **58** in the closed position. Pushing the optical fiber into fiber slot **56** induces a stress on the upcoating thereby allowing the formation of a break point on the upcoating such as the buffer layer (i.e., initiates a fracture) on the optical fiber if one is present. In other words, the upcoating has a stressed induced therein when pushed into the fiber slot **56** and then the upcoating is broken when moved a distance by pulling the handler **10** from the stripper **50** during the stripping process. As shown in this embodiment, pushing surface **58** may include a convex portion (not numbered) facing receiving end **51** that cooperates (i.e., has a complementary shape) with a concave portion

of the fiber slot **56**. This arrangement of the convex and concave portions allows a close fit between the pushing surface **58** and the fiber slot **56**, thereby guiding and forcing the optical fiber into the fiber slot **56**. Fiber slot **56** can have any suitable shape or geometry for breaking the upcoating (i.e., buffer layer) on the optical fiber.

[0040] By way of example, fiber slot **56** has a lead-in portion (i.e., a v-shaped entry) for aligning and centering the optical fiber as it engages the same, thereafter the walls of the slot have a generally parallel orientation to open and separate the upcoating on the optical fiber. Moreover, when stripper **50** is in the closed position the fiber slot **56** fits between the pushing surface **58** and stripping edge **60** on the other portion. Consequently, the portion of the upcoating on the optical fiber being removed is held within fiber slot **56** as the craftsman pulls the handler away from the receiving end **51** of stripper **50**. In this embodiment, the fiber slot **56** is an integral portion of the top portion **54**, but other embodiments can have the fiber slot removably attached to a portion of the stripper for replacement or reconfiguring the stripping sizing. Likewise, this embodiment depicts the first and second stripping edges **60** integrally formed with the respective bottom and top portions **52**, **54**; however, other embodiments may have the first and second stripping edges **60** that are inserts removably attached respectively to the top and bottom portions **52**, **54** so they can be replaced and/or reconfigured for different types of optical fibers.

[0041] Stripping edges **60** are used for removing the coating of the optical fiber over the desired portion, thereby exposing the bare optical fiber (i.e., the cladding of the optical fiber that surrounds the core). For instance, a typical optical fiber has a 250 micron coating that when removed leaves a 125 micron optical fiber that contains the core and cladding. **FIG. 14b** shows a detailed cross-sectional view of stripping edges **60** in the closed position. In one embodiment, the stripping edges **60** have a planar edge surface and are made from a material that deforms when engaging the optical fiber. In other words, the stripping edges **60** experience a deformation about the optical fiber disposed therebetween so it acts as a wiping surface to remove one or more coatings from the optical fiber. Stated another way, the stripping edges **60** experience a deformation of approximately one fiber diameter therebetween when closed onto the optical fiber so that the edges wipe away the optical fiber coating as the handler is pulled away from stripper

50. For instance, the material used for the stripping edge may have a bending elasticity in the range of about 900 to 20,000 MPa. One suitable material having a bending elasticity in this range is a polycarbonate, but other suitable materials are possible. Additionally, stripping edges **60** may be straight or angled downward towards the receiving end **51** of stripper **50** as shown. In other embodiments, the stripping edges maybe made from a material that does not deform when closed onto the optical fiber, but instead have a profile that accommodates the optical fiber and acts to wipe the coating from the optical fiber.

[0042] **FIGS. 15-22** depict an explanatory method of preparing an optical fiber for termination with a mechanical splice fiber optic connector (hereinafter fiber optic connector) using another handler **100**. Handler **100** is used for securing an optical fiber and is similar to handler **10** with some variations as depicted in greater detail in **FIG. 31**. Of course similar steps could be performed using handler **10** instead of handler **100**. **FIG. 15** shows handler **100** placed into stripper **50** that is the open position. Handler **100** may be pre-loaded within stripper **50** or positioned therein by the craft with the handler **100** in the open position for receiving optical fiber with the buffer layer **30** thereon. In other variations, an optical fiber without the buffer layer **34** may be inserted into the handler for preparation and termination. **FIG. 16** shows the optical fiber with the buffer layer **34** and optical fiber coatings intact being inserted into handler **100** and into stripper **50** as represented by the arrow. Optical fiber **30** is inserted so that it extends to or beyond the distal end of the stripper **50**, thereby ensuring that a suitable length of the optical fiber **30** is stripped for termination. Additionally, the steps explained herein may be performed in other sequences. For instance, the optical fiber with buffer layer **34** thereon may be secured in handler **100** before being inserting the assembly into an open stripper **50**.

[0043] Thereafter, the stripper **50** is closed by translating the top and bottom portions **52,54** of stripper **50** together as represented by the arrows in **FIG. 17**. Moreover, closing stripper **50** also closes and secures the optical fiber **30** to handler **100** by forcing the first and second portions thereof together. In one embodiment, the craft knows that the handler secures the optical fiber by a positive feedback such as an audible "click" or other feedback mechanism. Next, **FIG. 18** shows the handler **100** being pulled away from the stripper **50** as represented by the arrows, thereby removing one or more

coatings from the optical fiber **30**. In this embodiment, stripper **50** removes both the upcoating (i.e., the buffer layer **34**) and the optical fiber coating (i.e., the 250 micron coating) from the optical fiber leaving the bare optical fiber (i.e., the cladding and core of the optical fiber). As shown, as handler **100** is pulled from stripper **50** the fiber guide (not numbered) of handler **100** extends to protect the stripped optical fiber.

[0044] **FIG. 19** illustrates handler **100** having the optical fiber with the buffer layer **34** secured therein with the stripped portion of optical fiber **30** extending at the front end of handler **100**. Moreover, the handler provides strain relief for the optical fiber and a boot is not necessary for the protecting same; however, a boot may be used with the handler if desired.

[0045] **FIG. 20** depicts handler **100** cooperating with another fiber preparation tool. As shown, handler **100** cooperates with a cleaver **130** for preparing (i.e., cutting) the optical fiber secured by the optical fiber handler to a predetermined length. In one embodiment, cleaver **130** can include an interface for aligning and positioning the handler therewith. For instance, the cleaver can have a feature that cooperates with the keying feature of the handler. As shown, the handler **100** is positioned relative to the cleaver **130** as represented by the arrow with the optical fiber in the proper position. The positioning of handler **100** relative to cleaver **130** sets the cleave length of the optical fiber to the proper length for termination with the fiber optic connector. Thus, the craft does not need to take the time to measure and mark the optical fiber for the correct cleave length, but manual procedures such as measuring and marking may be used if a suitable tool such as cleaver **130** is not accessible. After handler **100** is positioned in the correct location in the cleaver **130**, the button or activation mechanism of cleaver **130** is pressed to cleave the optical fiber to the correct length.

[0046] **FIG. 22** shows a completed termination where the handler **100** is attached to a fiber optic connector **200** to form a portion of the same. Handler **100** is attached to a portion of the fiber optic connector **200** (i.e., the back end) such as with a snap-fit or the like. Fiber optic connector **200** includes an optical fiber ferrule **204** having a stub optical fiber **206** for mechanical splicing with the optical fiber secured in handler **100**. Further, fiber optic connector **200** includes a ferrule holder (not visible) having at least one splice part therein for securing the mechanical splice between the optical fibers. Handler **100**

guides the prepared optical fiber into the connector and inhibits damage since it is cleaved to a suitable length. Handler **100** guides the prepared optical fiber into the connector and inhibits damage since it is cleaved to the proper length. Thereafter, the handler, housing, or cam or other suitable structure is activated to activate the internal mechanical splice between the optical fiber held by handler **100** and a stub optical fiber (not visible) of the fiber optic connector **200**. Thereafter, the fiber optic connector can be tested for continuity using a suitable test tool.

[0047] In the embodiment shown in **FIG. 22**, handler **100** attaches to an outer portion of fiber optic connector **200**, but other embodiments may attach to other portions/components of the fiber optic connector. More specifically, handler **100** attaches to a splice housing **202** the ferrule holder so that when the housing (not numbered) is rotated it activates one or more splice parts within the splice housing **202** from an open position to a closed position, thereby securing the mechanical splice between the optical fibers.

[0048] Additionally, the optical fiber extending from the front end of the handler may have a length that is slightly longer than the length from the stub optical fiber to the front end of handler or other reference surface such as the latching boss (i.e., the extending length of optical fiber is longer than the length from the latching boss to the rear end face of the stub optical fiber), thereby inducing a bend in the optical fiber when inserted into the fiber optic connector to ensure physical contact between the stub optical fiber and the optical fiber secured by the handler. In other words, the bend in the optical fiber creates a spring force to push the optical fiber secured in the handler toward the stub optical fiber. Further, the optical fiber handler **100** may be released from the fiber optic connector **200** by the craft to re-position and/or re-secure the optical fiber if necessary. Simply stated, the splice activation mechanism can be reversed to release the clamping force of splice parts on the optical fibers. Then the handler can be removed from the fiber optic connector and the handler opened to released the optical fiber from the handler for repositioning and preparing for another try at preparation and termination. However, other embodiments can be more permanent with a one-shot termination type of design if desired.

[0049] Further, the activation mechanism may include a deactivation and/or reactivation feature for allowing the release of the splice parts if the mechanical splice does meet the desired performance level. In other words, the craft can undo the splice by releasing the bias on the splice parts and reposition and/or re-cleave the optical fiber and then reposition/re-insert the optical fiber to make a suitable mechanical splice connection. By way of example, the housing may be rotated relative to the splice housing in one direction to bias the splice parts together and rotation of the splice housing in the other direction releases the bias on the splice parts.

[0050] FIG. 23 is a perspective view of another optical fiber connector 300 with handler 10 attached thereto. Like fiber optic connector 200, fiber optic connector 300 allows the craft to quickly and easily make a mechanical splice termination between the prepared optical fiber 30 secured by the handler and stub optical fiber 206 of the fiber optic connector. As shown by the partially exploded view of FIG. 24, the optical fiber connector 300 includes ferrule 204, stub optical fiber 206, a splice housing 310, a first splice part 320, a second splice part 330, a lead-in 340, and a housing 350. However, other suitable fiber optic connectors can have fewer or more components. As shown, stub optical fiber 206 is secured in ferrule 204 so that a portion extends past the rear end of ferrule 204. Stub optical fiber 206 is secured to ferrule 204 using a suitable adhesive and the front endface of the stub optical fiber 206 and ferrule end face (not numbered) are processed in a suitable manner such as mechanical polishing in the factory, thereby finishing the front end face of the ferrule sub-assembly.

[0051] Likewise, the rear end (not numbered) of the stub optical fiber 206 may be processed in any suitable manner to form the rear end face of the stub optical fiber 206. By way of example, the rear end face (not numbered) of the stub optical fiber 206 may be formed by mechanical cleaving or laser processing. Moreover, the rear end face of stub optical fiber 206 may have an angled end face, a curved end face, a flat end face, or combinations thereof. For instance, suitable methods for forming the rear end face of the stub optical fiber 206 are disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 7,216,512 and/or U.S. Pat. App. No. 12/339,238 filed on December 19, 2008, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference; however, other suitable methods are possible for forming the rear end face of the stub optical fiber.

[0052] FIGS. 25A-25F depict various detailed views of the splice housing 310 of fiber optic connector 300. Splice housing 310 has a rear end 311 and a front end 313 with a passageway (not numbered) therethrough. The passageway of splice housing 310 receives optical fiber 30 secured by handler 10 from the rear end 311 and stub optical fiber 206 from the front end 313 for making the mechanical splice therebetween within the splice housing 310. Splice housing 310 also includes one or more attachment features 312 for securing handler 10 thereto. In this embodiment, splice housing 310 also functions as a ferrule holder (i.e., the ferrule 204 is secured to the splice housing 310), but other variations of the fiber optic connector can use another component for securing the ferrule 204.

[0053] As best shown in FIG. 23, handler 10 is removably secured to splice housing 310. More specifically, a portion of handler 10 is received within splice housing 310 (i.e., nested therein) and removably secured thereto at a rear portion 323. This embodiment shows that the attachment features 312 of splice housing 310 are one or more windows for receiving respective bosses 17 on handler 10, but other suitable mechanical attachment structures are possible. In other embodiments, the attachment feature(s) 312 of the splice housing 310 may be one or more bosses that attach to one or more respective recess portions on handler 10. As shown, splice housing 310 has a shape that is smaller at the front end 313 compared with the rear end 311, thereby allowing a compact footprint for the connector. For instance, a front portion 321 of the splice housing 310 is attached to the rear portion 323 with a tapered portion 315 therebetween. Moreover, the front portion 321 of splice housing 310 includes a ferrule receiving portion 314 for inserting and securing ferrule 204 thereto. Ferrule 204 may be secured with a friction fit or may use an adhesive or the like to secure the same to splice housing 310.

[0054] Splice housing 310 also includes a housing keying portion 316 and handler keying portion 317 as shown. Housing keying portion 316 aids in aligning the housing 350 with splice housing 310 when installing the same and limits rotation of housing 350. Moreover, the housing keying portion 316 ensures that the housing 350 is fully seated onto splice housing before it can be rotated and also acts as a rotational stop as discussed below. Likewise, handler keying portion 317 aids in gross aligning of handler 10 by

cooperating with the keying feature **20** of handler **10** and positions the handler **10** in a given orientation with respect with to splice housing **310**. Splice housing **310** also include a window **318** in the front portion **321** for allowing a portion of one splice component to extend therethrough.

[0055] Splice housing **310** receives one or more splice parts within the passageway which are disposed internally with a front portion **321** of the same. The one or more splice part are secured within splice housing **310** by lead-in **340** which includes a locating feature **340a** for inhibiting removal of the same and acts as a stop. In other words, lead-in **340** fits into the the passageway of splice housing **310** after the splice part(s) are inserted therein and the locating feature(s) **340a** is secured to splice housing **310**. Further, the rear end of the lead-in **340** includes a tapered or conical portion for guiding the end of optical fiber **30** through the same and into the splice parts **320,330** as shown in the rear end view. In the illustrated embodiment, two splice parts **320, 330** are shown; however, other embodiment may use a single splice part. By way of example, the shape of splice part **330** may be a molded into the passageway of the splice housing **310** at the front portion **321**. The splice housing **310** also includes a rotation feature **319** such as a slot for cooperating with housing **350** as discussed below. Rotation feature **319** of splice housing **310** has a dog leg (i.e., a turn in the slot) as shown for cooperating with housing **350** and rotation of the same as discussed below.

