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Continuation-in-part of application Ser. No. 873,200, Nov. 3, 1969, now abandoned.

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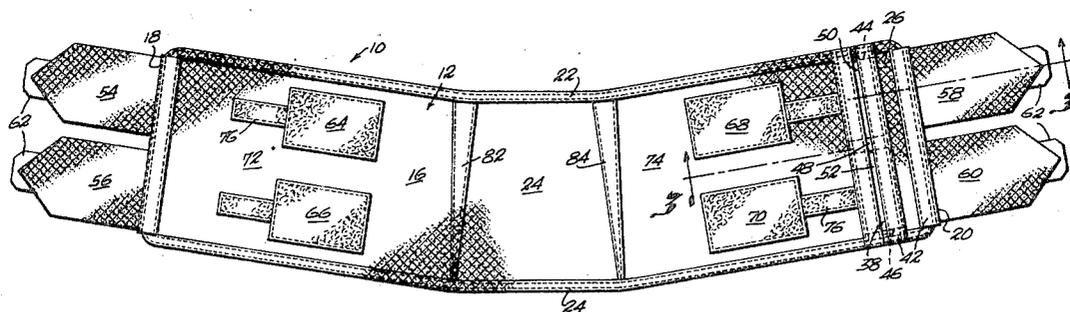
[54] **ABDOMINAL BELT**
 15 Claims, 13 Drawing Figs.

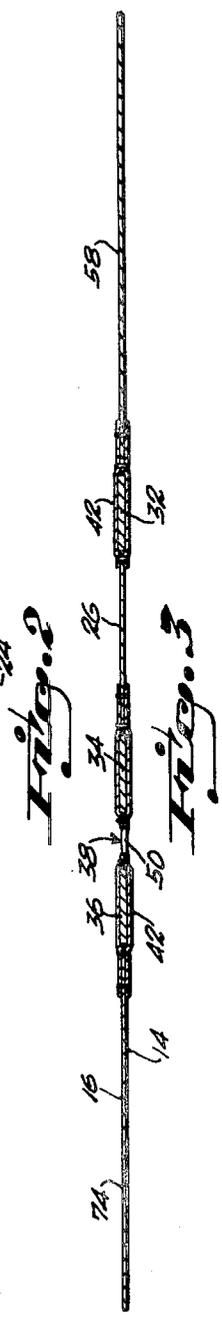
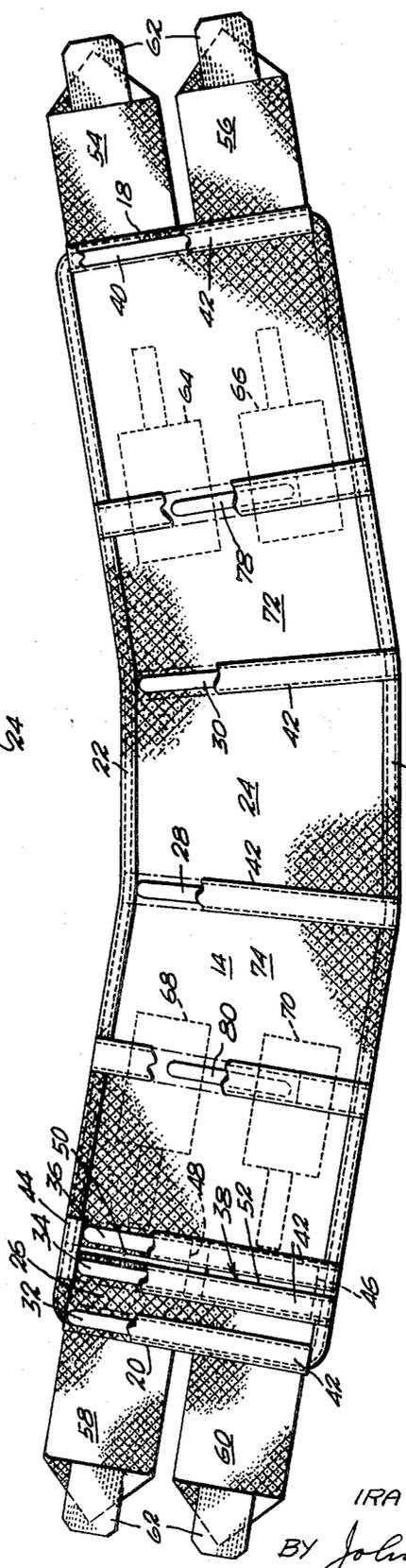
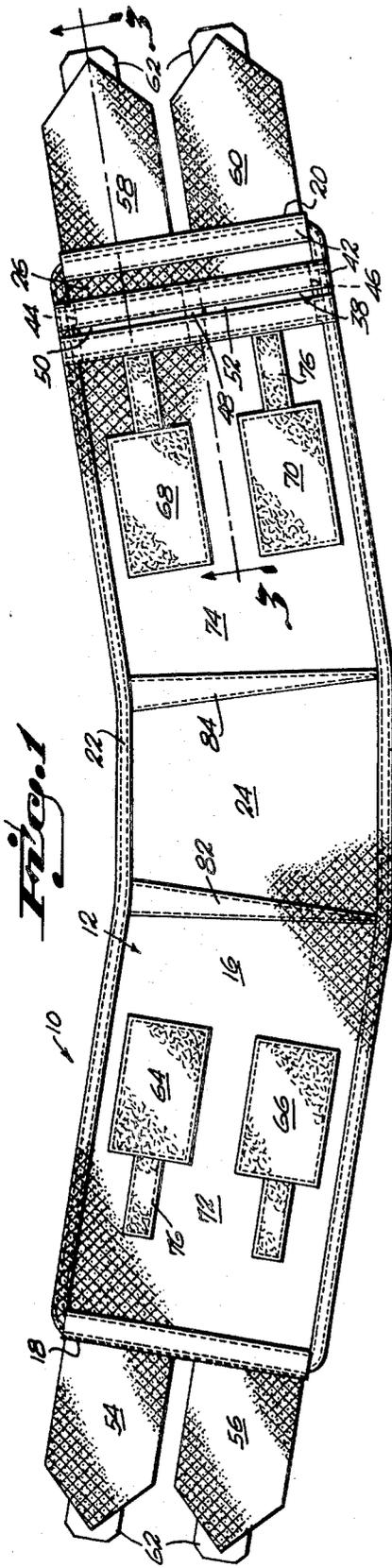
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[51] Int. Cl. **A41c 1/00**

