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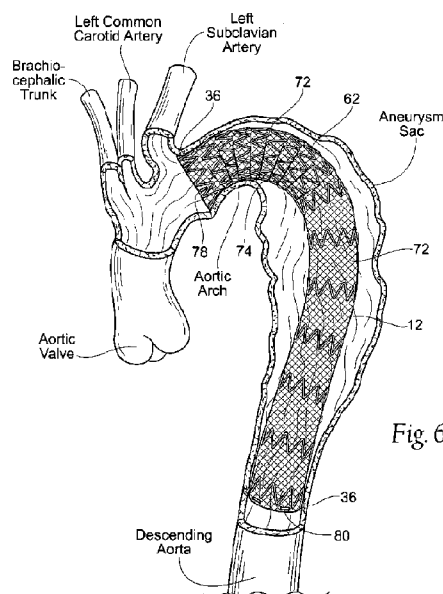


Fig. 6K

(57) Abstract: Devices, systems, and methods for implanting expandable prostheses in the body lumens rely on stapling or anchoring the prostheses with separately introduced fasteners. The prostheses may be self-expanding or balloon expandable, and may include a single lumen or more than one lumen. After initial placement, a stapling system is introduced within the expanded prosthesis to deploy a plurality of fasteners to at least one prosthesis end. The stapling system may apply a force to the prosthesis to modify the shape of the prosthesis to conform to the shape of the vessel wall. The stapling system can be deflected in one or more distinct steerable segments. A lumen extension or lumens may be coupled to the prosthesis to extend the reach of the prosthesis within the implantation site. Fasteners may also be applied to the lumen extensions.

**DEVICES, SYSTEMS, AND METHODS FOR ENDOVASCULAR STAPLE  
AND/OR PROSTHESIS DELIVERY AND IMPLANTATION**

**Related Applications**

This application is a continuation-in-part of co-  
5 pending United States Patent Application Serial No.  
11/488,305, filed July 18, 2006, and entitled  
"Endovascular Aneurysm Devices, Systems, and Methods."

This application is also a continuation-in-part of  
co-pending United States Patent Application Serial No.  
10 11/255,116, filed October 20, 2005, and entitled  
"Devices, Systems, and Methods for Prosthesis Delivery  
and Implantation."

This application is also a continuation-in-part of  
co-pending United States Patent Application No.  
15 11/254,619, filed October 20, 2005, and entitled  
"Devices, Systems, and Methods for Guiding an Operative  
Tool Into an Interior Body Region."

This application is also a continuation-in-part of  
co-pending United States Patent Application No.  
20 11/633,724, filed December 5, 2006, entitled "Prosthesis  
Delivery Systems and Methods," which is a division of  
United States Patent Application Serial No. 10/692,283,  
(18379-PROV FOR) filed October 23, 2003 (now United  
States Patent 7,147,657), and entitled "Prosthesis  
25 Delivery Systems and Methods," which claims the benefit

of United States Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/488,753, filed July 21, 2003, and entitled "Endoprosthesis Delivery Systems and Methods."

5 This application also is a continuation-in-part of co-pending United States Patent Application Serial No. 10/786,465, filed February 25 2004, and entitled "Systems and Methods for Attaching a Prosthesis Within a Body Lumen or Hollow Organ."

10 This application is also a continuation-in-part of co-pending United States Patent Application 11/166,428, filed June 24, 2005, entitled "Multi-Lumen Prosthesis Systems and Methods," which is a division of United States Patent Application Serial No. 10/693,255, filed October 24, 2003 (now United States Patent 6,929,661),  
15 which claims the benefit of United States Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/489,011, filed July 21, 2003, and entitled "Bifurcated Prosthesis Systems and Methods."

20 This application also is a continuation-in-part of co-pending United States Patent Application Serial No. 10/307,226, filed November 29, 2002, and entitled "Intraluminal Prosthesis Attachment Systems and Methods."

25 This application is also a continuation-in-part of co-pending United States Patent Application Serial Number 10/669,881, filed September 24, 2003, entitled "Catheter-Based Fastener Implantation Apparatus and Methods with Implantation Force Resolution."

30 This application is also a continuation-in-part of co-pending United States Patent Application Serial No. 11/166,411, filed June 24, 2005, entitled "Endovascular Aneurysm Repair System," which is a division of United States Patent Application Serial No. 10/271,334, filed October 15, 2002 (now United States Patent No. 6,960,217), which claims the benefit of United States  
35 Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/333,937,

filed November 28, 2001, and entitled "Endovascular Aneurysm Repair System." Each of the preceding applications is incorporated herein by reference.

#### **Field of the Invention**

5       The invention relates generally to devices, systems, and methods for the delivery and implantation of an endovascular staple(s) and/or prosthesis to a targeted site within the body, e.g., for the repair of diseased and/or damaged sections of a hollow body organ and/or  
10   blood vessel.

#### **Background of the Invention**

      The weakening of a vessel wall from damage or disease can lead to vessel dilatation and the formation of an aneurysm. Left untreated, an aneurysm can grow in  
15   size and may eventually rupture.

      For example, aneurysms of the aorta occur in the abdominal region, usually in the infrarenal area between the renal arteries and the aortic bifurcation. Aneurysms can also occur in the tortuous thoracic region between  
20   the aortic arch and renal arteries. The rupture of an aortic aneurysm results in massive hemorrhaging and has a high rate of mortality.

      Damage or disease of a vessel such as the aorta may also result in a dissection of the vessel wall. Aortic  
25   dissections are usually caused by a connective tissue disorder and/or high blood pressure. Left untreated, an aortic dissection can rupture or critically reduce blood flow to the heart, the brain, the spinal cord, the abdominal organs and the legs.

30       Open surgical replacement of a diseased or damaged section of vessel can eliminate the risk of vessel rupture. In this procedure, the diseased or damaged section of vessel is surgically removed and a prosthesis, made generally in either in a straight or bifurcated  
35   configuration, is installed and then permanently attached

and sealed to the ends of the native vessel by suture. The prostheses for these procedures are usually unsupported woven tubes and are typically made from polyester, ePTFE or other suitable materials. The  
5 prostheses are longitudinally unsupported so they can accommodate changes in the morphology of an aneurysm, dissection, and/or the native vessel. However, these procedures require a large surgical incision and have a high rate of morbidity and mortality. In addition, many  
10 patients are unsuitable for this type of major surgery due to other co-morbidities.

Endovascular aneurysm and dissection repair has been introduced to overcome the problems associated with open surgical repair. The diseased or damaged section of the  
15 vessel is bridged with a vascular prosthesis, i.e., graft, which is placed intraluminally. Typically these prostheses for aortic aneurysms and dissections are delivered collapsed on a catheter through the femoral artery. These prostheses are usually designed with a  
20 fabric material attached to a metallic scaffolding (stent) structure, which expands or is expanded to contact the internal diameter of the vessel.

Unlike open surgical repair of diseased or damaged sections of a vessel, such as an aortic aneurysm or an  
25 aortic dissection, intraluminally deployed prostheses are not sutured to the native vessel, but rely on either barbs or hooks extending from the stent, which penetrate into the native vessel during deployment and require a substantial area of healthy tissue to penetrate, and/or  
30 the radial expansion force of the stent itself is utilized to hold the prosthesis in position. These prosthesis attachment means do not provide the same level of attachment when compared to suture and can damage the native vessel upon deployment. In addition, in some areas  
35 the native vessel may include bends or turns, making it

difficult for one or both ends of the deployed prosthesis to expand, appose and seal the prosthesis to the vessel wall.

Accordingly, there is a need for improved prosthesis  
5 delivery and fastening devices, systems, and methods that deliver and fasten a staple(s) and/or a prosthetic graft within or to a body lumen, the prosthesis being able to adapt to changes in the vessel morphology and able to be deployed and fastened safely and without damage to the  
10 native vessel, including a tortuous vessel.

#### **Summary of the Invention**

The devices, systems, and methods for delivering and implanting radially expandable prostheses in the body lumens are described. In particular, the present  
15 invention provides improved devices, systems, and methods for implanting vascular prostheses into blood vessels, including both arterial and venous systems. In the exemplary embodiments, a variety of tools are used to place prostheses in vasculature to repair and/or  
20 reinforce aneurysms and/or dissections, particularly thoracic aortic aneurysms, and aortic dissections.