[0056] **FIG. 26** is a detailed perspective view of the splice parts **320, 330**. As shown, splice part **320** includes a keel **322**. When fiber optic connector is assembled, keel **322** extends through the window **318** of splice housing **310** so that the activation mechanism such as on housing **350** can bias the splice parts **320, 330** together when rotated to the proper position. Splice parts **320** also includes a groove for receiving and aligning the stub optical fiber **206** with the optical fiber secured by handler **10**. Furthermore, the splice parts may be suitable for securing a portion of bare optical fiber, coated optical fiber, a portion of a buffered optical fiber, or combinations thereof by sizing one or more of the splice parts accordingly. Other suitable mechanisms for biasing one or more of the splice parts together for securing the optical fiber and stub optical fiber are also possible. In other fiber optic connectors, the activation mechanism may have another structure such as a wedge that uses a linear activation in a generally parallel direction to the axis of

the connector or a push button activation mechanism that use a linear activation in a transverse direction to the axis of the connector.

[0057] FIGS. 27A-27D depict various detailed views of the housing of FIG. 24 that cooperates with splice housing 310 by fitting onto a portion thereof. Specifically, splice housing 310 is positioned and inserted into housing 350 so that protrusion 354 is aligned with rotation feature 319 (i.e., the slot) of splice housing 310. Housing 350 is correctly oriented when housing keying portion 316 fits into groove 352 and is held in place with a friction fit with splice housing 310. Moreover, the groove 352 and housing keying portion 316 protect the splice housing 310 from over-rotation of housing 350 and inadvertently breaking off protrusion 354. Stated another way, protrusion 354 controls the linear and rotational placement of housing 350 relative to splice housing 310 and the assembly is protected from over-rotation. At this point, the protrusion 354 is at the turn in the rotation feature 319 and the splice parts are in the unbiased position (i.e., open position). In other words, the housing 350 can only move with respect to the splice housing 310 along the rotation feature (i.e., the slot). Thus, fiber optic connector 300 is assembled and ready for receiving optical fiber 30 secured by handler 10.

[0058] As the handler 10 is inserted and secured to the splice housing 310 the optical fiber 30 secured by the handler 10 is inserted past the lead-in 340 and positioned between the splice parts 320, 330 and abutted with stub optical fiber 206. Moreover, the optical fiber 30 has a bend therein for maintaining physical contact with the stub optical fiber 206 since it is slightly longer than the distance within the fiber optic connector. Then, the craft can secure the mechanical splice by rotating housing 350, thereby biasing the splice parts 320,330 together for clamping the optical fibers therein and completing the termination process.

[0059] Housing 350 includes a suitable activation feature 356 that uses a suitable movement such as rotational movement for biasing the splice parts 320, 330 together. More specifically, activation feature 356 is a cam surface (i.e., an eccentric surface disposed on the passageway of housing 350) for biasing the splice parts 320,330 together, thereby securing the abutment of the stub optical fiber 206 with the optical fiber 30. Simply stated, the activation feature 356, in this case, the cam surface of housing 350 pushes on the keel 322 of splice part 320 that extends through the window 318 of splice

housing **310** as it is rotated, thereby biasing the splice parts **320,330** together and securing the abutment of the optical fibers. In this embodiment, housing **350** is configured with an LC connector footprint and includes a latch **358** molded along with latch ears **359** on either side thereof for securing the same in an LC adapter. Of course, the concepts disclosed may be used with other fiber optic connector footprints as shown in **FIGS. 28 and 29**.

[0060] As known in the art, one or more of the components or portions of the components of the fiber optic connector (i.e., the splice housing and/or splice component(s)) may be translucent so the craft and/or a tool can view the glow of the mechanical splice for evaluating the continuity of the mechanical splice as known. For instance, U.S. Pat. No. 6,816,661 discloses methods for evaluating the continuity of the mechanical splice. Moreover, the housing or other component may have one or more view ports for viewing the glow of the mechanical splice to evaluate the continuity of the mechanical splice.

[0061] **FIGS. 28-30** depict perspective views of different types of optical fiber connectors as finished cable assemblies according to the concepts disclosed herein. Specifically, **FIGS. 28-30** respectively depict a SC fiber optic connector as part of a cable assembly, a ST fiber optic connector as part of a cable assembly, and a LC fiber optic connector as part of a cable assembly.

[0062] **FIGS. 31** depicts various view of handler **100** depicted above in both the open and closed positions. Handler **100** is similar to handler **10** and includes a first portion **112** and a second portion **114** that are attached together. The second portion **114** can pivot relative to the first portion **112** (or vice versa) and the handler **100** defines a passageway (not numbered) extending therethrough from a first end **111** to a second end **113** of the handler **10** for receiving one or more optical fibers therein. As with handler **10**, handler **100** can secure the at least one optical fiber thereto by pivoting the first portion **112** relative to the second portion **114** for clamping onto the optical fiber, buffer layer, etc. Specifically, handler **100** has a pivot point **116** adjacent to one end and a latching portion **118** adjacent to the other end for securing the first portion **112** to the second portion **114**. Like handler **10**, pivot point **116** is adjacent to a rear end and latching portion **118** is adjacent to a front end of handler **10**; however, this arrangement

could be reversed in other embodiments. Handler 100 uses resilient fingers (not numbered) on second portion 114 for securing the first portion 112 with second portion 114 in the closed position. Further, a part of the first portion 112 fits within a part of the second portion 114 when the handler 100 is either the open or closed position, thereby creating a relatively compact design.

[0063] Still other handler designs are possible for securing an optical fiber and interfacing with other devices for preparation and termination, thereby making these tasks simple, easy, and repeatable for the craft. For instance, other handlers may use a push button for securing the optical fiber to the same.

[0064] Although preferred embodiments and specific examples were illustrated and described herein, it will be readily apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that other embodiments and examples can perform similar functions and/or achieve like results. All such equivalent embodiments and examples are within the spirit and scope of the present disclosure and are intended to be covered by the appended claims. It will also be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made to the embodiments shown. Thus, it is intended that the disclosure and/or claims cover the modifications and variations.

We claim:

1. An optical fiber connector for making a mechanical splice, comprising:
 - a ferrule having a stub optical fiber extending therefrom;
 - a splice housing, the splice housing having a front end and a rear end; and
 - at least one splice part disposed in the splice housing for aligning the stub optical fiber for making the mechanical splice;
 - a housing having an actuation feature for biasing the at least one splice part for securing a mechanical splice.
2. The optical fiber connector of claim 1, wherein the optical fiber connector can secure a handler thereto.
3. The optical fiber connector of claims 1 or 2, wherein a rear end of the splice housing has an attachment feature for securing an optical fiber handler thereto.
4. The optical fiber connector of claims 1-3, wherein the ferrule is secured to the splice housing.
5. The optical fiber connector of claims 1-4, further including a first splice part and a second splice part.
6. The optical fiber connector of claims 1-5, the housing having a cam surface for biasing the at least one splice component.
7. The optical fiber connector of claims 1-6, the housing being rotated in a first direction for securing the mechanical splice and wherein the housing may be rotated in a second direction for releasing the mechanical splice.
8. The optical fiber connector of claims 1-7, the housing having a footprint selected from a SC connector, a LC connector, or a ST connector.

9. The optical fiber connector of claims 1-8, further including a handler having an optical fiber secured therein, wherein the handler is attached to the optical fiber connector for making a mechanical splice between an optical fiber secured in the handler and the optical fiber stub.

10. The optical fiber connector of claim 9, wherein a portion of the handler is received within the splice housing.

11. The optical fiber connector of claims 9 or 10, wherein the optical fiber secured in the handler is bent for maintaining physical contact with the stub optical fiber.

12. A method of making a mechanical splice using an optical fiber connector, comprising:

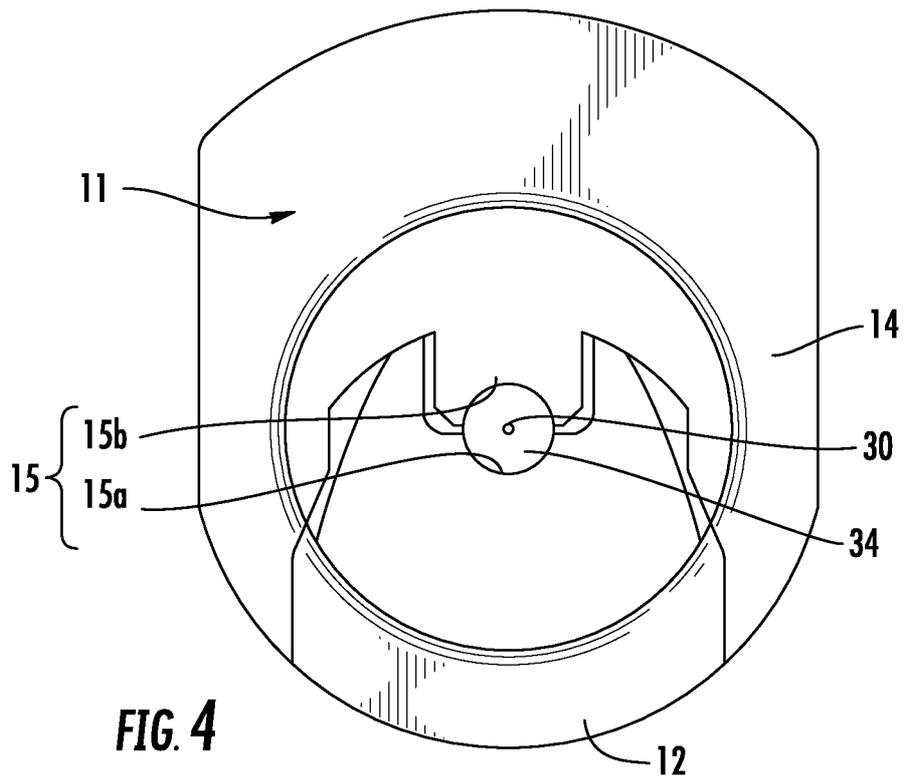
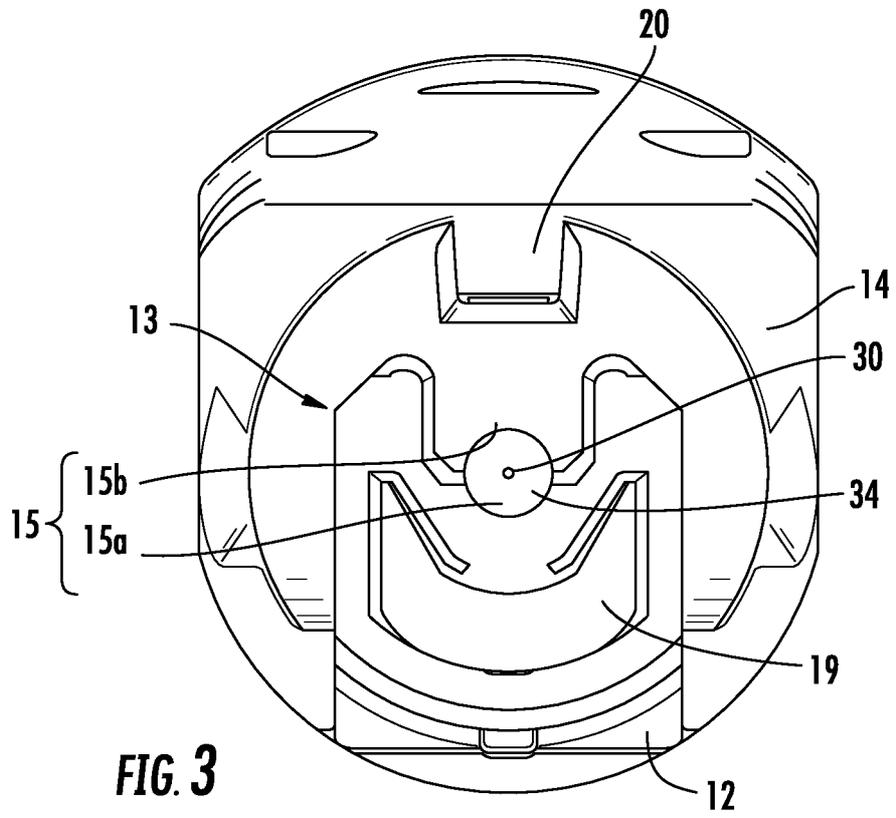
providing the optical fiber connector having a ferrule with a stub optical fiber extending therefrom, a splice housing having a front end and a rear end, at least one splice part disposed in the splice housing for aligning the stub optical fiber for making the mechanical splice, and a housing having an actuation feature for biasing the at least one splice part for securing the mechanical splice; and

rotating the housing in a first direction for making the mechanical splice between the stub optical fiber and a field optical fiber.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the housing may be rotated in a second direction for releasing the mechanical splice.