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 564, 577, 578, 579, 560, 545, 544, 78, 575,
 428-446

ABSTRACT: An abdominal belt of elastic material, to girdle a substantial portion of the midsection of a wearer to provide a limited degree of primary pressure force to the entire area of contact with the body and secondary pressure forces to the abdominal region through elastic draw strips at both ends of the belt and a slot adjacent one of the belt ends whereby one of the draw strips is adapted to be pulled through the slot and across the abdominal region while the other strip is pulled in the opposite direction into an overlapping relationship of the outside surface of the abdominal belt.





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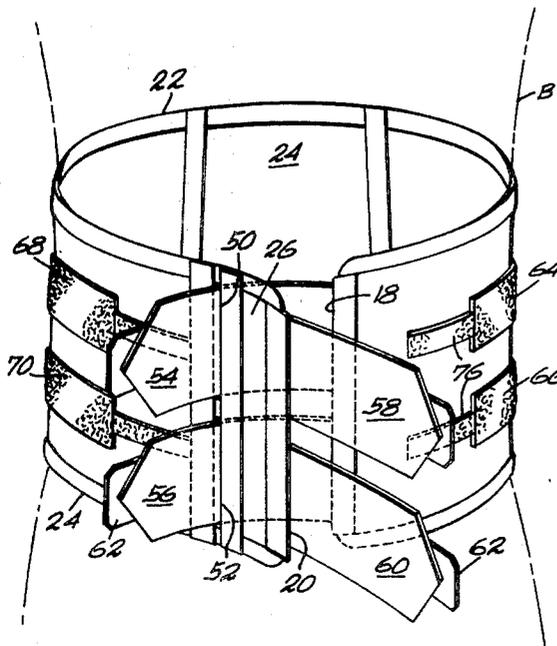