One aspect of the invention provides devices, systems, and methods including a prosthesis for a blood vessel or hollow body organ comprising a tubular body  
25 having a circumference and including a prosthetic material having an interior and an exterior surface, and a plurality of circumferential stents. The plurality of stents may be coupled to the tubular body along a length of the tubular body, and the plurality of stents may be  
30 coupled to the exterior surface of the tubular body along a length of the tubular body. A circumferential spacing of prosthetic material may be provided free of the plurality of stents, the spacing of prosthetic material located between at least two of the plurality of stents,  
35 and the spacing of prosthetic material sized and

configured to allow one of the at least two of the plurality of stents to at least partially overlap the other of the at least two of the plurality of stents to form a fold of the prosthetic material.

5           The prosthesis may be preconfigurable to expand into a predefined shape after implantation in the blood vessel or hollow body organ. The prosthesis may be expandable between a longitudinally compressed configuration and a longitudinally expanded configuration, and the prosthesis  
10 may include both a longitudinally compressed configuration and a longitudinally expanded configuration. The spacing of prosthetic material may cause the plurality of stents to be in a non-contact relationship.

15           In one embodiment, the fold of the prosthetic material extends completely around the circumference of the tubular body. In an additional embodiment, the fold of the prosthetic material extends only partially around the circumference of the tubular body.

20           Another aspect of the invention provides devices, systems, and methods including providing a tubular body comprising a prosthetic material having an interior and an exterior surface, the tubular body including a plurality of circumferential stents, the plurality of  
25 stents coupled to the tubular body along a length of the tubular body, and a circumferential spacing of prosthetic material free of the plurality of stents, the spacing of prosthetic material located between at least two of the plurality of stents, radially compressing one stent and  
30 the tubular body coupled to the one stent, inserting at least a portion of the one stent and the tubular body coupled to the one stent into an adjacent stent causing the stents to at least partially overlap, and forming a fold in the prosthetic material free of the plurality of  
35 stents, the fold located between the at least partially

overlapping stents.

Yet another aspect of the invention provides devices, systems, and methods including providing a tubular body comprising a prosthetic material having an interior and an exterior surface, the tubular body including a plurality of circumferential stents, the plurality of stents coupled to the tubular body along a length of the tubular body, and a circumferential spacing of prosthetic material free of the plurality of stents, the spacing of prosthetic material located between at least two of the plurality of stents, implanting the tubular body within a vessel, and allowing one of the at least two of the plurality of stents to at least partially overlap the other of the at least two of the plurality of stents to form a fold of the prosthetic material.

Another aspect of the invention provides devices, systems, and methods including a tubular body having a circumference and including a prosthetic material having an interior and an exterior surface, a plurality of circumferential stents, the plurality of stents coupled to the tubular body along a length of the tubular body, a circumferential spacing of prosthetic material free of the plurality of stents, the spacing of prosthetic material located between at least two of the plurality of stents, the spacing of prosthetic material sized and configured to allow one of the at least two of the plurality of stents to at least partially overlap the other of the at least two of the plurality of stents to form a fold of the prosthetic material, and instructions for use describing the use of the tubular body, the instructions comprising the operations of implanting the tubular body within a vessel, and allowing one of the at least two of the plurality of stents to at least partially overlap the other of the at least two of the



plurality of stents to form a fold of the prosthetic material.

#### **Brief Description of the Drawings**

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a healthy aorta showing the extent of the aorta from the aortic root, through the aortic arch, the descending thoracic aorta, and to the abdominal aorta and aortic bifurcation.

Figs. 2A to 2C are perspective views of diseased aortas, showing the extent to which aneurysms may deform the aorta.

Figs. 3A and 3B are perspective views of diseased aortas, showing aortic dissections.

Fig. 4 is a view of the components of a system for repairing an endovascular aneurysm.

Fig. 5 is a view of the components of the system shown in Fig. 4 consolidated for use in a multiple piece kit, along with instructions for their use.

Fig. 6A is a side view of one embodiment of an endovascular graft that forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4, the supported graft including a most proximal stent extending beyond the proximal edge of the graft.

Fig. 6B is a side view of an additional embodiment of an endovascular graft that forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4, the unsupported graft including a distal stent and a most proximal stent not extending beyond the proximal edge of the graft.

Fig. 6C is a side view of an additional embodiment of an endovascular graft shown in Fig. 6B, the unsupported graft including a most proximal stent not extending beyond the proximal edge of the graft, and without a distal stent.

Fig. 6D is a side view of an additional embodiment of an endovascular graft that forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4, the unsupported graft including a proximal portion with a first diameter, and a tapered

portion extending to a distal portion have a second diameter smaller than the first diameter.

Fig. 6E is a side view of an additional embodiment of an endovascular graft shown in Fig. 6D, the unsupported graft including a most proximal stent not extending beyond the proximal edge of the graft, and without a distal stent.

Fig. 6F is a side view of an additional embodiment of an endovascular graft that forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4, the unsupported graft including a curved portion adapted for placement in a tortuous vessel, and including a most proximal stent not extending beyond the proximal edge of the graft, and without a distal stent.

Fig. 6G is a side view of an additional embodiment of an endovascular graft that forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4, the supported graft including a graft opening, the graft adapted to allow positioning of the proximal portion of the graft proximal to a branch artery (e.g., the left subclavian artery where healthy tissue may be present for securing the graft, and maintaining fluid flow communication to the branch artery).

Fig. 6H is a close-up view of the opened or fenestrated portion of the endovascular graft shown in Fig. 6G.

Fig. 6I is a perspective view of an additional embodiment of endovascular graft that forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4, the branched graft includes a small ancillary branch protruding from the side of the graft, the branch 68 adapted to align with a vessel branch.

Fig. 6J is a view of an additional embodiment of endovascular graft that forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4, the graft including areas adapted for preferential bending/folding, allowing the graft to better conform to angled or tortuous anatomy.

Fig. 6K is a view of the graft shown in Fig. 6J, showing the graft implanted in a tortuous vessel.

Fig. 6L is a view of the graft shown in Fig. 6J, showing the ability of the graft to bend/fold in a multi-  
5 curved configuration.

Fig. 6M is a view of the graft shown in Fig. 6J, showing the graft in a compressed configuration, the graft having the ability to be processed to bend/fold at predefined locations.

10 Fig. 7A is an anatomic view of a representative graft assembly implanted within a descending thoracic aortic aneurysm (TAA).

Fig. 7B is an anatomic view of a representative graft assembly implanted within a descending thoracic  
15 aorta, the graft positioned to repair an aortic dissection.

Fig. 8A is a view of the delivery system for the endovascular graft, which forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4.

20 Figs. 8B and 8C are perspective views of the top and bottom of the control handle of the delivery system shown in Fig. 8A.

Fig. 8D is an enlarged perspective view of the distal end of the delivery system shown in Fig. 8A, with  
25 parts broken away to show the attachment of a supported endovascular graft to the delivery system and the release wire and/or wires and jacket controls that are coupled to the handle to affect a controlled stepwise release of the endovascular graft from the delivery system.

30 Fig. 8E is a view of the distal end of the delivery system showing the retracted and advanced positions of the slidable release jacket, with an unsupported graft attached to the delivery system.

Fig. 8F is a view of the distal end of the delivery  
35 system showing the retracted and advanced positions of

the slidable release jacket as shown in Fig. 8E, and showing a supported graft attached to the delivery system.

Fig. 8G is a view of the distal end of the delivery system showing the retracted and advanced positions of the slidable release jacket as shown in Fig. 8E, and showing an alternative delivery system without stabilizing arms.

Fig. 9 is an enlarged view of a hemostatic seal assembly within the handle of the delivery system, showing the passage of the release wires through the seal assembly between the control mechanisms and the distal end of the delivery system (as shown in Fig. 8D).

Fig. 10A is a perspective view of the first steerable endovascular guide, the second steerable endovascular guide, and the obturator, which make up a steerable endovascular guide system (a two segment guide system is shown) that form a part of the system shown in Fig. 4.