14. The method of claims 12 or 13, wherein the housing includes a cam surface.

15. The method of claims 12-14, further including securing a handler thereto the connector.



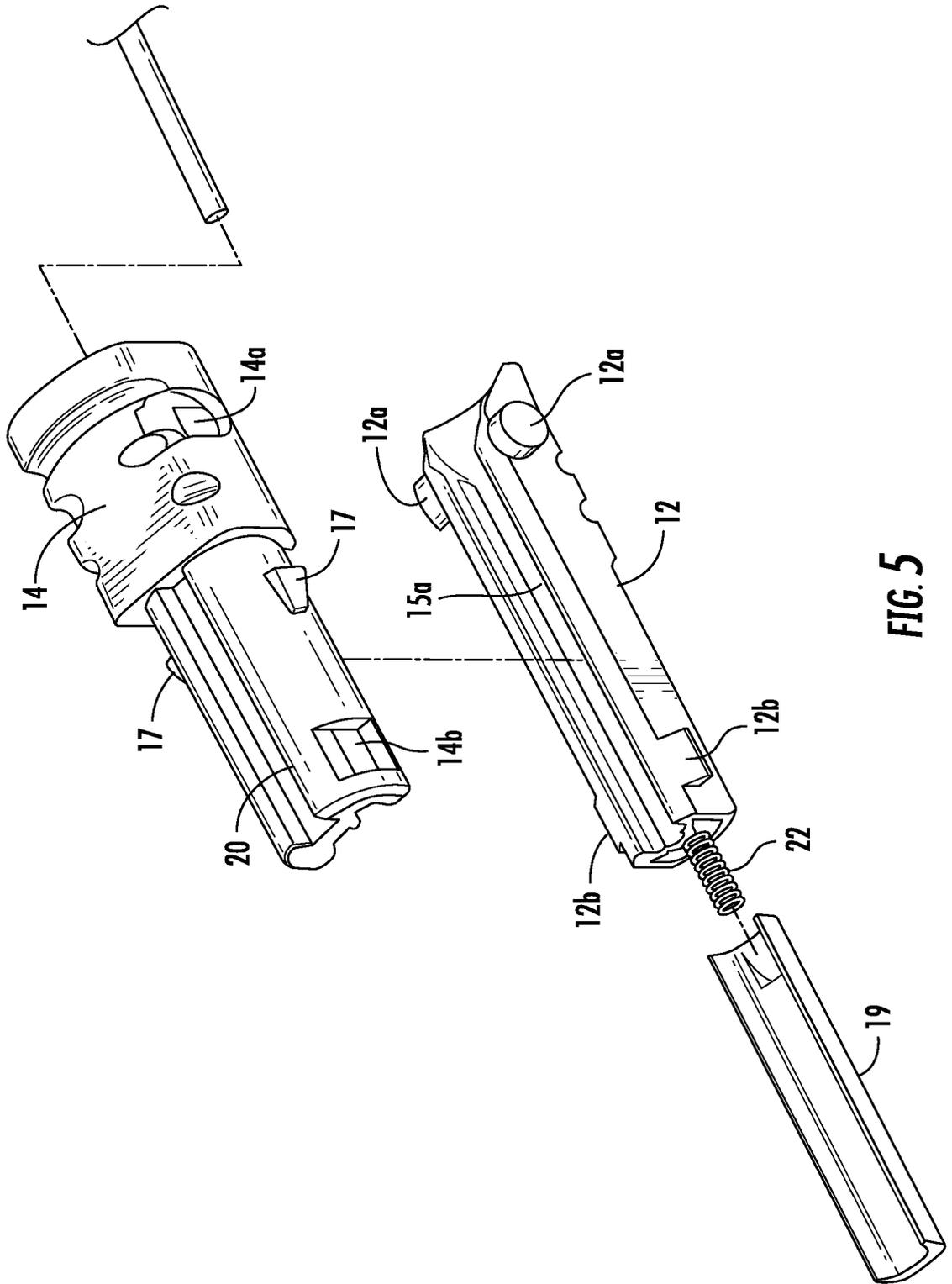


FIG. 5

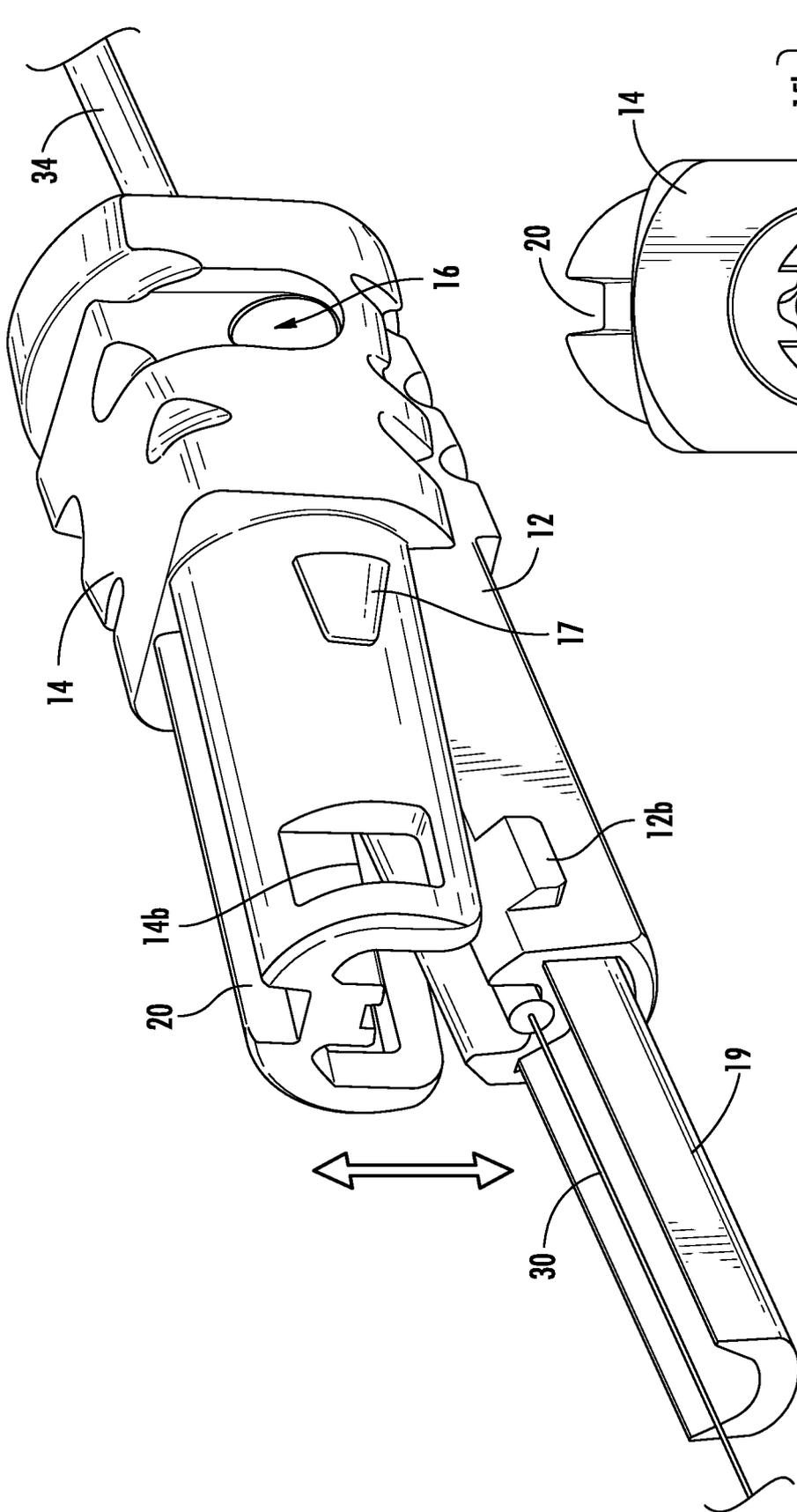


FIG. 6

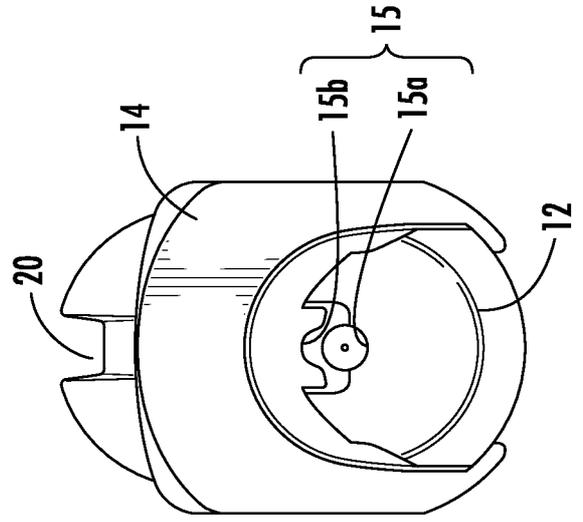
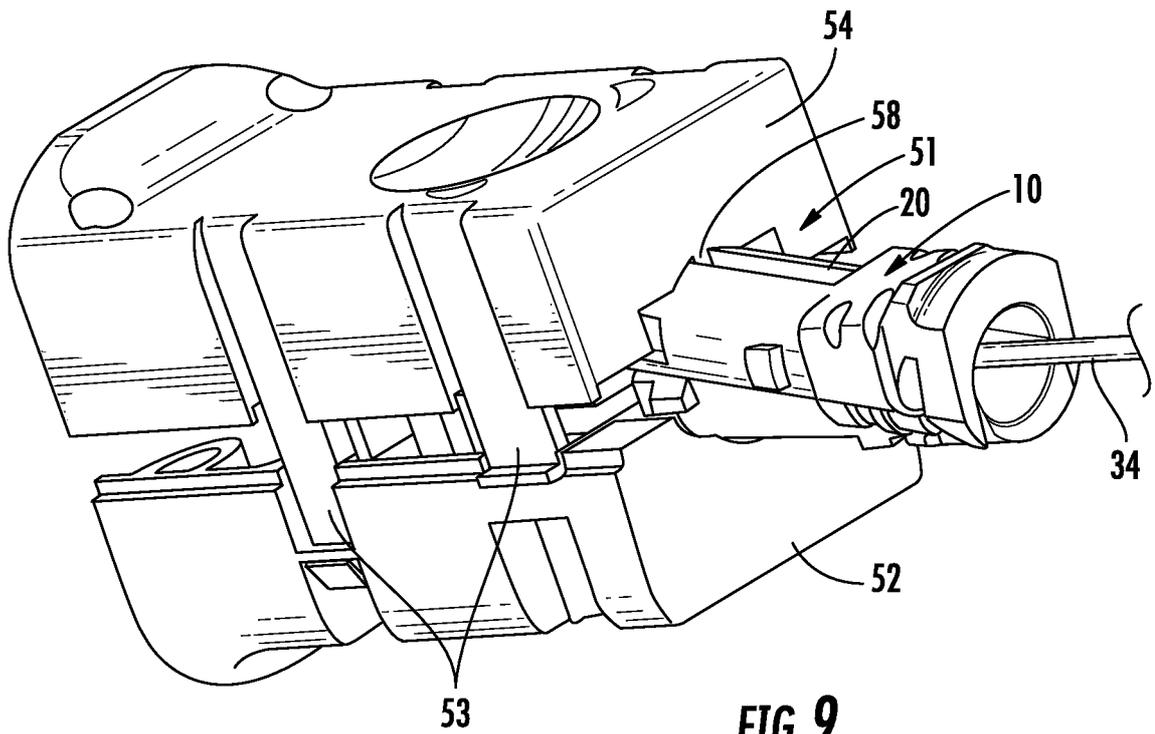
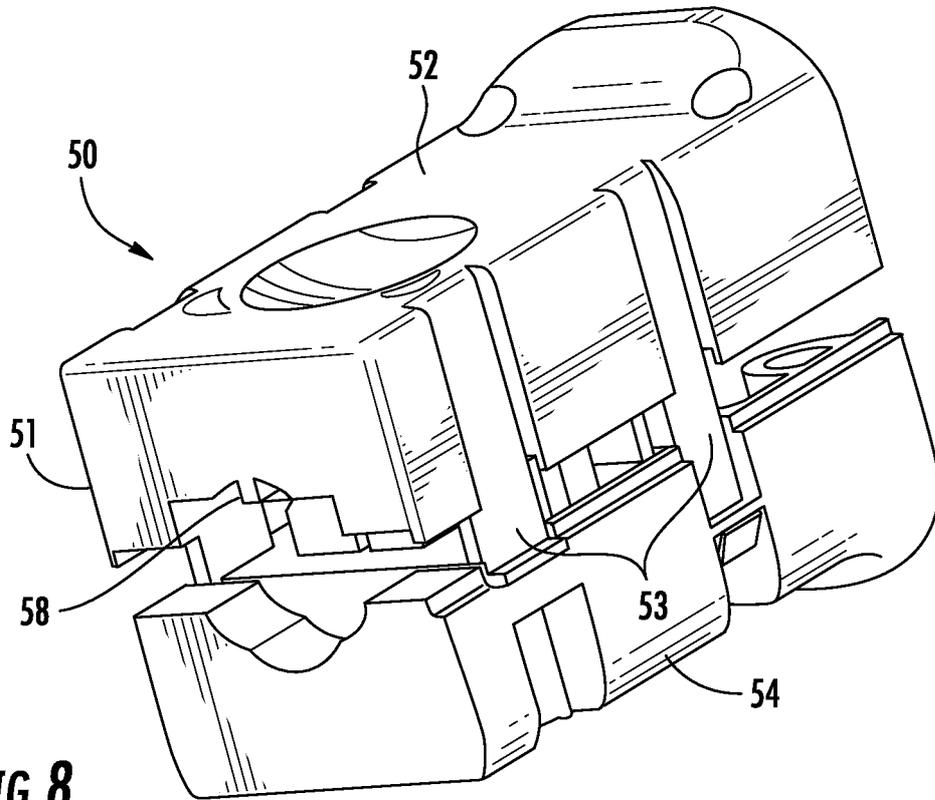