Fig. 4

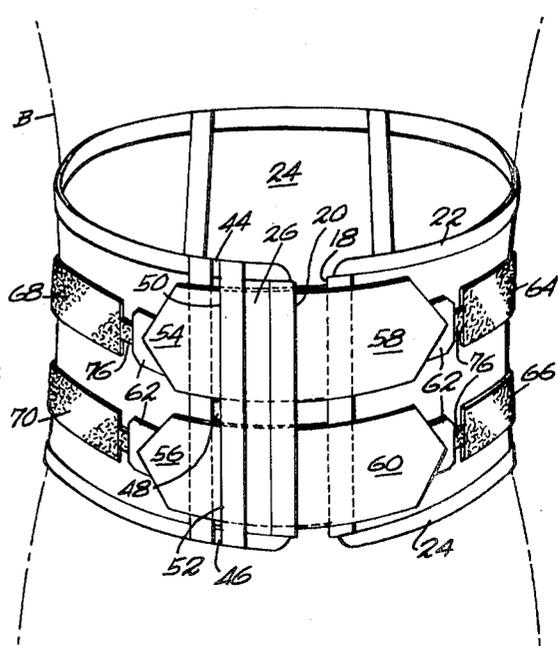


Fig. 5

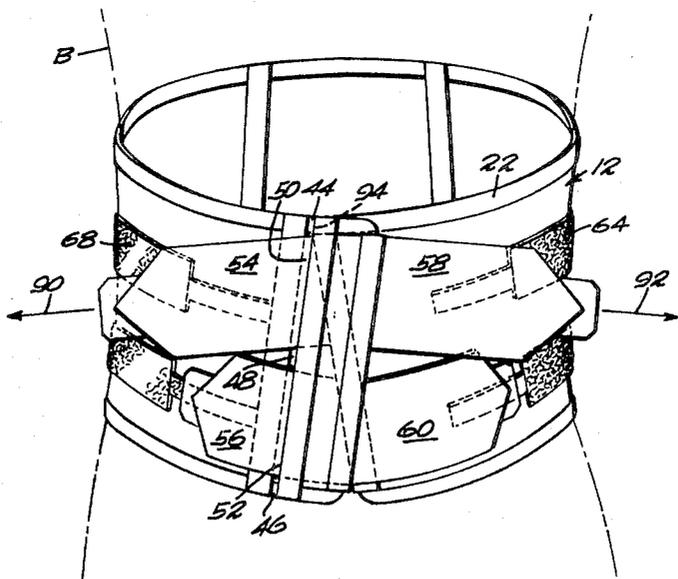


Fig. 6

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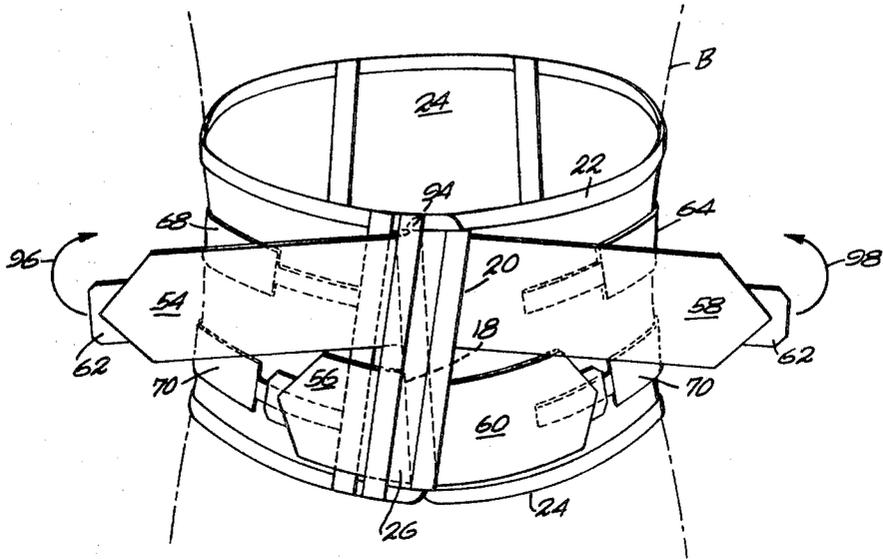


Fig. 7

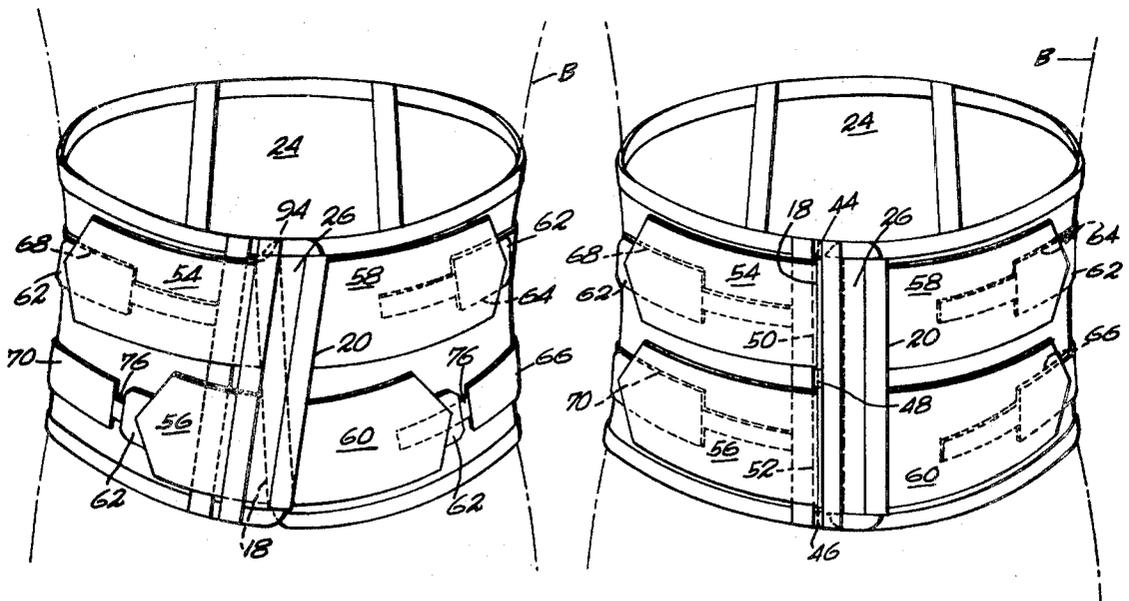


Fig. 8

Fig. 9

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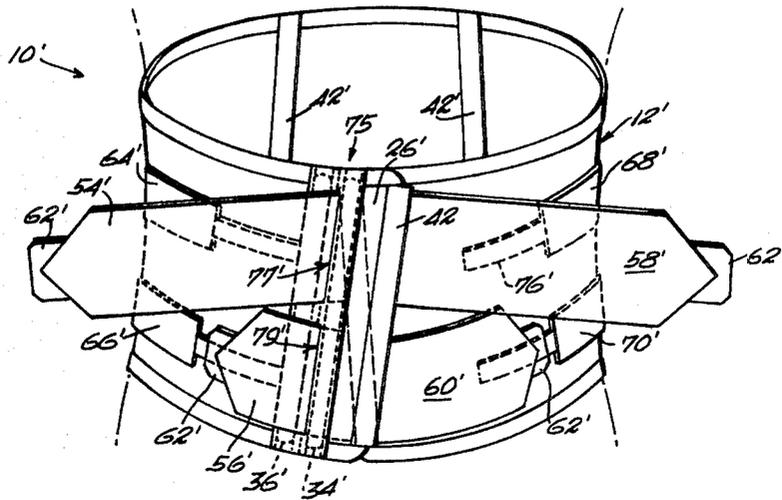