Fig. 10B is a perspective view of the guide tube from the first steerable endovascular guide nested within the second steerable endovascular guide, the nested system adapted to guide the staple applier through at least one resolved angle and to apply an apposition force to conform the shape of the endovascular graft to be secured to the vessel wall.

Fig. 10C is an enlarged view of the handle of the first steerable endovascular guide shown in Fig. 10A.

Fig. 10D is a view of an alternative embodiment of a steerable endovascular guide shown in Fig. 10B, showing the steerable endovascular guide as a single guide device incorporating the features of the first steerable guide and the second steerable guide.

Fig. 10E is a view of an additional alternative embodiment of a steerable endovascular guide, showing the

steerable endovascular guide as a single handle guide device with a single steerable guide tube adapted for steering in multiple directions.

Fig. 11A is a view of an endovascular fastener or staple that forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4.

Fig. 11B is a view of a cassette to hold a plurality of endovascular fasteners, as shown in Fig. 11A, and to present the fasteners for loading in the staple applier, which also forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4.

Fig. 12A is a view of a fastener applier for implanting a fastener as shown in Fig. 11A, which forms a part of the system shown in Fig. 4.

Fig. 12B is an enlarged view of the handle of the fastener applier shown in Fig. 12A, and showing the controls available to the user.

Fig. 12C is a view showing the manipulation of the fastener applier shown in Fig. 12A in loading a fastener from the cassette shown in Fig. 11B.

Fig. 13A is an anatomic view showing the driven member at the distal end of the fastener applier (and positioned within the catheter of the two segment steerable guide system) prior to being driven to implant a fastener in a graft and adjacent tissue, to secure the position of the graft, and showing the two segment steerable guide system adapted to guide the fastener applier through at least one angle to reach tortuous locations for fastener implant.

Figs. 13B and 13C are anatomic views as shown in Fig. 13A, showing the fastener applier positioned within the two segment steerable guide system, the steerable guide system being used to apply an apposition force to the endovascular graft to deflect a portion of the graft against the vessel wall where the graft may not naturally lay flat, modifying the shape of the endovascular graft to conform to the vessel wall, and then implanting a

fastener in the graft and adjacent tissue, to secure the position of the graft.

Fig. 14A is a view showing a fastener applier of a type shown in Fig. 12A, which includes indicia visible to a naked eye.

Fig. 14B is a view showing the fastener applier shown in Fig. 14A nested within the two segment steerable endovascular guide system of a type shown in Fig. 10B, showing how the indicia, which is visible to a naked eye, marks when the driven member rests at a desired distance within the steerable guide system just short of the terminus of the guide tube of the first steerable guide and therefore out of contact with tissue.

Fig. 14C is a close-up view showing the distal end of the two segment steerable guide system when the indicia visible at the proximal portion of the applier catheter marks when the actuated member rests at a desired distance within the first guide tube short of the terminus of the first guide tube and therefore out of contact with tissue.

Fig. 15A is a schematic view of the motor control functions of a representative control circuit for the fastener applier shown in Fig. 12A.

Fig. 15B is a schematic flow diagram of the operational states of the control circuit shown in Fig. 15A.

Figs. 16A to 16K are anatomic views of manipulation of the components of the system shown in Fig. 4 in placing a prosthesis in a descending thoracic aortic aneurysm, which manipulations can be incorporated within an instruction for use associated with a kit like that shown in Fig. 5.

Figs. 17A to 17C are anatomic views of manipulation of components of the system shown in Fig. 4 in repairing an aortic dissection in the descending thoracic aorta

using staples and without a graft, which manipulations can be incorporated within an instruction for use associated with a kit of components like that shown in Fig. 5.

- 5 Figs 18A and 18B are anatomic views showing an alternative graft assembly comprising three graft assemblies nested together to extend the length of the implanted graft.

#### **Description of the Preferred Embodiment**

- 10 Although the disclosure hereof is detailed and exact to enable those skilled in the art to practice the invention, the physical embodiments herein disclosed merely exemplify the invention which may be embodied in other specific structures. While the preferred  
15 embodiment has been described, the details may be changed without departing from the invention, which is defined by the claims.

- This specification discloses various catheter-based devices, systems, and methods for delivering and  
20 implanting staples and prostheses, including radially expandable prostheses in the body lumens. For example, the various aspects of the invention have application in procedures requiring the repair of diseased and/or damaged sections of a hollow body organ and/or blood  
25 vessel. The devices, systems, and methods that embody features of the invention are also adaptable for use with systems and surgical techniques that are not necessarily catheter-based.

- The devices, systems, and methods are particularly  
30 well suited for treating aortic dissections and aneurysms of the aorta, including those that occur in the thoracic region between the aortic arch and renal arteries, as well as aneurysms that also occur in the abdominal region, usually in the infrarenal area between the renal  
35 arteries and the aortic bifurcation. For this reason, the

devices, systems, and methods will be described in this context. Still, it should be appreciated that the disclosed devices, systems, and methods are applicable for use in treating other dysfunctions elsewhere in the body, which are not necessarily aorta-related.

When referring to a prosthesis, i.e., an endovascular graft or its components that are intended to be implanted in a vessel or body organ, the terms "proximal" and "distal" will be used to describe the relation or orientation of the graft with respect to the heart after implantation. Therefore, the term "proximal" will be used to describe a relation or orientation of the graft that, when implanted, is toward the heart, and the term "distal" will be used to describe a position or orientation of the graft that, when implanted, is away from the heart, i.e., toward the feet.

When referring to implantation apparatus or devices that are manipulated by a physician or operator in order to implant the endovascular graft or its components, the terms "proximal" and "distal" will be used to describe the relation or orientation of the apparatus or device with respect to the operator as it is used. Therefore, the term "proximal" will be used to describe a relation or orientation of the apparatus or device that, when in use, is positioned toward the operator (i.e., at the handle end of the device), and the term "distal" will be used to describe a position or orientation of the apparatus or device that, when in use, is positioned away from the operator (i.e., at the other end of a catheter or the like away from the handle).

#### **I. Aortic Abnormalities**

A healthy aorta, the body's largest artery, has a general shape like the handle portion of a walking cane (see Fig. 1). The short length of the curved handle comes out of the heart and curls through the aortic arch.



Multiple smaller arteries branch off at the aortic arch to serve the head and arms. The aorta continues to descend through the chest cavity into the abdomen and separates to provide blood to the abdominal organs and both legs. Various abnormalities may affect the aorta, most of which are considered potentially life-threatening. Prevalent aortic abnormalities include aortic aneurysms and aortic dissections, as non-limiting examples.

10       Aneurysms may affect one or more segments of the thoracic aorta, including the ascending aorta, the arch, and the descending thoracic aorta. A thoracic aortic aneurysm (TAA) can be described as an expanded (bulging) section(s) of the wall of the aorta, and is considered a life-threatening condition. Thoracic aortic aneurysms of any size can cause significant short- and long-term mortality due to rupture and dissection. Figs. 2A, 2B, and 2C show examples of aortas having diseased tissues and difficult cases where the left subclavian artery ostium is distal to the aortic arch. Relative positions of the aneurysmal tissues in the tortuous aortic arch can be seen, as can and relationship to the brachiocephalic trunk, left common carotid artery, and the left subclavian artery. Often the left subclavian artery provides a landmark for positioning of an endovascular graft (to be described in greater detail below).

Common causes of a thoracic aortic aneurysm include hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis), degeneration of the media of the aortic wall, as well as from local hemodynamic forces. Additional risk factors include various connective tissue disorders such as Marfan syndrome, previous dissection of the aorta, and trauma such as falls or motor vehicle accidents. They also sometimes occur in people who have bicuspid aortic valves.

An aortic dissection is a perforation or tear in the lining of the aorta. The tear allows blood to flow between the layers of the aortic wall, with the force of the blood forcing the layers of the wall apart. Figs. 3A and 3B show views of aortic dissections. An aortic dissection is a medical emergency and can quickly lead to death. If the dissection tears the aortic wall completely open, massive and rapid blood loss occurs.

The tearing of the inner lining of the aorta causes the blood to separate along the wall of the artery. This generally causes two channels in the vessel, with one channel referred to as the true channel and the other channel referred to as the false channel. As can be seen in Figs. 3A and 3B, the tear allows the blood to create the false channel. With each heartbeat, the artery may progressively tear more and more with blood propagating down the false channel blocking off the true channel and the flow of blood to some or all of the branches of the aorta.