FIG. 7

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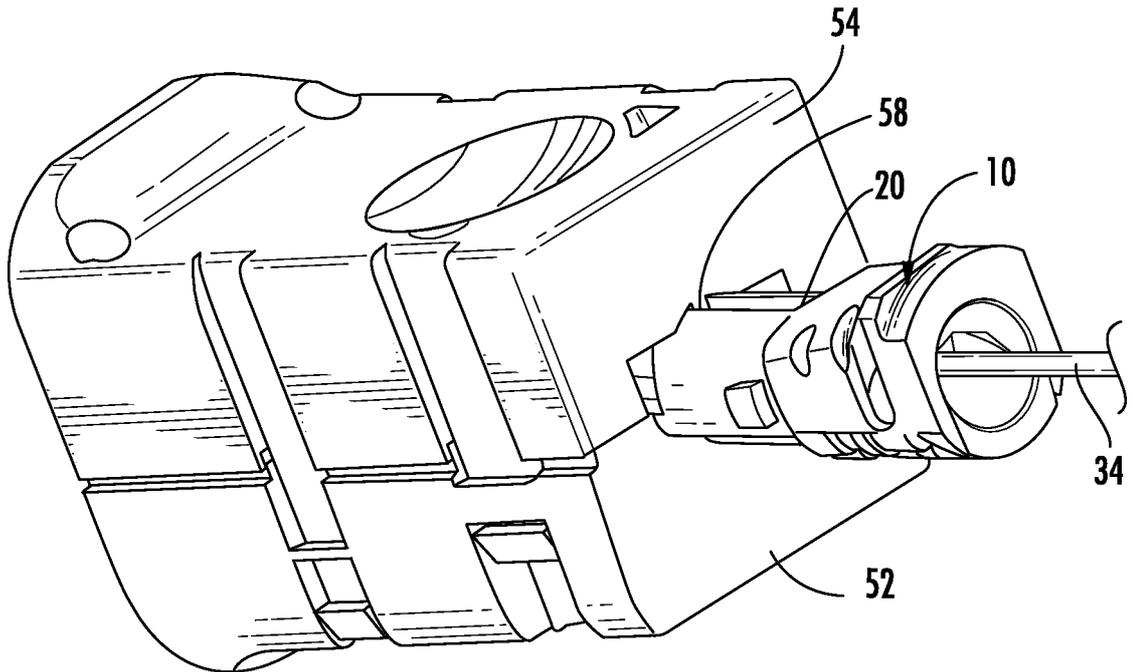


FIG. 10

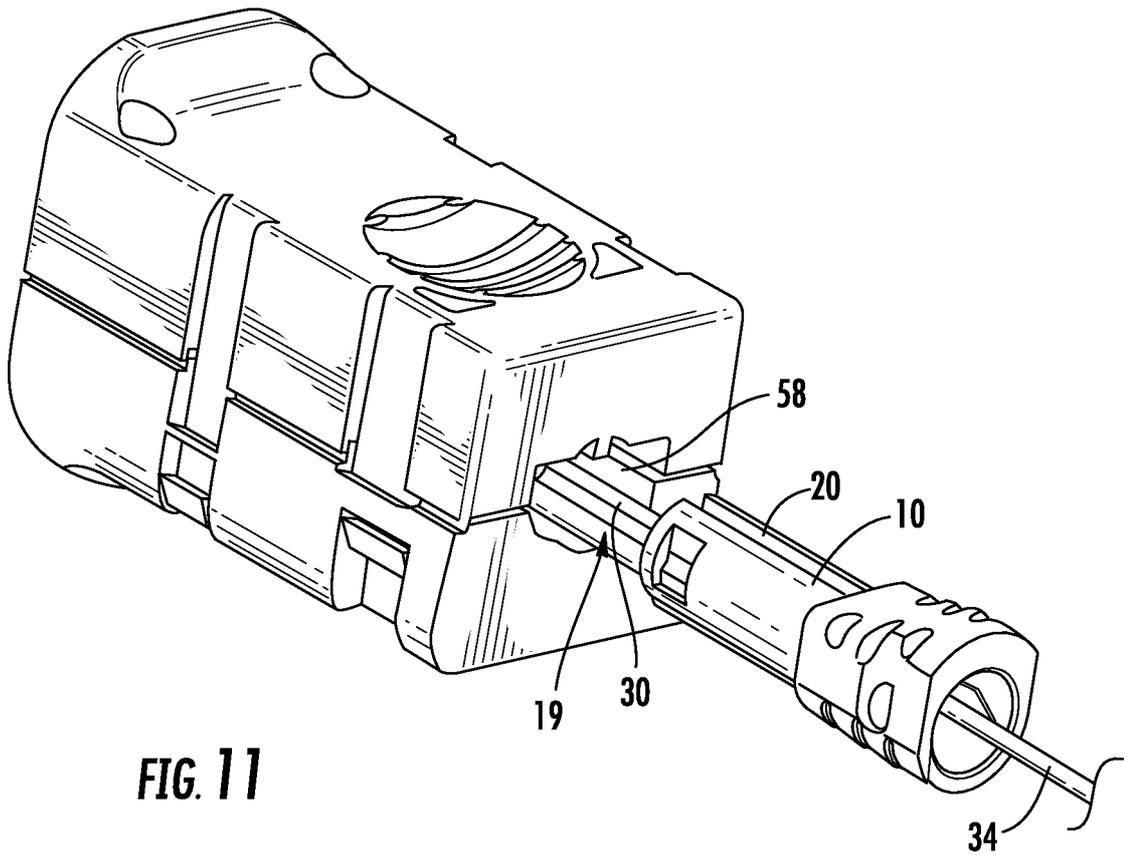


FIG. 11

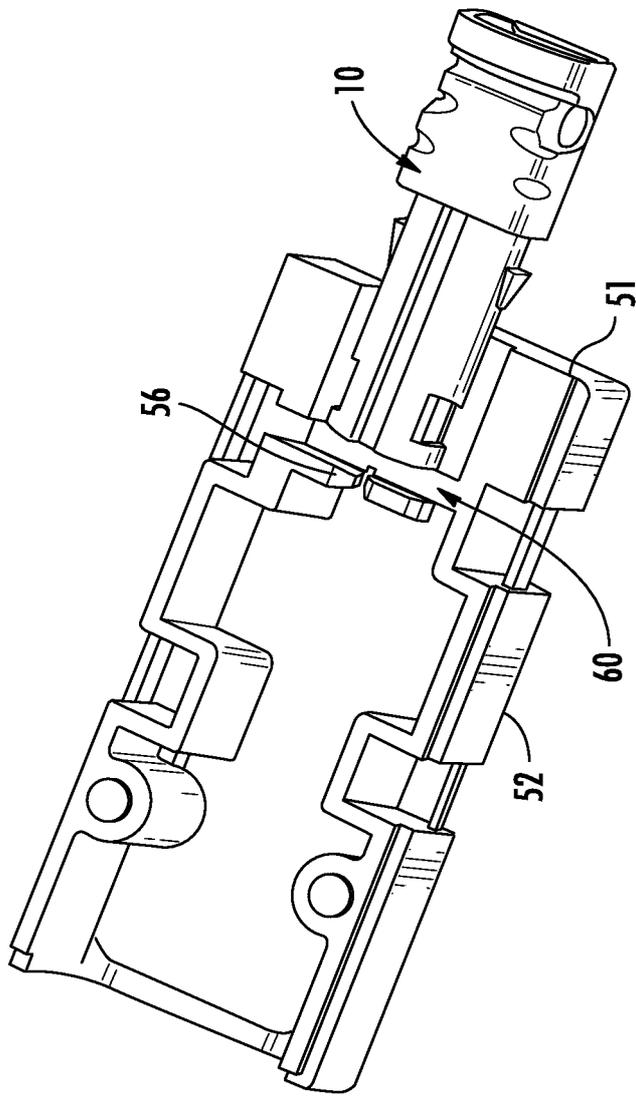


FIG. 12

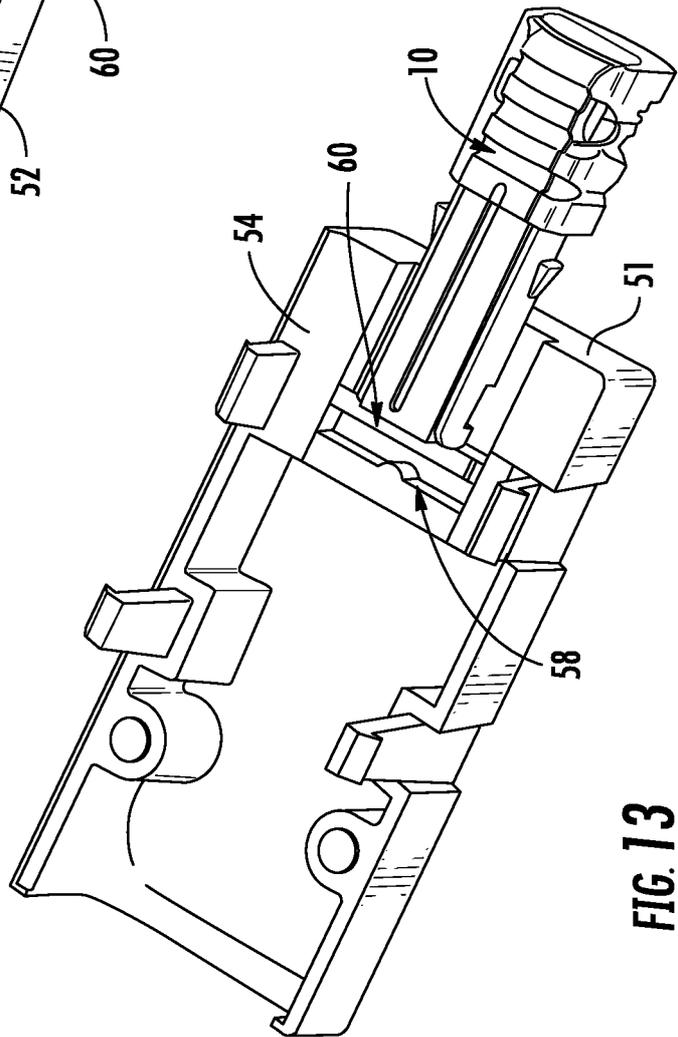
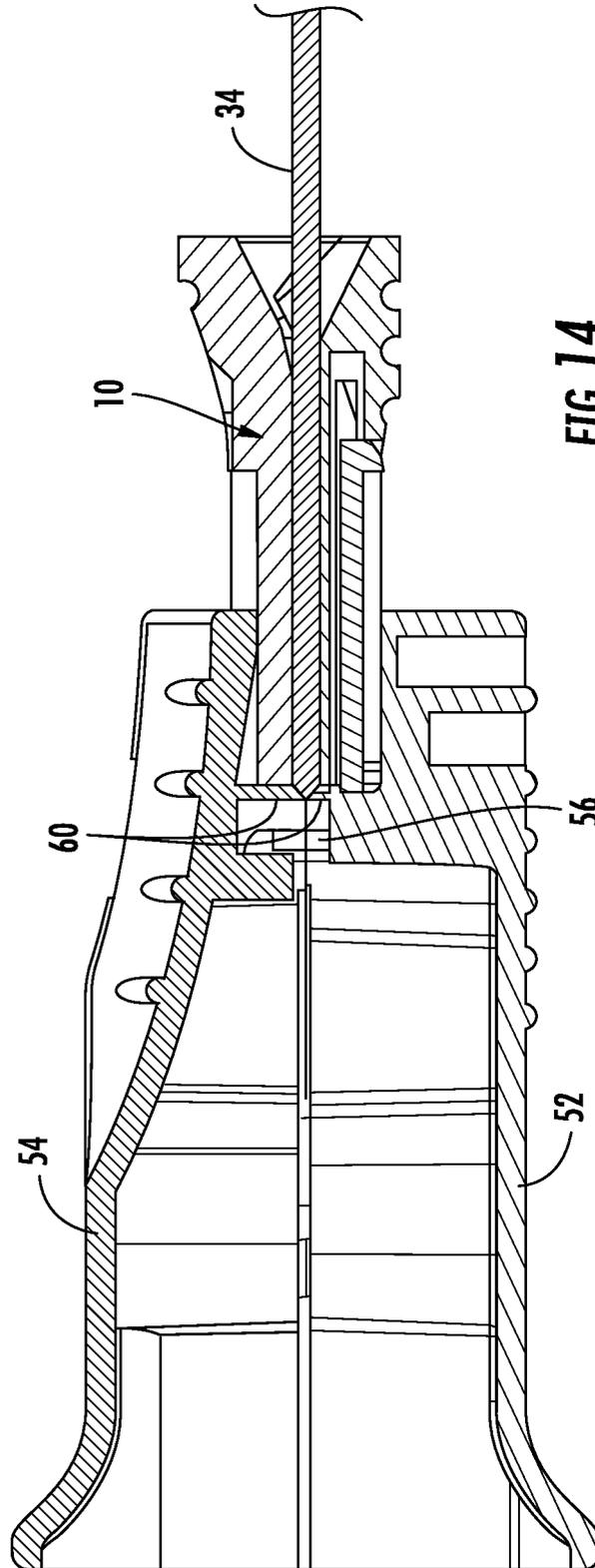


FIG. 13



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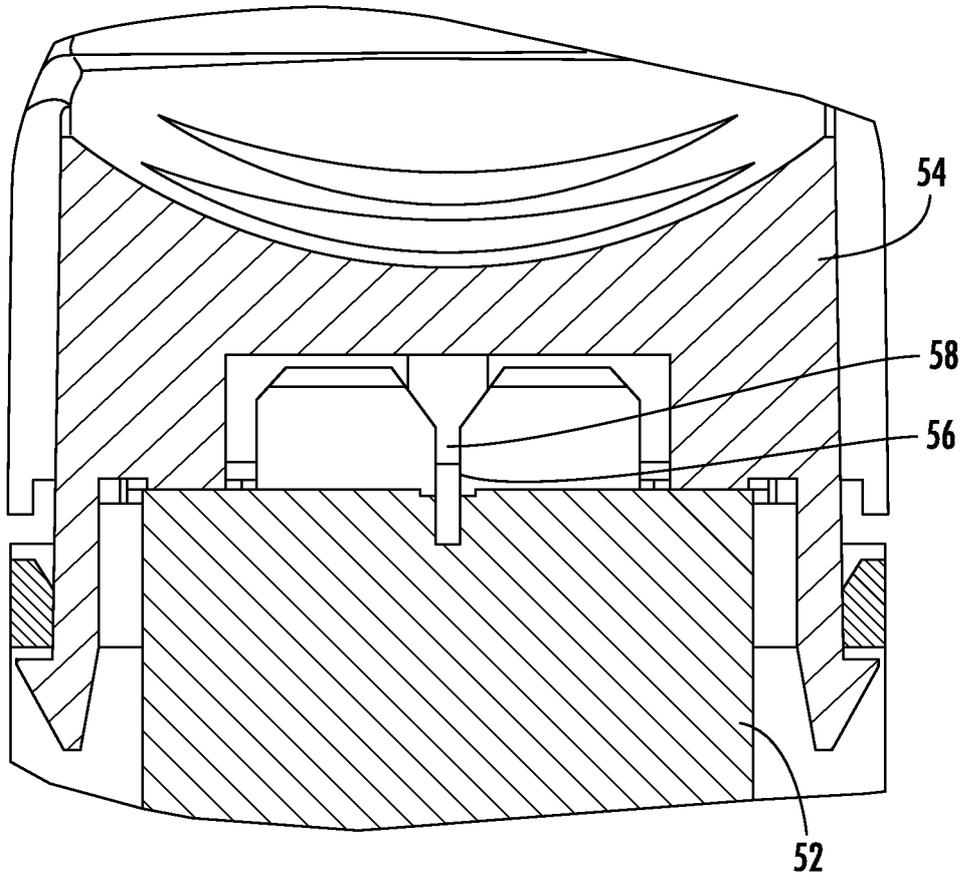