Fig. 10

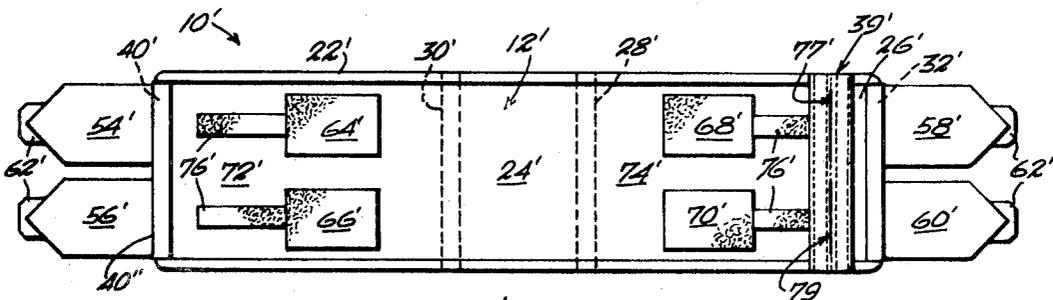


Fig. 11

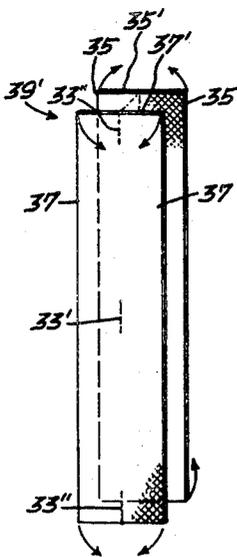


Fig. 13

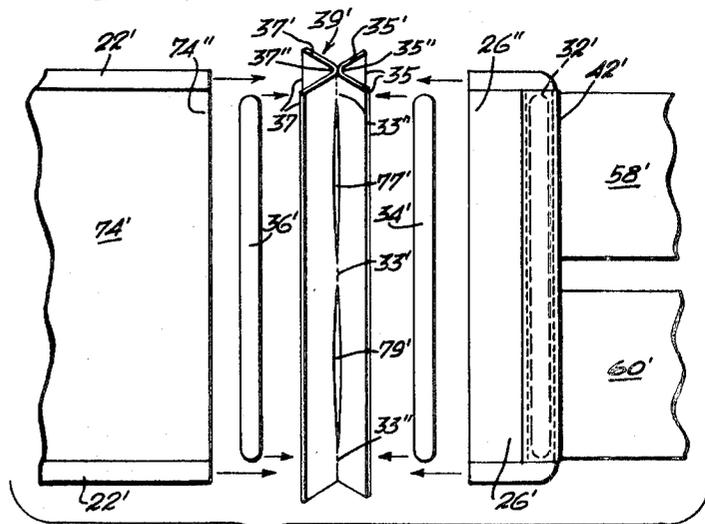


Fig. 12

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ABDOMINAL BELT

This is a continuation-in-part of application Ser. No. 873,200, filed Nov. 3, 1969 and now abandoned.

The present invention pertains to abdominal belts and more particularly to a belt which is adapted particularly for post operative use by a person requiring support in the abdominal region of his or her body.

One of the principal objects of the present invention is to provide an abdominal belt of this type which provides a primary, limited amount of pressure forces to the entire area of the body covered by the belt and secondary, adjustable, increased pressure forces to a specific portion of the contact area such as the abdominal region.

Another principal object of the present invention is to provide an abdominal belt having a main body portion of elastic material, of a substantial width, which is adapted to girdle the midsection of the body with sufficient pressure forces throughout the area of contact with the body to maintain the desired orientation therewith.

Yet another object is to provide elastic draw strip means which are attached to and extend longitudinally outwardly from both ends of the abdominal belt whereby the abdominal belt may be stretched to a predetermined limited degree to provide the primary pressure forces to the entire area of the body contact.

Still another object of the present invention is to provide a slot means adjacent one end of the abdominal belt whereby the elastic draw strip means, attached to each end thereof, are adapted to be pulled across the abdominal region of the body in an overlapping relationship to extended positions of adjustable attachment to the outside surface of the abdominal belt in the right and left front regions respectively.

Another object of the instant invention is the provision of stop means associated with said slot means whereby the amount of stretch imparted to the main body portion of the abdominal belt is limited and additional stretch forces imparted to said elastic draw strip means provides increased secondary pressure forces to the area spanned by said elastic draw strip means.

A further object of this invention is to provide adjustable attachment means between the distal end portions of said elastic draw strip means and the outside surface of the abdominal belt in the right and left front regions respectively whereby the amount of increased secondary forces may be varied.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide front and rear force distribution panels in the main body portion of the abdominal belt to provide a stretch orientation means whereby the primary stretch forces are distributed across the entire width of the abdominal belt.

Yet another object of the invention is to provide rigid stave means to define the vertical sides of the front and rear force distribution panels to maintain the proper spaced relationship of the longitudinal edges of the abdominal belt throughout its length when stretch forces are applied thereto.