Aortic dissections can be classified by the Stanford method into a type A or type B depending on the location and the extent of the dissection. Type A dissection, or proximal dissection, involves the ascending aorta and aortic arch, and may or may not involve the descending aorta. Type B dissection, or distal dissection, usually begins just distal to the ostium of the left subclavian artery, extending distally into the descending and abdominal aorta. If left untreated, the risk of death from aortic dissection can reach 30 percent within fifteen minutes after onset of symptoms and 75 percent by one week.

## II. SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Aortic abnormalities, such as thoracic aortic aneurysms and aortic dissections with the appropriate anatomy, may now be repaired by the implantation of an

endovascular prosthesis or graft. The implantation of staples alone may also be used for the repair of aortic dissections. Fig. 4 shows an exemplary system 10 for repairing an aortic abnormality. By way of example, the system 10 and/or components of the system are well suited for the repair of a descending thoracic aortic aneurysm and/or an aortic dissection, and will be described in this context. The system 10 comprises three primary components 12, 14, and 16.

10       The first component comprises an endovascular prosthesis or graft assembly 12. In use, the endovascular graft 12 is placed within a vessel at the site of the aortic abnormality. The endovascular graft 12 serves to exclude a portion of the vascular system from blood flow and blood pressure. In order to obtain exclusion of a portion of the vascular system, the endovascular graft must be sealed against the vascular wall, which requires apposition between the endovascular graft 12 and the vascular wall. The endovascular graft 12 must also be prevented from moving or migrating from its deployed position within the vascular system.

      In the illustrated embodiments, the endovascular graft 12 is placed and secured within the aortic arch, e.g., at or near the left subclavian artery and extends past the site of the aneurysm and into the descending aorta (see Fig. 7A). Fig. 7B shows the endovascular graft 12 placed and secured within the descending aorta and extending past the site of a dissection. Additional embodiments of a graft assembly 12 are shown in Figs. 6B through 6M.

      The second component 14 comprises an endovascular delivery system for introducing and deploying the endovascular graft 12 using an endovascular approach. In the illustrated embodiment, in which the endovascular graft 12 comprises a single lumen body, a single

endograft delivery component 24 may be provided. In alternative embodiments incorporating modular endovascular graft components, there may be individual corresponding endograft delivery components provided.

5       The third component 16 comprises an endovascular stapling system. In one embodiment, the endovascular stapling system 16 may be used to attach one or more regions of the endovascular graft 12 to the vessel wall with one or more endovascular staples. The endovascular  
10       stapling system 16 may also be used for implanting one or more endovascular staples without including an endovascular graft 12, the endovascular staples serving to close the entrance of the dissection to blood flow.

          In one embodiment, the endovascular stapling system  
15       16 comprises a steerable endovascular guide system 30 comprising a first steerable guide 30A and a second steerable guide 30B, an obturator 32, a cassette 34 holding a plurality of endovascular staples 36, and an endovascular fastening device, i.e., a staple applier 38.  
20       In an alternative embodiment, the two steerable guide catheters 30A and 30B may be combined into one operational handle with two steerable guide catheters. The steerable endovascular guide system 30 is sized and configured to provide at least one angle, rotational  
25       positioning, and relative positioning (axially) between the two guide catheters and preferably two or more angles with rotational positioning and relative positioning between the two guide catheters.

          In use, the steerable endovascular guide system 30  
30       establishes an endovascular path to the targeted site where the endovascular graft 12 has been positioned, and may be partially or fully deployed. The steerable endovascular guide system 30 is adapted to be manipulated by flexure and rotation in at least one direction or  
35       angle to provide the staple applier 38 access to

successive sites, including difficult to reach sites due to tortuous anatomy of the vessel. The endovascular staple applicator 38, carrying one or more endovascular staples 36, is guided by the two segment (30A and 30B) steerable endovascular guide system 30 to the successive sites. Once positioned, individual endovascular staples 36 are implanted, to penetrate the endovascular graft 12 (if used) and adjacent vessel wall. The endovascular staple applicator 38 is actuated to implant individual endovascular staples 36 into selected region or regions of the endovascular graft 12 and adjacent vessel wall, to attach the endovascular graft 12 to the vessel wall.

The stapling system is adapted to apply an apposition force, i.e., resolution of force, to the endovascular graft 12 to modify the shape or form of the endovascular graft to conform to the shape of the vessel wall. This resolution of force can be utilized to deflect a portion or portions of the endovascular graft against the vessel wall to implant an endovascular staple, i.e., a fastener. After the conformance is obtained, a fastener or fasteners are implanted through the endovascular graft 12 and into the vessel wall. The fastener(s) maintain the shape of the modified configuration of the endovascular graft. This modified shape enables the endovascular graft 12 to obtain apposition between the graft 12 and the tortuous wall(s) of the vessel, and to exclude a portion of the vascular system.

### III. SYSTEM KIT

As Fig. 5 shows, the various tools and devices as just described, comprising the system 10, can be consolidated for use in a multiple piece functional kit 40. It is to be appreciated that the various tools and devices are not necessarily shown to scale.

The kit 40 can take various forms. In the illustrated embodiment, the kit 40 comprises an

assemblage of individual packages 42, 48, 50, 52, 54, and 56, each comprising a sterile, packaged assembly. One or more of the packages may include an interior tray or card made, e.g., from die cut cardboard, plastic sheet, or thermo-formed plastic material, which hold the contents. The kit 40 also preferably includes instructions or directions 58 for using the contents of the packages to carry out a desired procedure. A desired procedure using the contents of the kit 40 shown in Fig. 5 will be described in greater detail later.

The instructions for use 58 can, of course vary. The instructions for use 58 can be physically present in one or more of the packages, but can also be supplied separately. The instructions for use 58 can be embodied in separate instruction manuals, or in video or audio recordings. The instructions for use 58 can also be available through an internet web page.

#### **A. The Component Packages**

The arrangement and contents of the packages can vary. For example, as shown in Fig. 5, the kit 40 comprises six packages 42, 48, 50, 52, 54, and 56, and instructions 58. Three of these packages 42, 48, and 50 provide the main components of the endovascular repair system 10 as described. The remaining packages 52, 54, and 56 provide ancillary components used in the deployment of the system 10, e.g., conventional vascular access sheaths (in package 52); conventional 0.035 inch guide wires (in package 54); and bags containing heparinized saline for catheter flushing and contrast for angiography (in package 56).

In package 42, the endovascular graft 12 is preloaded into the endograft delivery component 24. Housed within the package 42, the endovascular graft 12 and the corresponding delivery component 24 for the endovascular graft are supplied sterile to the user.

As further shown in Fig. 5, the kit 40 comprises an additional package 50 that provides the two segment (30A and 30B) steerable endovascular guide system 30 and at least one associated component; namely, the obturator 32.

5 As previously described, the steerable endovascular guide system 30 may also comprise a single device having the combined features of the two separate catheters. The kit 40 also comprises an additional package 48 that provides the endovascular staple applier 38 and at least one

10 associated component; namely, a cassette 34 holding a plurality of endovascular staples 36. Housed within the packages 48 and 50, the two segment steerable endovascular guide system 30 and the endovascular staple applier 38 and their associated components are supplied

15 sterile to the user.

#### **IV. SYSTEM COMPONENTS**

##### **A. The Endovascular Graft**

In representative embodiments (see Figs. 6A through 6M), the endovascular graft 12 is a single lumen endograft generally comprising two primary components: a

20 graft 60 made of a biocompatible material, e.g., polyester, ePTFE, etc.; and optionally a most proximal stent or scaffold 70 made of a biocompatible metal or plastic material, e.g., stainless steel, nickel-titanium

25 (Nitinol), etc. One or more stents or scaffolds 62 may also be included in the graft mid-body for additional support (supported graft). Supported grafts (with one or more stents 62) and unsupported grafts are possible. In addition, a distal stent 63 may or may not be included.