FIG. 14A

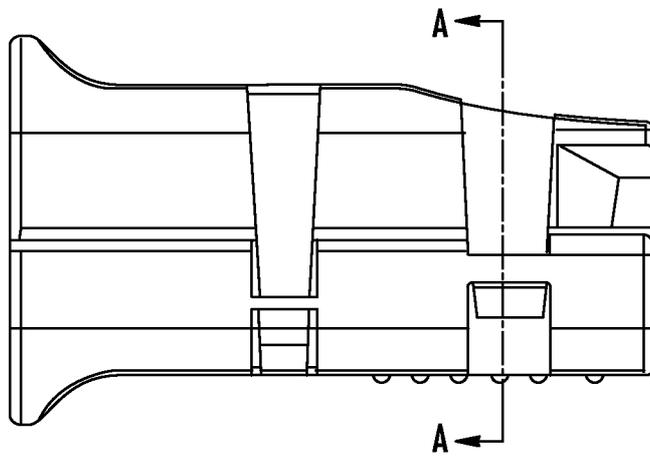


FIG. 14B

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FIG. 14C

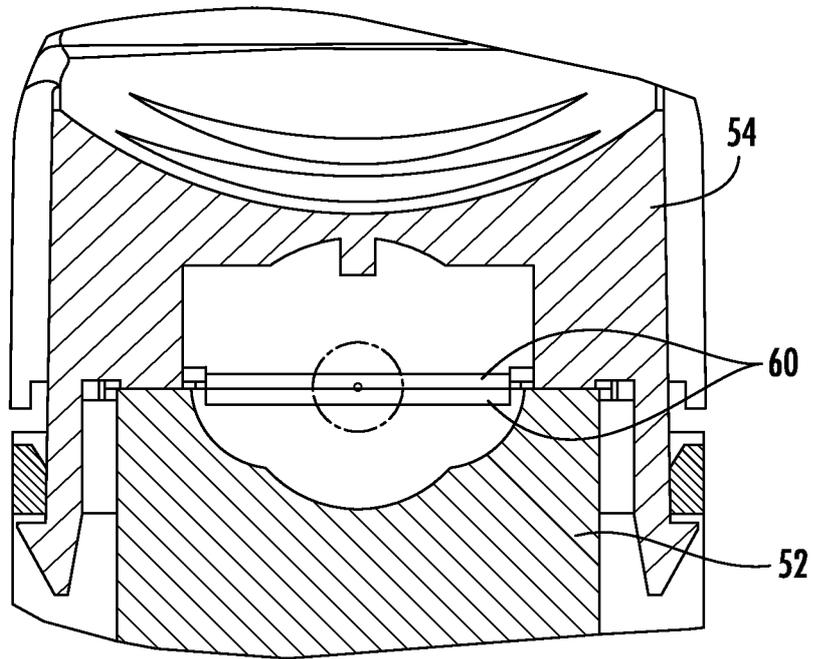


FIG. 14D

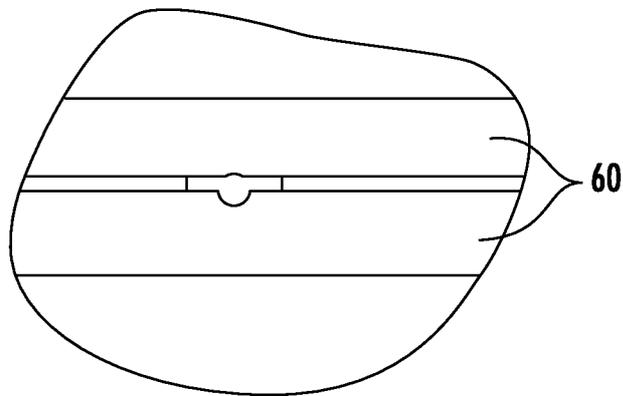
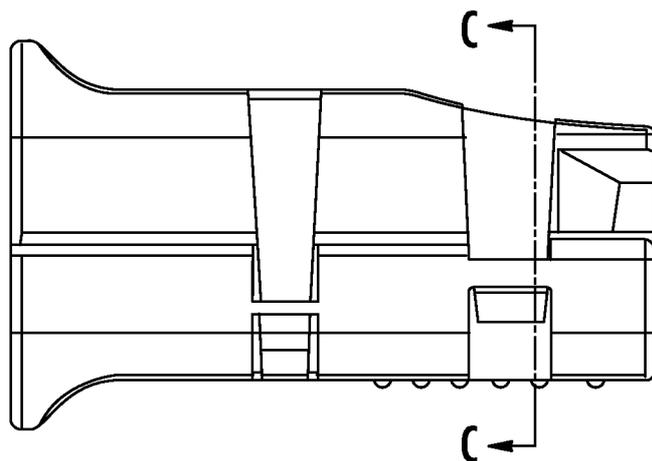


FIG. 14E



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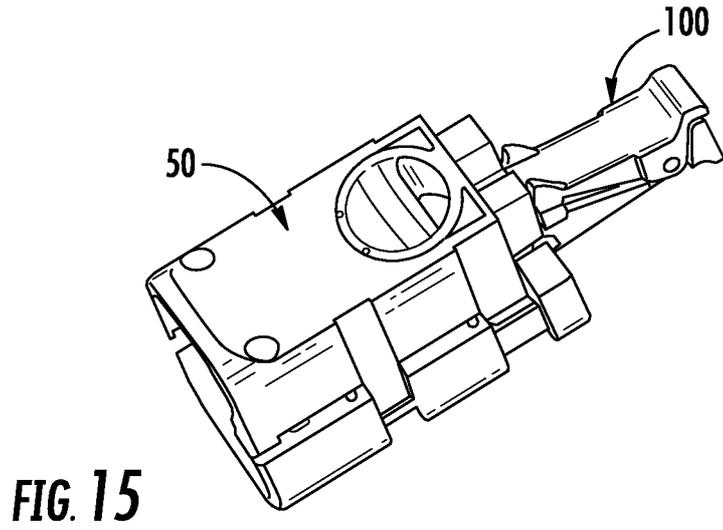


FIG. 15

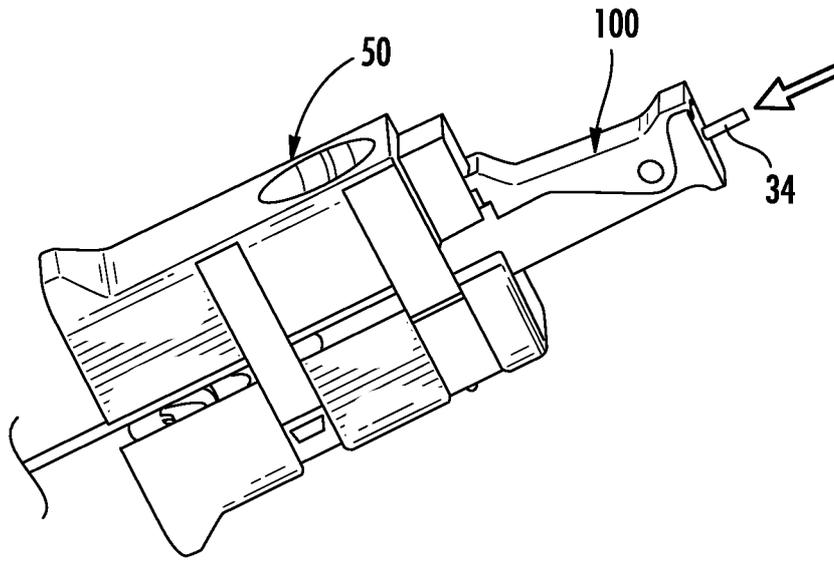


FIG. 16

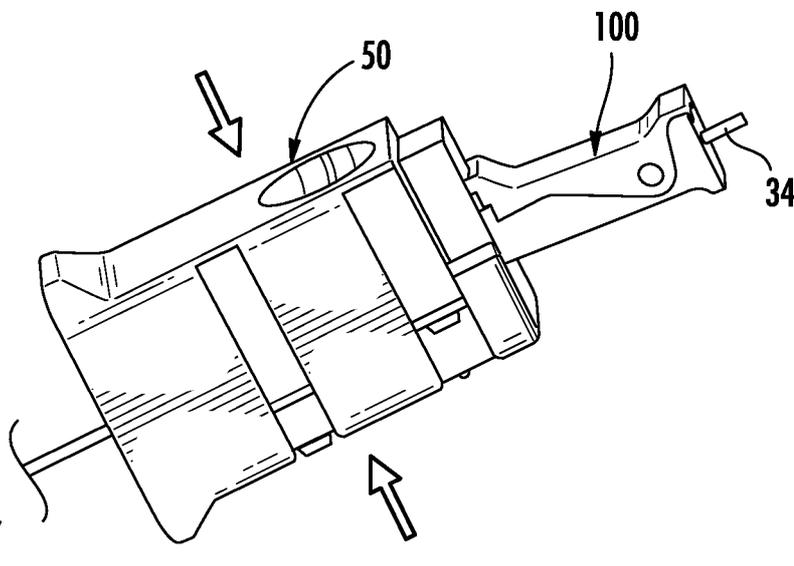


FIG. 17

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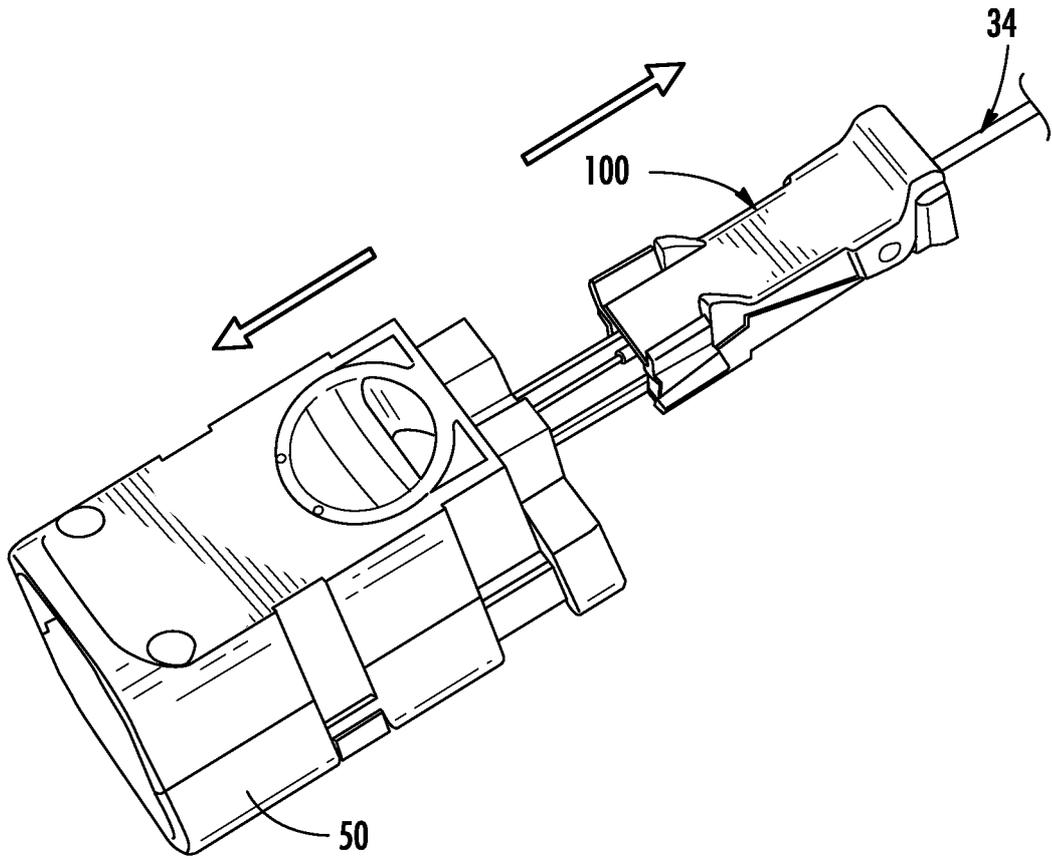