It is another object of this invention to provide an abdominal belt which, when worn, provides a controlled supportive pressure over the anterior visceral abdominal wall which is especially useful after abdominal surgery and which is adapted to be applied without reinjuring, hurting or placing an uncomfortable pressure on the wounded, traumatized area.

It is another object of this invention to provide an abdominal belt which is adapted to be applied by the person who will wear it without the need of assistance and without placing undue strain on the muscles of the abdomen, groin, chest and arms in an unusual direction; that is, the belt is adapted to be applied in a natural type movement of the arm, such as in rowing a boat, which does not contort the body in order to obtain a correct application of the forces required to apply the belt.

It is another object of this invention to provide an abdominal belt which includes two pairs of symmetrical elastic pull tabs, each pair being sewn onto the ends of a primary

body-encircling belt portion, one member of each of the pairs on the same end of the belt, and, when applied, on the same side of the body, passing through a vertical slot provided in the primary elastic band adjacent the end of it, the primary band being made of elastic material such as that which is commercially available and known as, for instance, Spandex or Lycra and which is about 10 inches wide.

It is another object of this invention to provide a belt construction which provides the patient or wearer with two pairs of readily accessible fastening tabs to be grasped, one in each hand, at the distal ends. These fastening tabs or pull tabs are placed in position by passing the tabs through the slots so that each side, right and left, is in close proximity to the right and left hands as they hang at their sides in their natural positions.

Thereafter, a patient holding one tab in each hand, either the top or the bottom pair, may then, by stretching one or both together, gently pull each tab laterally to the side, each hand extending away from the body in this movement, and then placing each extended tab in position moving it toward the right or left side of the distal visceral areas so that the fastening means on the tabs, preferably Velcro hook fastener means, on each tab, engages the companionate strips of Velcro pile which are sewn onto the primary band at a zone which underlies the distal ends of the visceral area, and, in this manner, the tabs are adapted to be permanently secured to the belt when a proper elastic extension in conformity with the degree of support required and the comfort condition of the patient has been applied.

It is another object of this invention to provide an improved support having a primary band adapted to be positioned in body-encircling relationship of the abdominal area and which is adapted to be extended longitudinally and which includes a pair of strips or pull-tabs on the ends of the primary band to be in superimposed relation over the abdominal visceral area by the two pairs of pull-tabs, each tab being about 4 inches wide by 6 1/2 inches long in an unstretched, preferred construction. These tabs are of the type which can be aptly described as heavy duty and which stretch about half again as much as their unstretched state, and in effect act as members to gently support the abdominal wall and substituting for and aiding the weak, injured abdominal muscles, relieving pain of movement and supporting the incision area against rupture or hernia.

It is another object of this invention to provide an improved abdominal belt which is adapted to be secured in position in a secure fashion and which in the preferred embodiment utilizes Velcro closure type fastening means and arranges the reinforcing strip means so that the application of tension is symmetrical and the forces of adjustment exerted on the body are mutually distributed by two sets of Velcro fastening means, with a distribution of the forces providing a balanced tonicity and defining a force rectangle over the front abdominal area to distribute the forces of adjustment substantially over that surface.

It is another object of this invention to provide an improved abdominal belt in which in application there is no pressure applied by the person installing it on himself by his hands holding the tab in a direction perpendicular to the traumatized abdominal wall, but, rather one in which the pressure and forces required to secure the belt to the body are applied by extending the strip means outwardly away from the injured area and wrapping it around over it and fastening it on the side away from the traumatized area with the forces being distributed over the entire area and which requires, by reason of the construction, a minimum amount of muscular effort applied in an easy, natural movement similar to that of a person rowing a boat which places no excessive strain upon the internal organs because of the structure of the belt.

It is another object of the invention to provide an improved abdominal belt having novel slot means for threadingly receiving the draw strip elements of the belt structure and for providing means for easy mounting or positioning of the belt around the body of a wearer.

It is another object to provide such slot means which may be economically fabricated from a pair of double-fold portions and thread seam means intermittently securing the double-fold portions together and defining smooth-edge slot apertures adapted for ready insertion and removal of the belt draw strip elements during positioning or removal of the belt from the body midsection of a user.

It is another object of the invention to provide such slot means of durable form and which may be fabricated with less material and production time.

In the past, there have been abdominal belts which utilize a primary elastic band; however, these belts generally have two ends which close at one point directly in the center and over the injured area which makes it necessary that the patient press one end of the belt against the abdomen to hold that one in position by friction, while with the other hand and in a contorted manner which anyone simulating the installation of the belt can readily duplicate, he stretches the entire garment exerting muscular effort with the other hand against the elastic tension of the belt and then he has to fasten the end which he has stretched in order to hold it stationary, adding another pressure to the abdominal area. In so doing, at the same time he must resist the natural tendency of the elastic to distort by reason of his contorted position in stretching the band, and maintain them in superimposed position so that they will line up. With the structure disclosed herein, the surgical binder may be of a lightweight, stretchable material, such as Spandex, because of the fact that the material is stretched in a controlled manner by reason of the structure directing the forces about the body instead of holding one in towards the body while the other one is stretched, and, in addition, because at the support area in the front there is a zone of reinforcement caused by the superpositioning of the strip means after they have been stretched over the central zone, and by reason of the pass-through slots included in the structure which assist in the directing of the forces.