30 In a representative embodiment, the preferred length of the endovascular graft 12 is between 5 cm and 30 cm and most preferably between 10 cm and 25 cm. Although, it is to be appreciated that other lengths, such as 15 and 20 cm for example, are possible to accommodate different

35 anatomic conditions and vessel abnormalities. Desirably,

a range of dimensions for the diameter of the graft 12 are provided to accommodate different anatomic dimensions of patients.

The endovascular graft 12 may include a most proximal stent 70, e.g., with diamond or "V" shaped cells, which may be sewn to the inside or outside of the proximal portion 65 of the graft e.g., with braided or monofilament suture. The most proximal stent 70 is sized and configured to accommodate secure apposition to the vessel wall, for example, at the level of the aortic arch just below, or just beyond the left subclavian artery. At this tortuous location, the graft 12 and/or stent 70 may resolve to a more elliptical or oval shape, due to the curvature of the proximal portion of the endovascular graft within the aortic arch, which may bend or curve 90 degrees or more. The stapling system 16 is adapted to apply an apposition force to deflect a portion or portions of the proximal portion 65, or other portions of, the graft 12 and/or the stent 70 against the vessel wall where the graft 12 does not naturally appose the vessel wall due to the curvature of the vessel wall, to conform the shape of the endovascular graft 12 to the vessel wall at the desired location to be secured. The ability to deflect a portion or portions of the endovascular graft is desirable because it allows the shape of the graft 12, or portions thereof, to be customized to the patient's anatomy.

In the embodiment shown in Fig. 6A, the stent 70 extends beyond the fabric, with the extension ranging from about 0.0 mm to about 15 mm, although a wider range is possible. A supporting stent 62 is shown in the graft 12. In an alternative embodiment shown in Fig. 6B, the stent 70 does not extend beyond the fabric. The grafts in Figs. 6B and 6C are shown as an unsupported graft with a distal stent 63 and without a distal stent 63,



respectively.

Additional embodiments of the graft 12 are possible to address a variety of anatomical configurations. Fig. 6D shows an unsupported tapered graft 12 wherein the proximal portion 65 includes a first diameter D1, and the distal portion 66 includes a second diameter D2. The first diameter may be greater than the second diameter in one embodiment and less than the second diameter in an alternative embodiment. The grafts in Figs. 6D and 6E are shown as an unsupported graft with a distal stent 63 and without a distal stent 63, respectively.

Fig. 6F shows one embodiment of a curved graft 12 configuration. The curved graft may be used to aid in conformance with placement in the aortic arch or other tortuous locations. As a non-limiting example, the curved graft 12 is shown without the use of the distal stent. The curved graft may be initially woven in a straight configuration, and then processed (i.e., heat set on a curved mandrel) to take the predetermined curved shape.

Fig. 6G shows an additional alternative embodiment of the graft 12. The graft 12 includes an opening 67 in the proximal portion 65 which could accommodate fluid communication with a branch artery such as the left subclavian artery, for example, and allow the graft 12 to land further proximally in the thoracic aorta, where healthy tissue may be more readily available to secure the graft 12.

Fig. 6I shows another alternative embodiment of the graft 12. The branched graft 12 includes a small ancillary branch 68 protruding from the side of the graft, the branch 68 adapted to align with a vessel branch, such as the subclavian artery.

Figs. 6J to 6M show yet another alternative embodiment of a graft 12. The tubular graft 12 includes areas 72 for preferential bending/folding. These

preferential bending/folding areas 72 allow the graft 12 to better conform to angled or tortuous anatomy. In addition, the preferential bending/folding areas 72 bias the folds 74 in a direction that is most advantageous for blood flow (i.e., the folds go in the direction of blood flow). The preferential bending/folding areas 72 may also eliminate or reduce the contact between individual stents 62 (i.e., metal scaffolding components) when the graft is placed in angled or tortuous anatomy.

As can be seen in Fig. 6J, the graft 12 includes sufficient unstented graft areas 72 in-between the stents 62 in order to allow the bending/folding to occur. The width of the unstented graft area 72 may vary depending on the application and/or the location of implantation (see Fig. 6K for example). Figs. 6K and 6L show the graft 12 in various curved configurations. As can be seen, the graft 12 is adapted to bend/fold (i.e., compress) at or near the inner radius of the curve, while the unstented graft area 72 at or near the outer radius of the curve is allowed to expand as needed.

The graft 12 may be preconfigured so the graft bends/folds at the unstented graft areas 72 as desired. A compressive force may be applied to successive stents 62 while radially pinching or squeezing the leading edge of one stent 62, to cause it and the unstented graft material 72 between the two stents to fold within the other stent 62. Using this method, the graft 12 may be partially or completely compressed as shown in Fig. 6M. Time and/or temperature may then be used to process the graft 12 to bend/fold in a predetermined manner. The bends/folds in the graft 12 may be made permanent with time and/or temperature configurations. Generally, the lower the temperature the longer the time it takes to achieve a desired configuration. In a preferred embodiment, a temperature between about 10 degrees

Celsius to about 250 degrees Celsius may be used, and more preferably between about 30 degrees Celsius to about 150 degrees Celsius. The graft may be processed to varying levels of conformity using a range of times from about 1 second to several days.

The graft 12 may include stents 62, shown with diamond or "V" shaped cells, which may be sewn to the inside or outside of the graft, e.g., with braided or monofilament suture.

Predetermined arrays of radiopaque markers made from biocompatible materials with high radiopacity (e.g., tantalum, platinum or gold) are desirably attached to the endovascular graft 12 to assist with visualization under fluoroscopy. The markers, like the stents, may be sewn to the graft, e.g., with braided or monofilament suture or can be attached to the stent. The arrays can vary. In the illustrated embodiments, there are four (4) proximal stent marker bands 78 and four (4) distal stent marker bands 80, although other combinations and positions are possible to aid in the placement of the graft.

Further details of representative constructions of the endovascular graft 12 can be found in co-pending, commonly owned United States Patent Application Serial No. 11/254,444, filed October 20, 2005, and entitled "Devices, Systems, and Methods for Prosthesis Delivery and Implantation, Including a Prosthesis Assembly," which is incorporated herein by reference.

## **B. Endovascular Graft Implantation Components**

### **1. The Endovascular Graft Delivery System**

#### **a. General Overview**

The endovascular graft assembly 12 is preloaded into the delivery system 24 (see Fig. 8A), which is a single use component that is supplied to the user within its package 42 in a sterile condition (see Fig. 5). The delivery system 24 is sized and configured to facilitate

accurate placement of the endovascular graft 12 and to allow the physician to maintain control of the endovascular graft 12 while the endovascular staples 36 are applied.

5        In the illustrated embodiment, the delivery system 24 comprises a delivery catheter 96 and a control handle 98 coupled to the proximal end of the delivery catheter 96. The delivery catheter 96 (see Fig. 8D) comprises a flexible inner assembly 100 and an outer graft retention  
10 jacket 102. The inner assembly 100 carries at its distal-most end a flexible radiopaque tracking nosecone 104.

When preloaded (see Fig. 8D), the endovascular graft 12 (a supported graft 12 is shown) may be attached to the inner assembly 100 in discrete locations. In this non-  
15 limiting example, the graft is attached in three locations, just proximal of the nosecone 104 (i.e., toward the handle 98), the proximal portion 65 of the graft may be secured by a releasable suture S1 to the inner assembly 100. Also just proximal of the nosecone  
20 104, the inner assembly 100 may include a set of stabilizing arms 106 (or a releasable suture). In the illustrated embodiment, there are three stabilizing arms 106. The proximal portion 65 of the preloaded endovascular graft 12 may be attached to the three  
25 stabilizing arms by three releasable pull wires S2, each threaded through eyelets in a respective one of the distal ends of the stabilizing arms 106 and through adjacent graft material. The distal end 66 of the preloaded endovascular graft 12 may also be attached to  
30 the inner assembly 100 by a releasable suture S3. These sutures S1, S2, and S3 and release wires 108, 110, and 112 (or other release means) secure the endovascular graft 12 to the inner assembly 100 for deployment to the targeted implantation site.

35        In an alternative embodiment, the graft 12 can be

attached to the inner assembly 100 in multiple discrete locations without using the proximal stabilizing arms. It is also to be appreciated that the stabilizing arms are not limited to attaching only the proximal portion 65 to the inner assembly 100. Stabilizing arms may be used to attach any portion of the graft 12 to the inner assembly, including the most proximal stent 70, a distal stent 63, the proximal portion 65, the distal portion 66, or any other portion of the graft 12.