FIG. 18

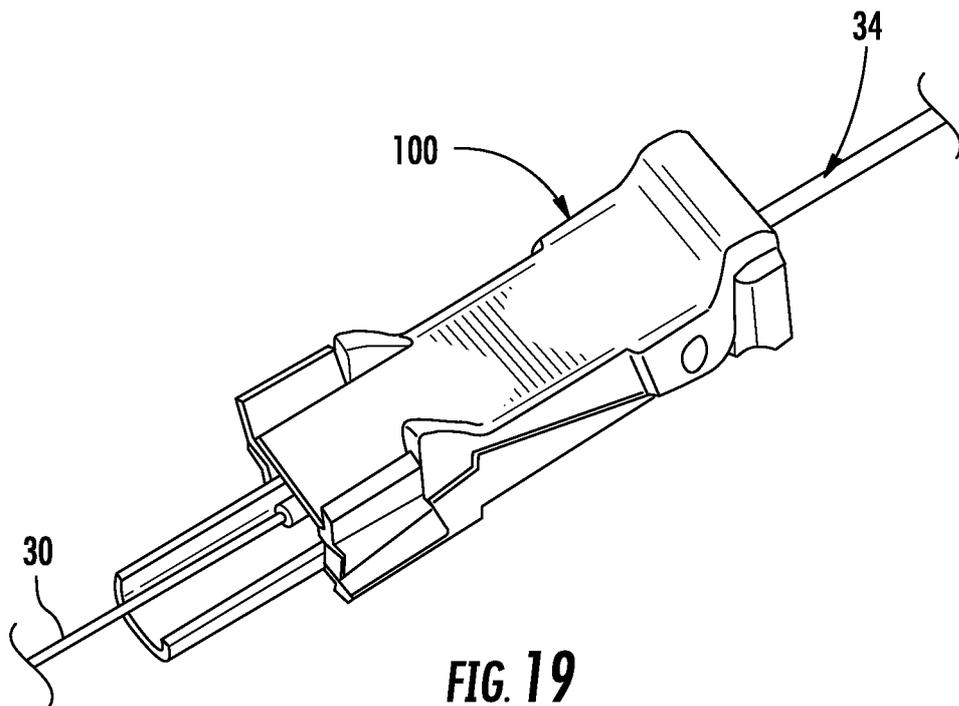


FIG. 19

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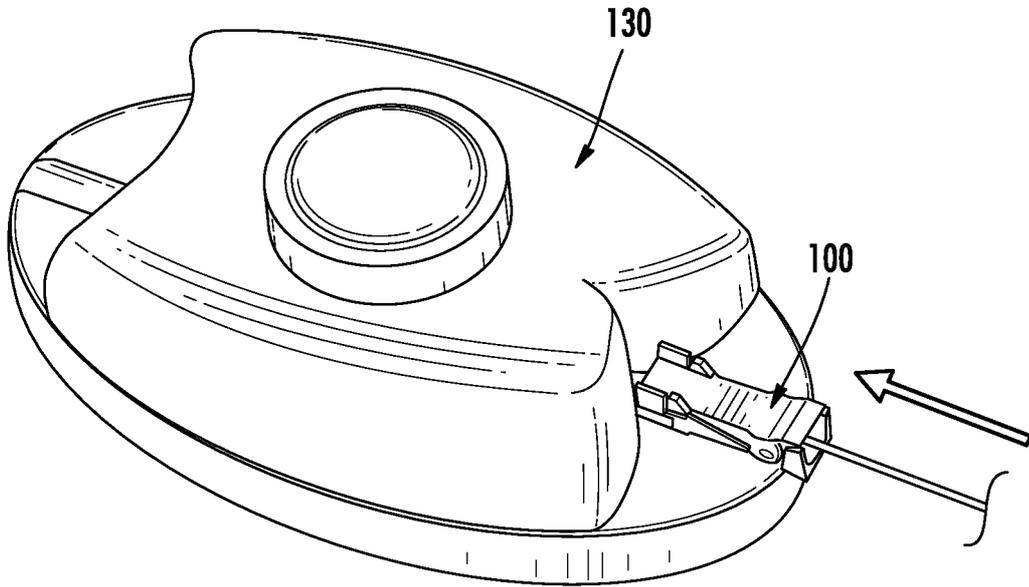


FIG. 20

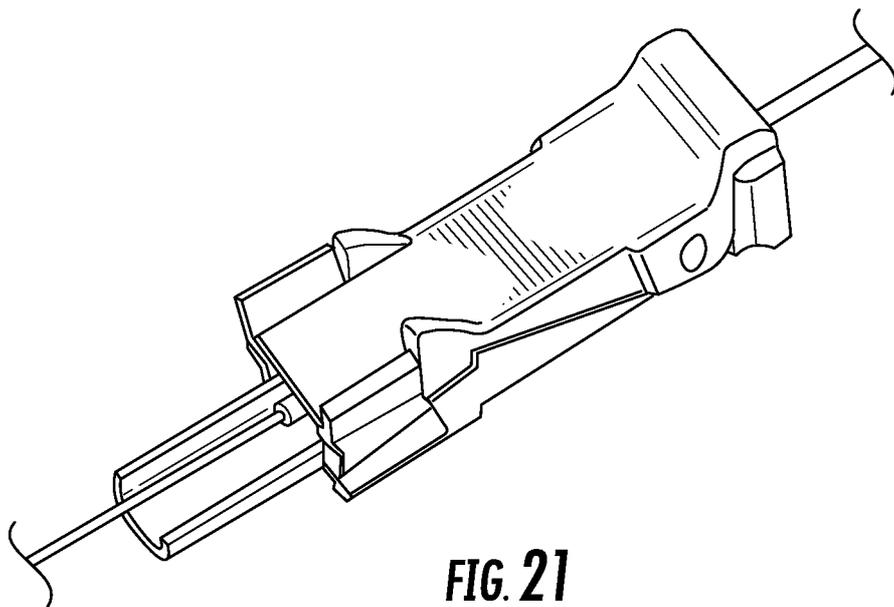
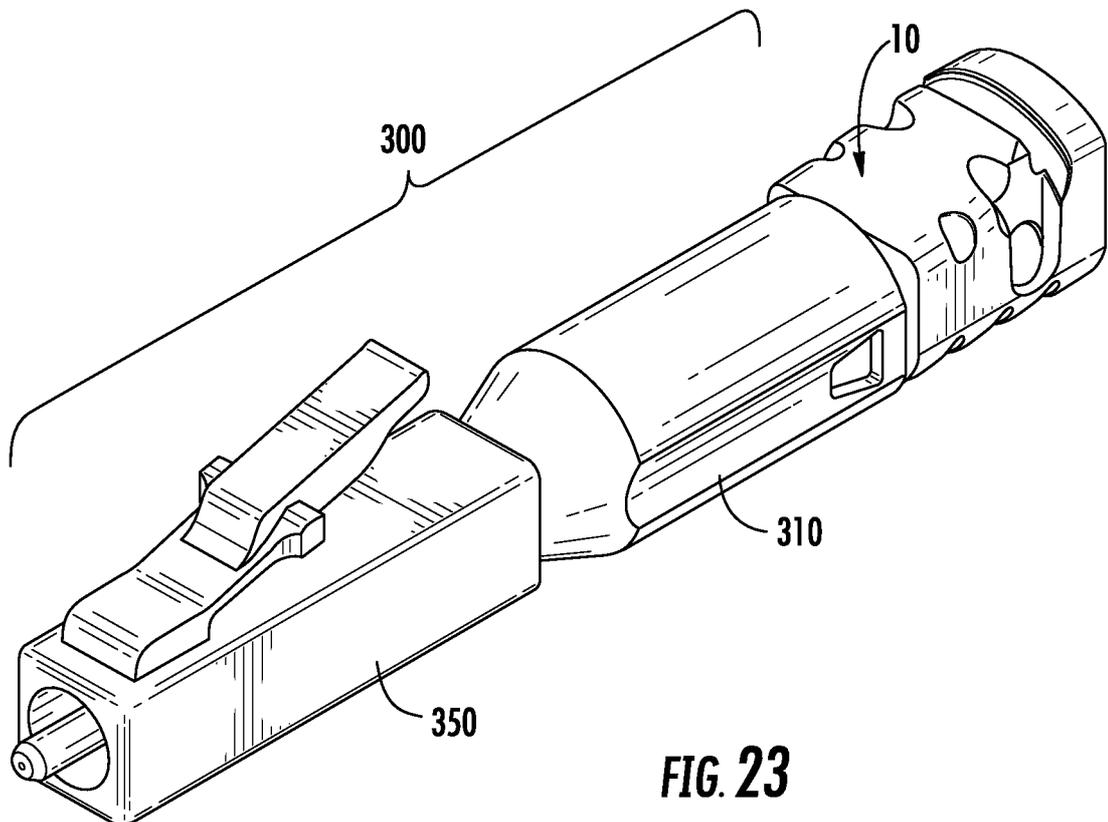
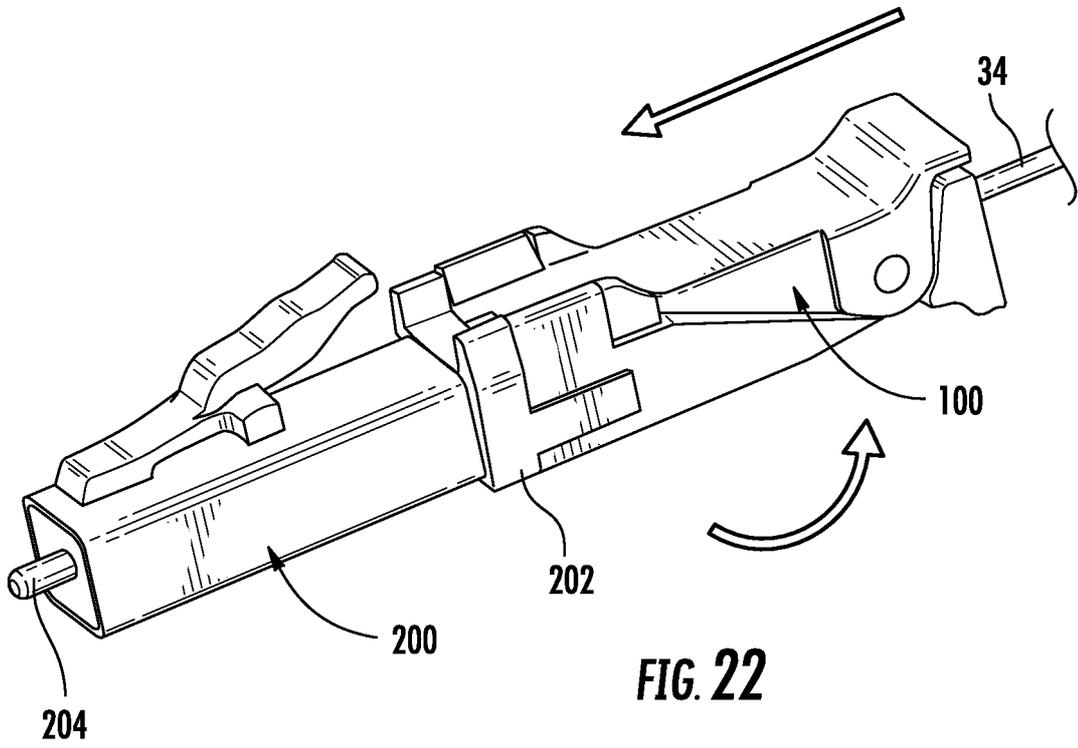