Other objects and advantages of the present invention will become more fully apparent to those skilled in the art when the following detailed description is read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is an outside plan view of the abdominal belt of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is an inside plan view of the abdominal belt;

FIG. 3 is a longitudinal sectional view taken along the line 3-3 of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 4-9 are perspective views illustrating the various steps in applying the abdominal belt to a wearer and illustrating particularly how both the primary and secondary pressure forces are applied;

FIG. 10 is a front perspective view of a second embodiment of the abdominal support belt of the invention;

FIG. 11 is an outside plan view of the belt of FIG. 10;

FIG. 12 is a view of the slot means of the second embodiment with the several parts thereof being in disengaged arrangement for purposes of clarity; and

FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the double-fold fabric slot-defining elements of the belt embodiment illustrated in FIG. 10.

In the drawing, in which like reference numerals designate like or similar parts throughout the various views, the numeral 10 indicates the abdominal belt of the present invention which includes a main body portion 12 of elastic material having an inside surface 14, an outside surface 16, first and second ends 18 and 20 respectively and a pair of longitudinal edges preferably bound with elastic binding strips 22 and 24.

The main body portion 12 includes a medial panel 24 which serves as a rear force distributing panel when the belt is in place on a wearer and a panel 26 extending inwardly from the end 20 which serves as a front force distribution panel. The rear and front force distribution panels 24 and 26 are delineated by portions of the longitudinal bindings 22 and 24 and rigid stave members 28, 30 and 32, 34 respectively, extending vertically between the bindings 22 and 24. As the ab-

dominal belt is of a substantial width to apply pressure to a substantial portion of the abdominal region of a wearer, stretch forces when applied to the belt would normally cause the longitudinal edges 22 and 24 to roll toward each other because of the natural curvature of the body. However, the force distribution panels 24 and 26 at the front and back respectively by means of the rigid stave members 28, 30 and 32, 34 provide a force orientation means causing the belt to maintain its proper width and providing substantially equal forces to the entire area of contact with the body when the primary stretch forces are applied to the abdominal belt as will be more fully described hereinafter.

With reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, a rigid stave member 36 is spaced closely adjacent to and inwardly of the stave member 34 providing a slot 38 therebetween which extends between the longitudinal bindings 22 and 24. A stave member 40 may also be provided at the second end 18. All of the stave members are covered by binding tape 42.

Nonelastic strips 44 and 46 are fixed as by stitching across both ends of the slot 38 and a nonelastic divider 48 is similarly fixed across the medial portion of the slot 38 to form a pair of slot portions 50 and 52.

Each end 18 and 20 is provided with a pair of outwardly extending elastic draw strips 54, 56 and 58, 60 respectively and the distal end portion of each elastic draw strip is provided with a tab 62 of the male portion of a commercially available attaching means known by the trade name "Velcro." Pairs of the female portion 64, 66 and 68, 70 of the "Velcro" are fixed as by stitching to the outside surface 16 of the respective panels 72 and 74 which are adapted to span the left and right lumbar regions respectively, of a wearer. Each of the female portions 64, 66 and 68, 70 may include a reduced width portion 76. Orientation means in the form of rigid staves 78 and 80, fixed to the respective panels 72 and 74 in the same manner as the previously described stave members, span the respective pairs of female members 64, 66 and 68, 70 to maintain the proper vertical spaced relationship between each pair.

Darts 82 and 84 may be provided in the main body portion 12 as best illustrated in FIG. 1 to angle the panels 72 and 74 upwardly to make the abdominal belt conform to the shape of the midsection of the body, however, this feature is not necessary to the proper functioning of the belt because the inherent elasticity of the material provides for the necessary conformation.

Referring now to the perspective views FIG. 4 through FIG. 9 for a description of the various steps involved in applying the belt to the midsection including the abdominal area of the body of a wearer. In FIG. 4 the abdominal belt of the present invention is placed about the midsection of the body B with the rear force distribution panel 24 in the back and the front force distribution panel 26 and the elastic pull strip carrying ends 18 and 20 in overlying relation with the front of the abdominal area of the body B.

The elastic draw strips 54 and 56 are first pulled through the slot portions 50 and 52 respectively and as shown in FIG. 5 the male tab portions 62 of the "Velcro" of said draw strips 54 and 56 are pulled outwardly and engaged with the reduced width portion 76 of the female "Velcro" portions 68 and 70 respectively and the elastic draw strips 58 and 60 are similarly attached to the female "Velcro" portions 64 and 66. The steps illustrated in FIGS. 4 and 5 serve the purpose of positioning the abdominal belt correctly and no substantial pull forces are exerted on the elastic draw strips before the attachments are completed. It should be noted that the female "Velcro" portions 64, 66 and 68, 70 including the reduced width portions 76 are substantially elongated and could be of the same width throughout their length, it being preferable, however, that the various female "Velcro" portions be of sufficient length to provide for the initial attachment of the elastic draw strips 54, 56 and 58, 60 thereto without applying any substantial pull forces thereon.