10       The separate release wires 108, 110, and 112 extend from the handle 98 along the inner assembly 100 (see Fig. 9). The separate release wires 108 and 112 are independently coupled to the respective suture S1 holding the most proximal stent 70 (release wire 108), and the  
15       suture S3 at the distal portion 66 of the endovascular graft 12 (release wire 112). The release wires 110 are continuations of the release wires S2 threaded through the stabilizing arms 106 (as previously described), so that, in the illustrated embodiment, there are actually  
20       three release wires 110, one for each arm 106. Controls 114, 116, and 118 on the handle 98 are coupled to the separate release wires 108, 110 (commonly coupled to the three wires), and 112, as will be described in greater detail later, to independently release the sutures or  
25       release wires at one location, without necessarily releasing the sutures or release wires at another location. The separate and independently controllable release wires 108, 110, and 112 make possible the release of the endovascular graft 12 in a prescribed order, to  
30       deploy the endovascular graft 12 in a desired sequence during the graft deployment process, as will be described in greater detail later.

      The graft retention jacket 102 is sized and configured to slide over and along the inner assembly 100  
35       from an advanced position over the preloaded endovascular

graft 12 (shown in phantom lines in Fig. 8E) to a retracted position spaced away from the preloaded endovascular graft 12 (shown in solid lines in Fig. 8E). Fig. 8E shows an embodiment of an unsupported graft, and  
5 Fig. 8F shows an embodiment of a supported graft. One or more radiopaque marker(s) 120 is positioned at or near the leading edge of the graft retention jacket 102 to assist in visualization under fluoroscopy.

As can be seen in Figs. 8B and 8C, a jacket control  
10 mechanism 122 coupled to controls 124 and 126 on the handle 98 affects retraction of the graft retention jacket 102 in a stepwise fashion -- using first control 124 and then control 126, as will be described later -- as well as the re-advancement of the retention jacket 102  
15 using the single control 126 after the graft 12 has been fully deployed and it is time to withdraw the delivery system.

When in its advanced position, the graft retention jacket 102 protects the preloaded endovascular graft 12  
20 as it is advanced through the patient's vasculature. When in its retracted position, the graft retention jacket 102 frees the preloaded endovascular graft 12 for deployment by operation of the controls 124 and 126 on the handle 98 during the graft deployment process.

25 The actuating means on the control handle 98 (see Figs. 8B and 8C) may include a jacket retraction knob 124 and a jacket retraction slide 126, which are coupled to the jacket control mechanism 122 just described. The jacket retraction knob 124 is actuated by rotation and is  
30 coupled to gear components of the jacket control mechanism 122 within the handle 98. The gear components apply a mechanical advantage in response to rotation of the knob 124 sufficient to overcome the resistance of the graft retention jacket 102 to axial movement beyond the  
35 proximal portion of the graft and optionally the mid-body

stent(s) 62, when included, of the endovascular graft 12. Once passed the proximal portion of the graft, the gear components of the jacket control mechanism 122 may be automatically released from the jacket retraction knob 124 (the knob 124 will accordingly spin freely), and subsequent control passes to the jacket retention slide 126. Pulling on the jacket retention slide 126 (which may not provide a mechanical advantage) suffices to complete the retraction of the jacket 102. This control sequence provides the physician with tactile feedback during the retraction of the jacket 102. After retracted in this manner, the jacket 102 can be advanced back toward the nosecone 104 using the jacket slide 126 when it is time to withdraw the delivery system after release of the graft 12.

In an alternative embodiment of the jacket control mechanism 122 within the handle 98, the delivery system 24 may have the ability to produce a mechanical advantage for the full length of the retraction of the graft retention jacket 102. The mechanical advantage produced may be disengaged by the physician at any point during the retraction of the jacket 102, and the mechanical advantage may be reengaged if desired, at any point during the retraction of the jacket 102. The mechanical advantage may be produced using the gear system as described, or may be produced by other means such as a reel and cable system, or an exterior threaded rod with an internal threaded component for example.

As previously described, the actuating components on the control handle may include the proximal release slide 114, the graft release slide 116, and the distal release slide 118. The proximal release slide 114 is coupled to the release wire 110 for the proximal portion 65 of the graft. The graft release slide 116 is coupled to the three separate release wires 110 for the stabilizing arms

106. The distal end release slide 118 is coupled to the separate release wire 112 for the distal portion 66 of the endovascular graft 12.

Once the graft retention jacket 102 is retracted (as just described), pulling on the proximal release slide 114 opens the proximal portion 65 of the graft. Pulling on the distal end release slide 118 opens the distal portion 66 of the endovascular graft 12. Despite opening the proximal portion 65 and the distal portion 66, the proximal portion 65 of the endovascular graft 12 remains attached to the inner assembly 100 of the endovascular graft delivery system. The physician maintains control of the endovascular graft 12 for further final positioning and for the application of the staples 36, as will be described in greater detail later.

Once positioned in a desired location and/or after insertion or implantation of staples to secure the endovascular graft 12 to the vessel wall, pulling on the graft release slide 116 releases the endovascular graft 12 from the stabilizing arms 106 and the delivery catheter 96.

An alternative embodiment of the delivery catheter 96 is shown in Fig. 8G without stabilizing arms. In this embodiment, the endovascular graft 12 (an unsupported graft 12 is shown) may be attached to the inner assembly 100 at discrete locations. In this non-limiting example the graft is attached in two locations, just proximal of the nosecone 104, (i.e., toward the handle 98), with the proximal portion 65 of the endovascular graft 12 being secured by a releasable suture S1 to the inner assembly 100, and the distal end of the preloaded endovascular graft 12 may also be attached to the inner assembly 100 by a releasable suture S3. These sutures S1 and S3 secure the endovascular graft 12 to the inner assembly 100 for deployment to the targeted implantation site, as



previously described. It is to be appreciated, as previously described, that the graft 12 can be attached to the inner assembly 100 in multiple discrete locations, and without using the proximal stabilizing arms, to  
5 maintain control of the graft 12. The use of release wires, for example, as described above may be used to attach the graft 12 to the inner assembly 100 to maintain control of the graft 12 while implantation of staples takes place.

10 If desired, and as shown in phantom lines in Fig. 8A, a stationary outer jacket 220 may be provided that extends for a distance from the proximal end of the handle 98 over the delivery catheter 96 (the jacket 102), which slides within the stationary outer jacket 220. The  
15 stationary jacket 220 provides a seal interface with a hemostatic valve of the introducer sheath at the access site. The stationary jacket 220 can be made of a suitable medical grade plastic, such as Fluorinated Ethylene Propylene (FEP) as a non-limiting example. The stationary  
20 outer jacket 220 provides column strength and lubricity to reduce friction during sliding actuation of the jacket 102.

In a representative embodiment, the handle 98 (e.g., near the sliding controls 114, 116, and 118 just  
25 described) includes a hemostatic seal assembly 128. As Fig. 9 shows, a flush passage 130 (for conveying heparinized saline to flush the delivery catheter 96 prior to deployment) communicates with the space between the inner assembly 100 and jacket 102 through the  
30 hemostatic seal assembly 128. As Fig. 9 also shows, the individual release wires 108, 110, and 112 for the proximal portion release slide 114, the graft release slide 116 (one release wire 110 for each stabilizing arm 106), and the distal end release slide 118, as previously  
35 described, also pass from the slide controls 114, 116,

and 118 within the handle in a sealed fashion through the hemostatic seal assembly 128 for passage along the inner assembly 100 to the distal end of the delivery catheter 96, where they connect to their respective components, as previously described. The hemostatic seal assembly 128 allows flushing to occur and prevents blood, which can enter the space between the outer jacket 102 and the inner assembly 100 catheter tube during use, from entering the interior of the handle 98.