FIG. 21

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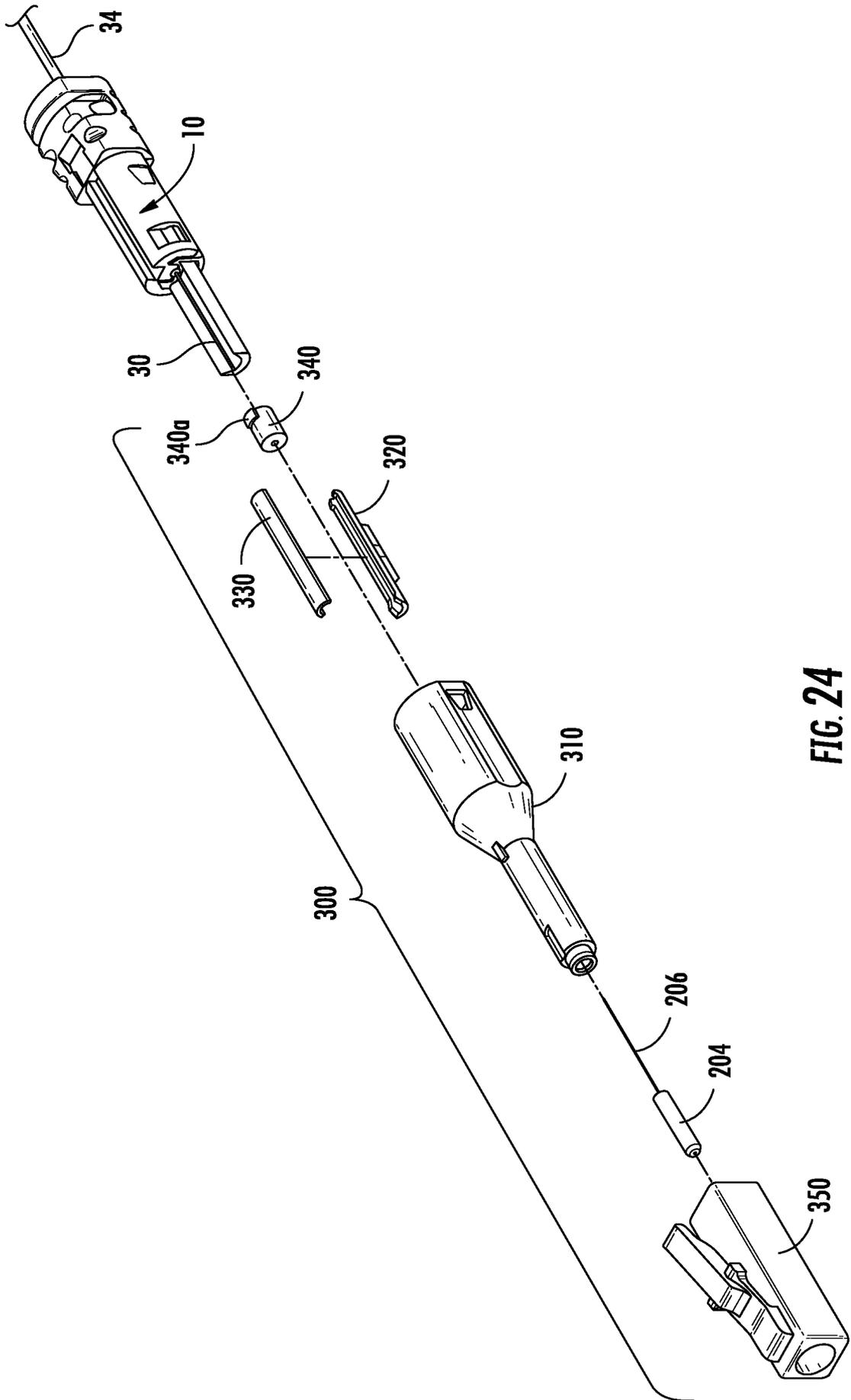
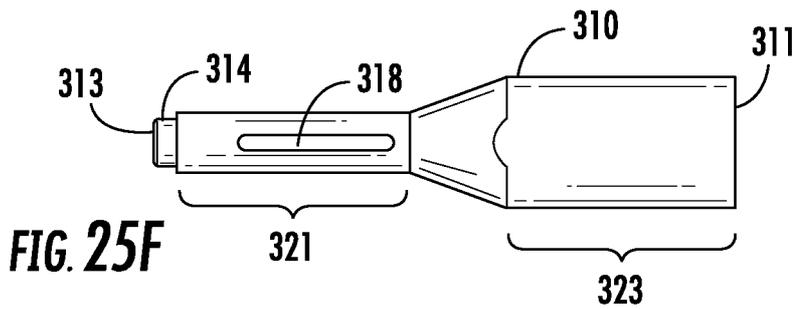
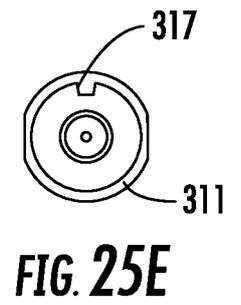
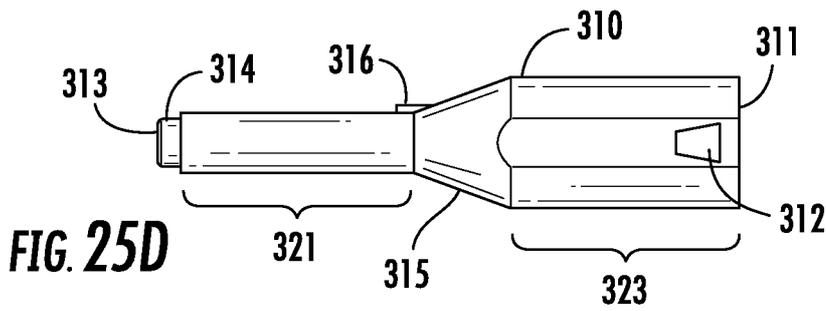
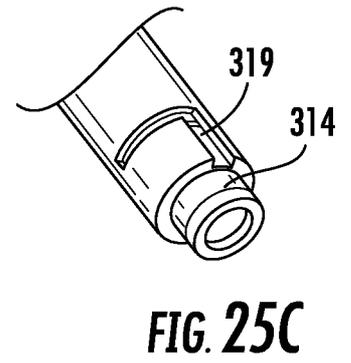
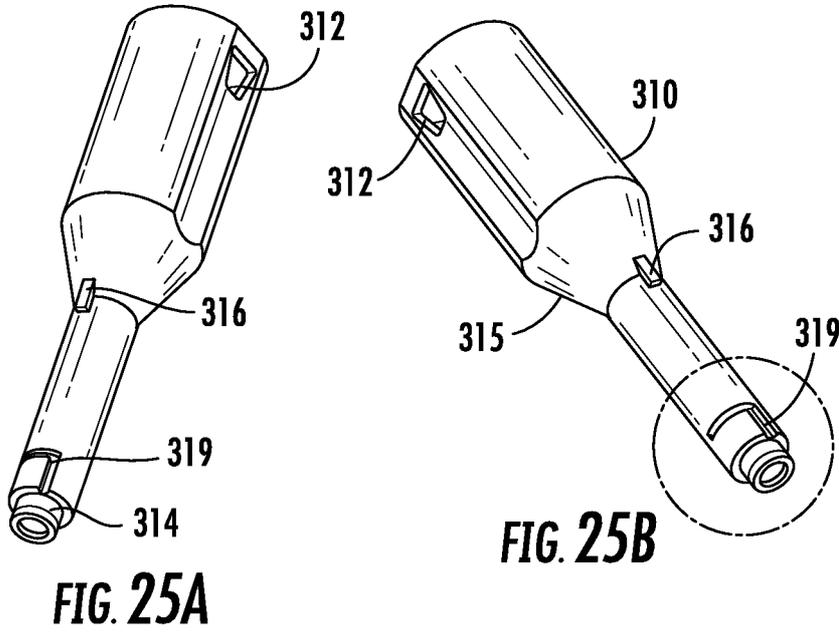


FIG. 24



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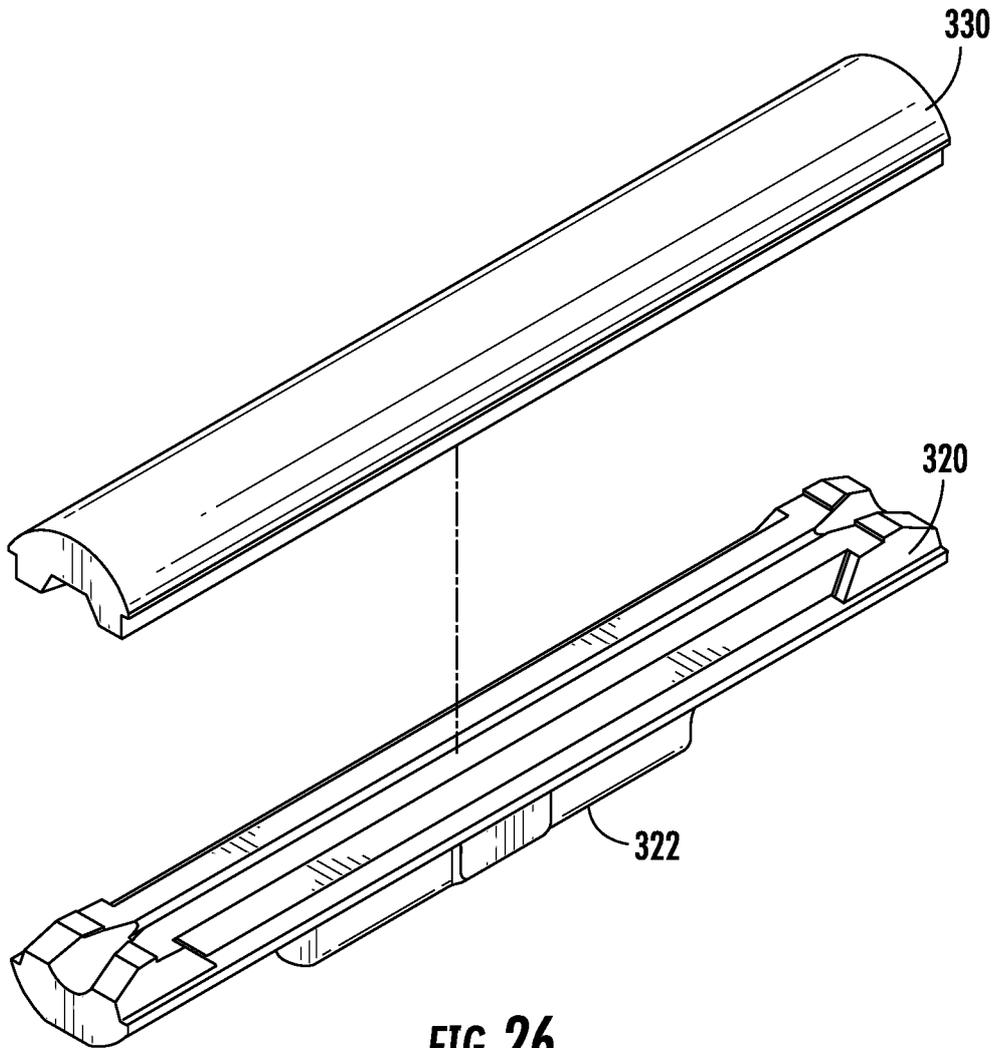