FIG. 6 illustrates the upper elastic draw strips 54 and 58 after being disengaged from their respective female "Velcro"

members 68 and 64 respectively. Outward, opposed pull forces are then applied to said draw strips as indicated by the arrows 90 and 92 respectively until the upper corner 94 engages the nonelastic strip 44 which limits the pull forces along the upper longitudinal edge 22 of the main body portion 12 of the belt.

As illustrated in FIG. 7 and as indicated by the arrows 96 and 98 additional outward pull forces are applied to the elastic draw strips 54 and 58 building up stretch forces in said draw strips which are then swung rearwardly, as also indicated by the arrows 96 and 98, into engagement with the female "Velcro" strips 68 and 64 respectively as seen in FIG. 8. Increased, secondary pressure forces are now applied to the upper portion of the abdominal region only, due to the stretch forces in the elastic draw strips 54 and 58.

The elastic draw strips 56 and 60 are next detached from the reduced width portion 76 of the female "Velcro" portions 70 and 66 respectively and the procedure as described relative to the elastic draw strips 54 and 58 in FIGS. 6 and 7 is repeated with the draw strips 56 and 60 which are attached to the female "Velcro" portions 70 and 66 respectively under increased secondary stretch forces.

As seen in FIG. 9, the end 18 is now in engagement with the nonelastic strips 44, 46 and 48 which form a stop means at the slot portions 50 and 52 for the end 18, which determines the maximum stretch forces applicable to the main body portion 12 and establish the primary pressure forces applicable to the body of the wearer over the entire area of contact by the inner surface of the abdominal belt. The increased secondary pressure forces are applied to the abdominal region by reason of the stretch forces built up in the elastic draw strips 54, 56 and 58, 60 after the edge 18 engages the stop means in the manner just described. The secondary pressure forces are adjustable by reason of the elongated female "Velcro" portions whereby the male "Velcro" tabs 62 may be attached anywhere along their respective lengths. In donning the abdominal belt, a wearer may, after practice, eliminate the initial attachment for positioning reasons as described and illustrated in FIG. 5.

The second embodiment of the abdominal belt (FIGS. 10-13) is represented by numeral 10' and includes a body portion 12' including a medial panel 24', a pair of panels 72', 74' secured respectively along opposite side edges of medial panel 24' and includes an extension panel 26' defining the front force distribution panel. The opposite end portions of the belt body 12' preferably includes draw strip elements 54', 56', 58', 60' secured to and extending longitudinally outwardly respectively from oppositely arranged body panels 72', 26'. The belt means preferably includes "Velcro" fastening means for detachably securing the belt to the wearer. Each draw strip 54', 56', 58', 60' preferably is provided with male "Velcro" tab elements 62. A plurality of female "Velcro" elements 64', 66'; 68', 70' are secured respectively to the outside surface areas of panels 72', 74'. A plurality of female "Velcro" elements 76', of reduced width, is arranged in contiguity with respectively the elements 64', 66'; 68', 70' and cooperate in a manner as described in the first embodiment 10. The belt body 10' is provided with longitudinally extending edge bindings 22' and stave members 28', 30' pocketed to the inside of the belt body by binding strip means 42'. Stave elements 32', 40' also preferably are fitted in opposite end portions of the belt body.

The second embodiment 10' of the abdominal belt includes slot structure 75' defining aligned slot apertures 77', 79'. The slot structure 75' constitutes substantially the structure distinguishing the second embodiment 10' of the belt structure from the embodiment 10. The slot structure 75' is interposedly arranged respectively between the belt body panels 26', 74' and engages respectively the parallel edge portions 26'', 74'' of the panels: A connector member 39' connects the panels 26', 74' and is fabricated from a pair of double-fold portions 35', 37' integrally connected by a plurality of seam runs 33'; 33'', 33''' formed of thread loops stitching the double-fold elements together. The seam runs 33'; 33'', 33''' are arranged respec-

tively centrally and laterally of the belt body and join the transverse medial portions respectively of the double-fold portions 35', 37' along corresponding confronting fold edge portions 35'', 37''. The rolled fold edges 35'', 37'' and the intermittently arranged longitudinally aligned seam runs 33'; 33'', 33''' define the slot apertures 77', 79' adapted for receiving respectively the draw strips 54', 56' when the belt is in use. The parallel extending edge portions 35, 35'; 37, 37' respectively of the fold portions 35', 37' are laminatingly secured respectively to the edge portions 26'', 74'' of panels 26', 74'. Thread seam means, not shown, preferably laminatingly secure respectively the edge portions 35, 35'; 37, 37' to the panels 26', 74', and provide also pocket means for securing stave elements 34', 36'.

When the belt embodiment 10' is in use and positioned about the abdomen region of the user, the end edge 40'', extending along end stave member 40', defines substantially abutment means adapted for limiting the constricting movement of the belt structure encircling the user. With the draw strips 54', 56' extending respectively through the slot apertures 77', 79', and upon drawing the strip members 54', 56'; 58', 60' oppositely, the constricting movement of the belt is limited by the end edge 40'' simultaneously abuttingly engaging the seam runs 33', 33'', 33''' of the connector member 39': such action provides the primary forces applicable to the body of the wearer. The secondary pressure forces are applied by oppositely stretching the draw strip elements 54', 56'; 58', 60' and selectively engaging the "Velcro" tabs 62' with the "Velcro" elements 64', 66'; 68', 70' of the belt body panels and in the same manner as described in the first embodiment of the invention.