10       The delivery catheter 96 is desirably sized to present a minimum diameter according to the diameter of the endovascular graft 12 it carries. The delivery catheter 96 is desirably sized and configured with a lumen accommodating conventional over-the-wire delivery  
15       within a patient's vasculature, e.g., using a conventional 0.035 or 0.038 inch guide wire. In a representative embodiment, the overall length of the delivery catheter 96 (not including the handle 98) is preferably between 40 and 120 cm and most preferably  
20       between 60 and 110 cm.

Further details of representative constructions of a delivery system 24 can be found in co-pending, commonly owned United States Patent Application Serial No. 11/255,116, filed October 20, 2005, and entitled  
25       "Devices, Systems, and Methods for Prosthesis Delivery and Implantation," which is incorporated herein by reference.

## **2. Endovascular Stapling System**

The endovascular stapling system 16 comprises a  
30       steerable endovascular guide system 30 comprising a first steerable guide 30A and a second steerable guide 30B, and a companion obturator 32 (see Figs. 10A and 10B). The endovascular stapling system 16 also comprises a plurality of endovascular staples 36 (Fig. 11A) and,  
35       desirably, a cassette 34 for holding the staples 36 (see

Fig. 11B), as well as an endovascular staple applier 38 (see Figs. 12A and 12B). It is to be appreciated that the steerable endovascular guide system 30 may comprise a single guide device incorporating the features of the first steerable guide 30A and the second steerable guide 30B (see Fig. 10D).

The stapling system 16 may be used to apply an apposition force to the endovascular graft 12 to modify the shape of the endovascular graft to conform to the shape of the vessel wall. The endovascular stapling system 16 is also adapted to provide apposition force for improved sealing and fixation to eliminate movement and/or migration of the endovascular graft 12 within the vascular system. The endovascular stapling system 30 and endovascular staples 36 may also be used without the use of a graft 12 to close the entrance of a vessel dissection to blood flow.

**a. Steerable Endovascular Guide and Companion Obturator**

Referring to Figs. 10A through 10D, the steerable endovascular guide system 30 is a single use system that is supplied with a companion obturator 32 to the user within its package 50 in a sterile condition. The steerable endovascular guide system 30 is sized and configured to direct the endovascular staple applier 38 through at least one or more resolved angles to the desired location in a vessel for implantation of one or more endovascular staples 36, i.e., through one or more steerable segments 167A and 167B. In one embodiment shown in Figs. 10A and 10B, steerable segment 167A is a component of the first steerable guide 30A, and steerable segment 167B is a component of the second steerable guide 30B.

In an additional embodiment shown in Fig. 10D, steerable segment 167A and steerable segment 167B are

both components of an integrated endovascular guide system 30.

The first (inner) steerable endovascular guide 30A includes a guide tube 164A, and a handle 166A coupled to the proximal end of the guide tube 164A. The guide tube 164A defines an open interior lumen 168A accommodating passage of the endovascular staple applier 38 (during use).

The second (outer) steerable endovascular guide 30B is similar to the first steerable guide 30A, except the second steerable guide tube 164B has a shorter overall length, as will be described below. The second steerable guide 30B includes a guide tube 164B, and a handle 166B coupled to the proximal end of the guide tube 164B. The guide tube 164B defines an open interior lumen 168B accommodating passage of the obturator 32 (during deployment) and the guide tube 164A of the first steerable endovascular guide segment 30A (during use).

The distal portion of the two segment steerable endovascular guide system 30 can be deflected in one or more distinct segments comprising the first steerable segment 167A and the second steerable segment 167B (as shown in phantom lines in Figs. 10A and 10B), and re-straightened by deflection means, such as steering wires or pull cords (not shown) coupled to a first rotational deflector knob 170A on the handle 166A of the first steerable guide 30A for control of the first segment 167A, and a second deflector knob 170B on the handle 166B of the second steerable guide 30B for control of the second segment 167B. Each deflector knob 170A, 170B is adapted to move its respective steerable segment 167A, 167B, from a first, generally straight position for deployment to the general targeted region, to a second, articulated position for alignment of the distal end of the guide tube 164A, and the staple applier 38, to be in

contact with the vessel wall for staple deployment.

In the two component configuration, the guide tube 164A of the first steerable endovascular guide 30A is inserted (i.e., nested) into the lumen 168B of the guide tube 164B of the second steerable guide 30B until the distal end of the handle 166A is positioned near or against the proximal end of the handle 166B. The length of the second guide tube 164B is less than the length of the first guide tube 164A (see Fig. 10B). This allows the distal end segment 167A to be independently articulated (via the rotational deflector knob 170A) as it may not be confined within the second guide tube 164B. In addition, the first steerable guide 30A may be selectively moved longitudinally relative to the second steerable guide 30B. Longitudinal adjustment of the first steerable guide 30A allows the length of the distal end segment 176A to be adjusted. Because the first guide tube 164A passes through and extends beyond the distal end of the second guide tube 164B, when the distal end segment 167B of the second guide tube 164B is articulated (via the rotational deflector knob 170B), the first guide tube 164A articulates with the second guide tube 164B. The nested guide tubes 164A and 164B allow for distal end segments 167A and 167B to be independently steerable and longitudinally adjustable to produce at least one resolved angle to aid in positioning the stapler applier 38 in a desired location to produce a force resolution desired to deploy a staple 36.

In a representative embodiment, the over-all length of guide tube 164A, not including handle 166A, is preferably between 40 and 120 cm and most preferably between 60 and 110 cm, and the length of the two segment deflectable tip is preferably between 1.0 and 10 cm and most preferably between 2 and 5 cm. The first segment 167A is preferably between about 1.0 and 5.0 cm, and the

second segment 167B is preferably between about 1.0 and 2.5 cm. It is to be appreciated that the lengths of the segments may change depending on the body lumen in which the endovascular guide system is being used. C-shaped  
5 radiopaque markers 172A and 172B may be located at or near the distal tip of the guide tube 164A and 164B respectively, to aid in orientation under fluoroscopy.

In yet an additional embodiment of a steerable endovascular guide shown in Fig. 10E, the steerable guide  
10 30C may include a single control handle 166C with a single steerable guide tube 164C, as compared to the steerable guides shown in Fig. 10B and 10D, where assemblies are combined to produce a steerable endovascular guide. The control handle 166C may be  
15 adapted for steering the guide tube 164C in multiple directions using, for example, a first deflector knob 170C and second deflector knob 170D. As can be seen, the single guide tube is shown with two steerable segments 167C and 167D.

20 In a representative embodiment, the obturator 32 is desirably sized and configured with a lumen 174 accommodating conventional over-the-wire delivery within a patient's vasculature, e.g., using an appropriately sized guide wire.

25 Further details of representative constructions of a steerable endovascular guide 30A can be found in co-pending, commonly owned United States Patent Application Serial No. 11/254,619, filed October 20, 2005, and entitled "Devices, Systems, and Methods for Guiding an  
30 Operative Tool into an Interior Body," and co-pending, commonly owned United States Patent Application Serial No. 11/255,116, filed October 20, 2005, and entitled "Devices, Systems, and Methods for Prosthesis Delivery and Implantation," which are both incorporated herein by  
35 reference.

**b. The Endovascular Staple and  
Companion Cassette**

The endovascular staple 36 (see Fig. 11A) is a single use component that is supplied, desirably in a companion cassette 34, to the user within a package in a sterile condition. The endovascular staple 36 is sized and configured to attach the endovascular graft 12 to a vessel wall, and/or to close the entrance of a vessel dissection.

In the illustrated embodiment (see Fig. 11A) the endovascular staple 36 comprises a main staple body 176 that is helical-shaped. The helical-shape allows the endovascular staple 36 to pierce and engage tissue in response to rotation of the main staple body 176, thereby securing attachment of the endovascular graft 12 to a vessel wall.

In a representative embodiment, the main staple body 176 is manufactured from medical grade wire having a diameter between about 0.1 mm and 1.0 mm. In a representative embodiment, the endovascular staple 36 is approximately between about 2 mm and 12 mm in over-all length and approximately between about 1.0 mm and 10 mm in maximum diameter. The leading end 178 of the main staple body 176 is desirably sharpened to facilitate atraumatic deployment through the graft materials and vessel wall. The proximal end 180 of the main staple body 176 is desirably closed to prevent over-penetration of the endovascular staple 36.