FIG. 26

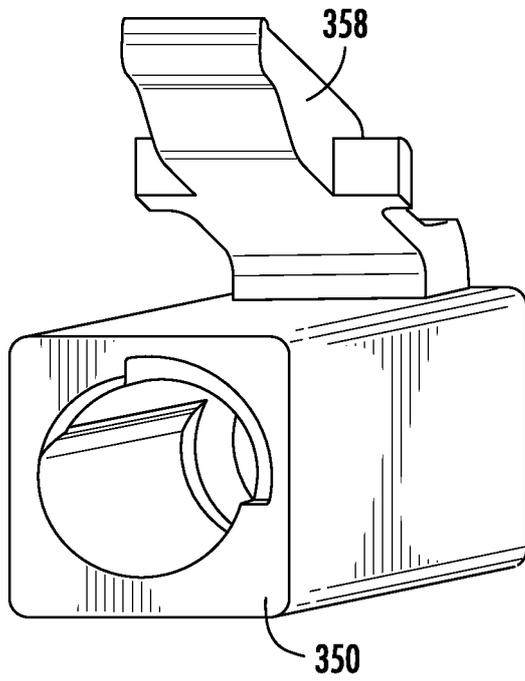


FIG. 27A

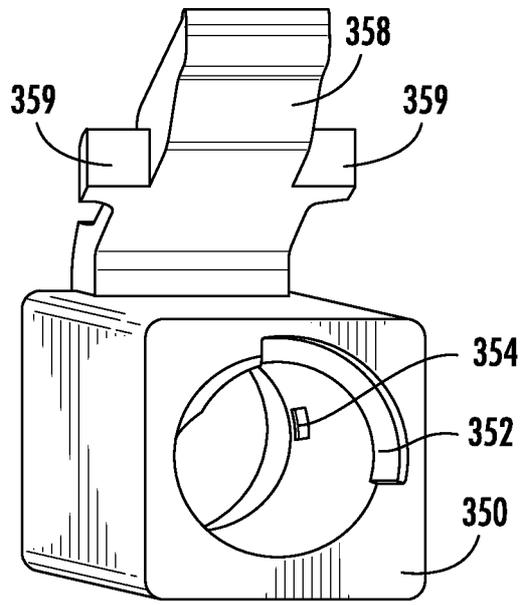


FIG. 27B

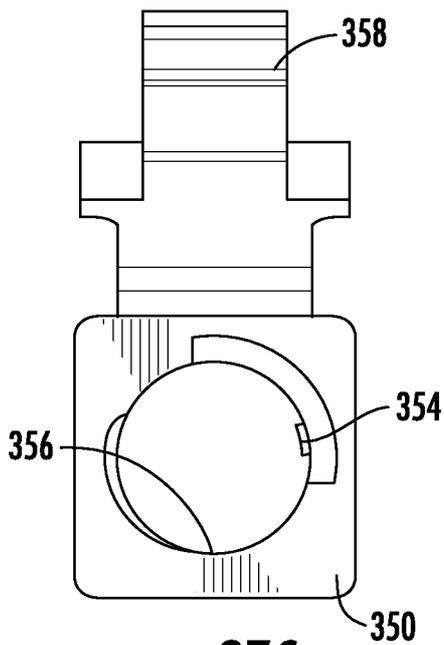


FIG. 27C

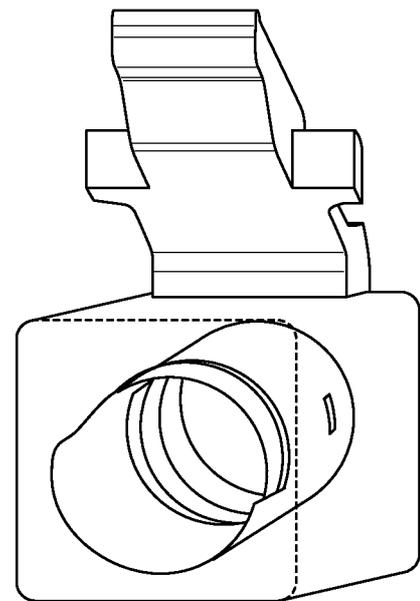


FIG. 27D

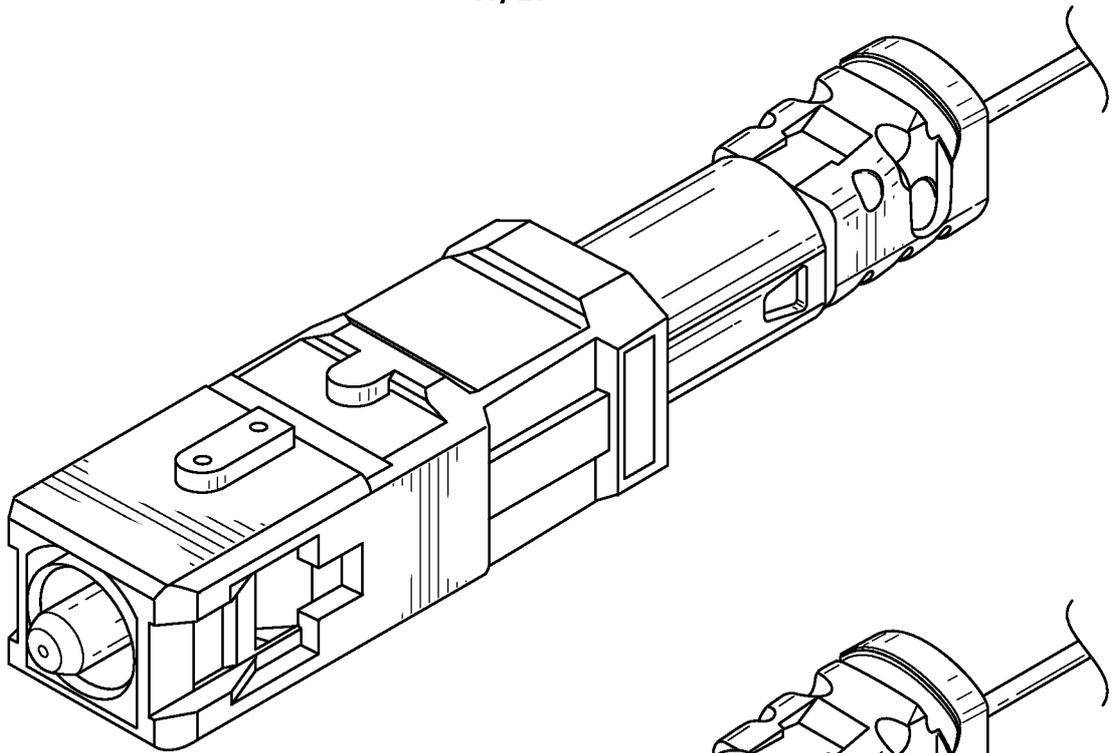


FIG. 28

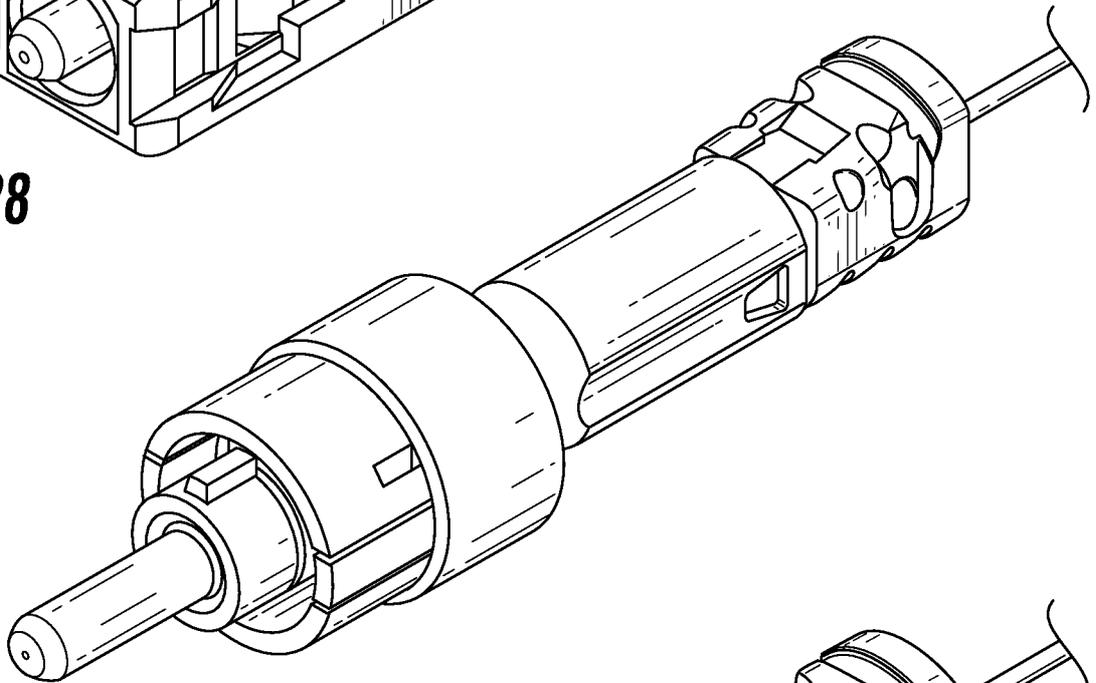


FIG. 29

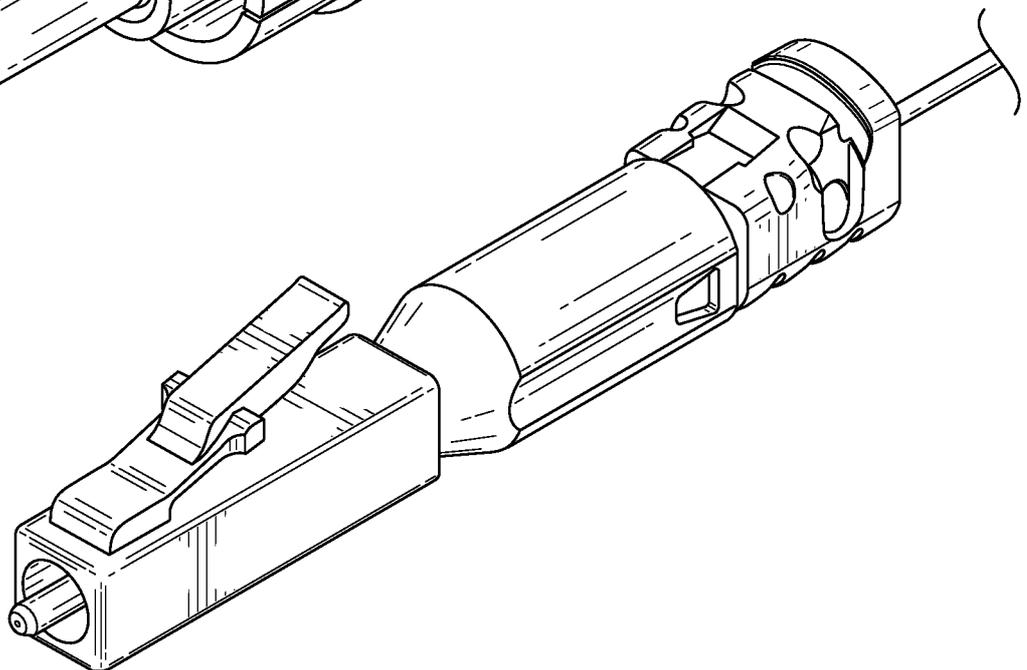


FIG. 30

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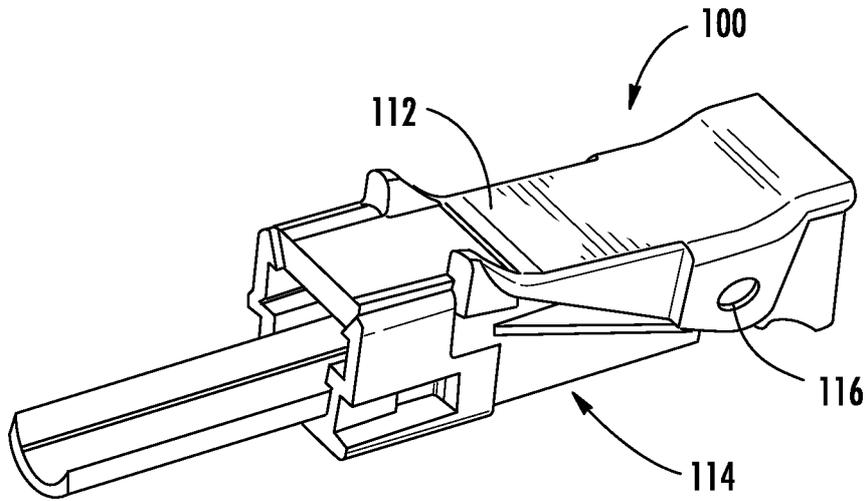


FIG. 31A

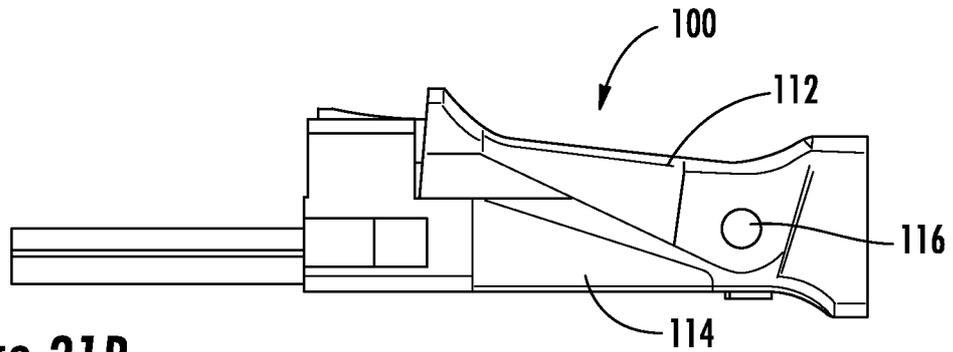


FIG. 31B

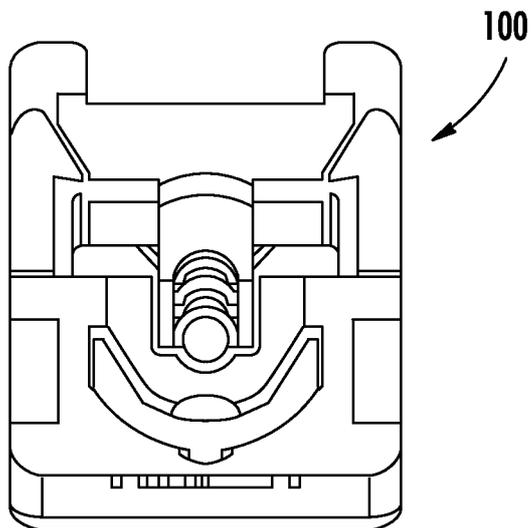
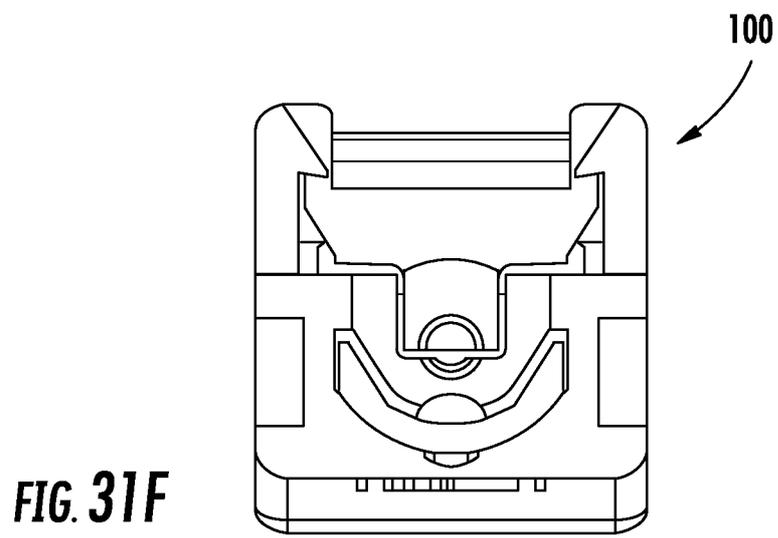
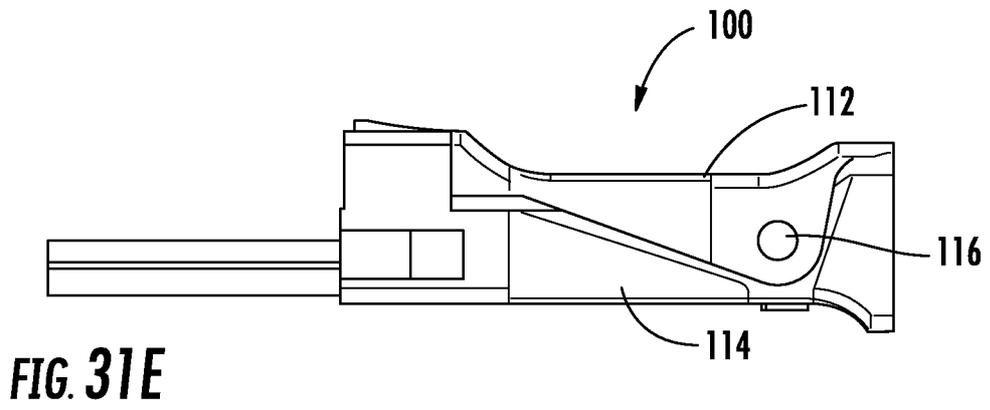
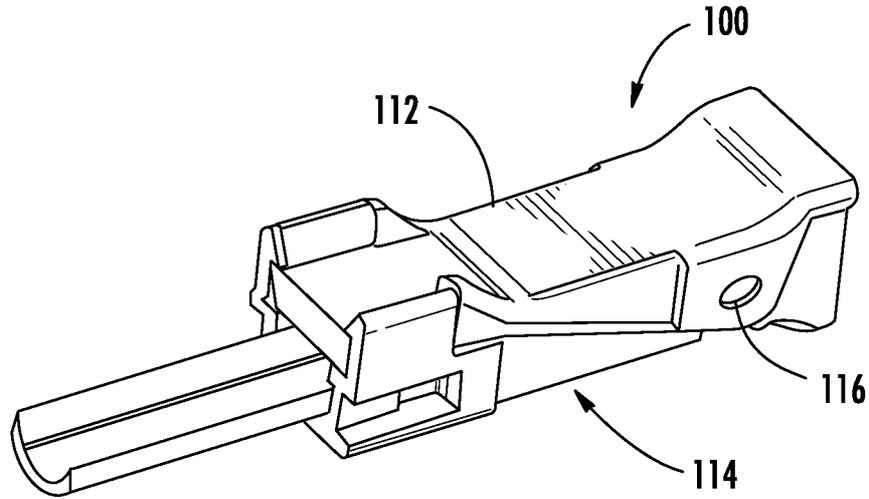


FIG. 31C

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No PCT/US2011/020222

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. G02B6/245 G02B6/25 G02B6/36 G02B6/38
 ADD.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
G02B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)
EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2007/172179 AI (BILLMAN BRADLEY S [US] ET AL) 26 July 2007 (2007-07-26) paragraph [0029] - paragraph [0031] ; figure 1A -----	1,4-7 , 12-15
X	US 2009/148109 AI (TAKAHASHI SHIGE0 [JP] ET AL) 11 June 2009 (2009-06-11) paragraph [0185] paragraph [0213] - paragraph [0259] ; figures 28-37 -----	1-4,8-11
X	US 2005/036744 AI (CAVENEY JACK E [US] ET AL) 17 February 2005 (2005-02-17) paragraph [0047] - paragraph [0062] ; figures 1-20 -----	1-15

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

<p>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p>	<p>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</p> <p>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.</p> <p>"&" document member of the same patent family</p>
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Date of the actual completion of the international search 7 April 2011	Date of mailing of the international search report 15/04/2011
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Name and mailing address of the ISA/ European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer Mouget, Mathi l de
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No PCT/US2011/020222
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