While the present invention is shown and described in a presently preferred form, various changes and modification in structure may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An abdominal belt comprising;

- A. a main body portion of elastic material including,
1. a first and a second end,
 2. a pair of longitudinal edges, and
 3. an inside and an outside surface;

B. a first and a second elastic draw strip means attached to and extending longitudinally outwardly from said first and second ends respectively;

C. slot means, extending between said longitudinal edges, spaced inwardly from said second end, for passage therethrough of said first draw strip means whereby said first and second draw strip means are adapted to be pulled in opposed directions across the abdominal region of the wearer in an overlapping relationship to opposed extended positions;

D. stop means associated with said slot means to provide an abutment for said first end when primary opposed stretch forces are applied to said first and second elastic draw strip means in said extended positions thereby stretching said main body portion until said first end is in contact with said abutment to provide primary pressure forces to the wearer throughout the area of contact, said main body portion being of a normal relaxed length such that said first edge is normally spaced a predetermined distance from said abutment, secondary increased pressure forces being applicable to the abdominal region only, by applying secondary increased stretch forces, in opposed directions to each of said first and second elastic draw strip means after said first end is in contact with said abutment;

E. adjustable attachment means between the distal end portions of each of said elastic draw strip means and said outside surface, in both the right and left lumbar regions, whereby each of said first and second elastic draw strip means may be respectively attached to maintain said secondary, increased pressure forces on the abdominal region.

2. An abdominal belt as set forth in claim 1 including stretch orientation means to hold said longitudinal edges apart.

3. An abdominal belt as set forth in claim 2 wherein said stretch orientation means comprises a plurality of rigid stave means, pocketed between said main body portion and binding strips, extending vertically between said longitudinal edges.

4. An abdominal belt as set forth in claim 3 in which said plurality of rigid stave means includes a first pair of medial, spaced apart pocketed staves to form a rear force distribution panel.

5. An abdominal belt as set forth in claim 3 in which said plurality of rigid stave means includes a second pair of spaced apart pocketed staves, the first of said second pair forming said second end and the second of said second pair being spaced inwardly therefrom to form a front force distribution panel.

6. An abdominal belt as set forth in claim 5 wherein each of said first and second elastic draw strip means comprises at least two spaced apart, generally parallel, outwardly extending draw strips and in which said slot means comprises an elongated slot formed between said second of said second pair of pocketed staves and a rigid pocketed stave positioned inwardly thereof and closely adjacent thereto.

7. An abdominal belt as set forth in claim 6 including a first nonelastic web means spanning both ends of said elongated slot and a second nonelastic web means dividing said elongated slot into slot portions conforming in number to the number of elastic draw strips extending outwardly from said first end.

8. An abdominal belt as set forth in claim 7 in which said first and second nonelastic web means comprise said stop means.

9. An abdominal belt as set forth in claim 1 in which each of said first and second elastic draw strip means comprises at least two spaced apart, generally parallel, outwardly extending draw strips.

10. An abdominal belt as set forth in claim 6 in which said adjustable attachment means comprises a tab of the male portion of "Velcro" attached to the distal end of each of said first and second elastic draw strips and elongated companionate strips of the female portion of "Velcro" attached to said outside surface in each of said lumbar regions.

11. An abdominal belt comprising;

- A. a main body portion formed substantially of fabric material including,
 - I. a first and a second end,

2. a pair of longitudinal edges,

3. an inside and outside surface;

B. a first and a second draw strip means attached to and extending longitudinally outward from said first and second ends respectively;

C. a pair of double-fold portions spaced inwardly from the second end of said main body and having fold edges arranged respectively in confronting contiguity and including,

D. seam means including at least two seam runs snugly connecting corresponding fold edge portions respectively of the pair of double-fold portions at spaced intervals, said seam means and said pair of double-fold portions defining at least a single slot aperture adapted to receive said first draw strip means when the belt is in use encircling a wearer and including,

E. adjustable attachment means arranged respectively between said first and second draw strip means and the outside surface of said belt body.

12. A belt as set forth in claim 11 wherein said first draw strip means includes a plurality of draw strip elements individually spaced and extending longitudinally outward of said first end of said belt body, and wherein said seam means includes first seam run means including two lateral runs binding respectively corresponding roll fold edge extensions respectively of the pair of double-fold portions and including second seam run means arranged between the lateral runs and defining a plurality of slot apertures corresponding in number with the plurality of draw strip elements of said first draw strip means.

13. A belt as set forth in claim 12 wherein said first end of said belt body includes abutment edge portions adapted to abuttingly engage said first and second run means of said seam means in operation of the abdominal belt and operatively defining means for limiting the constricting movement of a belt encircling a wearer.

14. A belt as set forth in claim 13 wherein the run means of said seam means each are of stitched thread seam form.

15. A belt as set forth in claim 11 wherein each portion of said pair of double-fold portions defines pocket means; said belt includes a pair of thin resiliently flexible stave elements snugly received respectively in the pair of double-fold portions and defining respectively stretch orientation foundation means for firming the belt body adjacent said pair of double-fold portions.

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