Desirably, a plurality of staples 36 (e.g., ten) are provided in a convenient cassette 34 (see Fig. 11B), to allow easy and accurate loading into the endovascular staple applier 38. The cassette 34 includes a base 208 having a plurality of foil covered spaced apart staple ports or stations 210, each sized to house a staple 36. A deformable cover 212 (e.g. a foil cover) may be

positioned over each staple port 210, and may include a precut shape, such as an "X". The precut "X" allows access for the staple applier 38 to the staple 36 within the port 210, and when the staple applier is inserted the  
5 deformable cover 212 and associate "X" deform 213, providing a visual indication to the user which port has been accessed. In use, an operator identifies a port 210 having a precut "X" in the cover 212. The operator operates the staple applier 38 to load the staple 36 from  
10 the foil covered port 210, as will be described in greater detail below. After implanting the withdrawn staple 36, the operator again identifies a port 210 having a precut "X" in the cover 212. The operator again operates the staple applier 38 to load the staple 36 from  
15 the foil covered port 210 for implantation. In this way, the cassette 34 aids the operator in loading individual staples on the staple applier 36 for implantation in a single fire (one at a time) fashion.

Further details of representative constructions of  
20 an endovascular staple 36 and companion cassette 34 can be found in co-pending, commonly owned United States Patent Application Serial No. 11/255,116, filed October 20, 2005, and entitled "Devices, Systems, and Methods for Prosthesis Delivery and Implantation," which is  
25 incorporated herein by reference.

### **c. Endovascular Staple Applier**

#### **(1) Overview**

The endovascular staple applier 38 (see Figs. 12A and 12B) is a single use component that is supplied to  
30 the user within a package 48 in a sterile condition. In the illustrated embodiment, the endovascular staple applier 38, a supply of endovascular staples 36, and the staple cassette 34 are provided, for the sake of convenience, in a single package 48. The endovascular  
35 staple applier 38 is sized and configured to pass through



the lumen 168A of the first steerable endovascular guide 30A guide tube 164A, which may be nested within the lumen 168B of the second steerable endovascular guide 30B guide tube 164B and to be selectively operated to implant one or more endovascular staples 36 through the graft (when used) and into the vessel wall.

In the illustrated embodiment, the endovascular staple applier 38 comprises an applier catheter 182 and a control handle 184 coupled to the proximal end of the applier catheter 182. The applier catheter 182 carries a rotationally driven member 186 at its distal end. A battery powered motor 188 enclosed within the handle 184 is coupled to the driven member 186, to selectively rotate the driven member 186 either in a forward (e.g., clockwise) direction and reverse (e.g., counterclockwise) direction. A control circuit 190 in the handle 184 is coupled to the motor 188 and to a forward control button 192 and a reverse control button 194 on the handle. The control circuit 190 governs operation of the motor 188 according to pre-programmed operating parameters in response to user commands received by manipulation of the buttons 192 and 194.

In use, an endovascular staple 36 is loaded into the driven member 186 from the cassette 34, e.g., by placing the distal end of the applier catheter 182 into an exposed staple port 210 in the cassette 34 and pressing the reverse control button 194 (see Fig. 12C). The now loaded endovascular staple applier catheter 182 is passed through the nested guide tubes 164A and 164B of the endovascular guide system 30, which has been manipulated beforehand to be at an intended implantation site for the endovascular staple 36 (see Figs. 13A to 13C). To simplify Figs. 13A to 13C, the delivery system 24 is not shown.

As can be seen in Fig. 13A, the nested guide tubes

164A and 164B are adapted to guide the staple applier catheter 182 through one or more steerable segments 167A and 167B to the desired location in a vessel for implantation of one or more endovascular staples 36. The  
5 steerable guide system 30 may be used to apply the desired resolution of force to the endovascular graft 12 to modify the shape or form of the endovascular graft to conform to the shape of the vessel wall. This resolution of force can be utilized to deflect a portion or portions  
10 of the endovascular graft against the vessel wall to implant a staple 36.

Once the endovascular staple applier catheter 182, loaded with a staple 36, is positioned at the desired location and the resolution of force is achieved, the  
15 physician presses the forward control button 192 to command rotation of the endovascular staple 36 in the forward direction, i.e., into tissue (see Fig. 13B).

The control circuit 190 is desirably pre-programmed to require a two-stage implantation process. The first  
20 stage commands only a partial implantation of the staple 36. In the first stage, the physician is allowed to ascertain whether the staple 36 is placed correctly at the desired location and that the desired located is suitable for implantation of the staple 36. While in the  
25 first stage, the physician is allowed to retract the staple 36 (by pressing the reverse control button 194) and to re-position the staple 36.

The control circuit 190 commands a full final deployment of the staple 36 only after a deliberate entry  
30 of the second stage. In the first and second stages, the control circuit 190 generates audible tones and/or visual indicators (e.g., blinking lights) during operation of the motor 188, to indicate the position of the staple and available direction of motion.

35 Once the staple 36 is implanted, the endovascular

staple applier 38 is withdrawn through the nested guide tubes 164A and 164B. The physician identifies another port 210 having a precut "X" in the cover 212. The staple applier 38 is reloaded. The two segment endovascular guide system 30 is manipulated to another desired implantation site, and the endovascular staple applier 38 (reloaded with another staple 36) is redeployed and operated in the manner just described (see Fig. 12C). The endovascular staple applier 38 is intended to be loaded, deployed, and reloaded in this way multiple times for a single patient.

Further details of representative constructions of an endovascular staple applier 38 and methods of its use can be found in co-pending, commonly owned United States Patent Application Serial No. 11/254,950, filed October 20, 2005, and entitled "Devices, Systems, and Methods for Prosthesis Delivery and Implantation, Including the Use of a Fastening Tool" which is incorporated herein by reference.

**(2) Tracking the Relative Position  
of the Endovascular Staple  
Applier in the Endovascular  
Guide**

As seen in Fig. 14A, the endovascular staple applier 38 desirably includes indicia 196, which is visible to a naked eye (i.e., without resort to fluoroscopic visualization or other visualization techniques that augment human vision) that indicates the extent to which the driven distal end 186 of the applier catheter 182, which carries the endovascular staple 36, resides within the guide tube 164A of the first steerable endovascular guide 30A. In particular, the visible indicia 196 indicates when the driven distal end 186 of the applier catheter 182 and the staple 36 it carries have arrived at a predetermined location within the guide tube 164A near

to the distal end of the guide tube 164A. In this way (see Figs. 14B and 14C), the physician can quickly and accurately ascertain, without resort to fluoroscopic visualization, that the distal end 186 of the applicator catheter 182, and the endovascular staple 36 it carries, are positioned adjacent the end of the guide tube 164A, ready for final deployment, once the guide tube 164A is placed at the intended implantation site. The visible indicia 196 can also indicate the extent to which the driven distal end 186 of the applicator catheter 182 has been extended outside the distal end of the guide tube 164A.

In the illustrated embodiment (see Fig. 14A), the indicia 196 comprises visible material or markings M on the most proximal section of the applicator catheter 182, adjacent the handle 184, that is marked or colored differently or is otherwise differentiated from the remainder of the applicator catheter 182. In a representative example, a prescribed length of contrast-colored tubing 198 can be placed at the most proximal end of the applicator catheter 182, where it exits the handle 184.

The contrast-color tubing 198 has a prescribed length. The distal end of the tubing 198 marks a line of differentiation between the tubing 198 and the remainder of the applicator catheter 182. The length is selected so that the distal end of the tubing 198 registers with the insertion port/hemostatic seal 200 on the handle 166A of the first steerable endovascular guide 30A (see Fig. 14B) when the driven distal end 186 of applicator catheter 182 rests at a desired inset distance  $d$  within the distal end of the guide tube 164A (see Fig. 14C).

In this way, the indicia 196 indicates when the applicator catheter 182 has reached a desired location relative to the end of the guide tube 164A, and is ready

to be further advanced to implant the endovascular staple 36. The contrast-color tubing 198 may further include additional markings M along its length by which the physician can gauge advancement of the applier catheter 182 beyond the guide tube 164A.

The indicia 196 makes it possible for the physician, without resort to fluoroscopic visualization, to always know the position of the endovascular staple 36 and staple applier 182 relative to the end of the endovascular guide system 30 (e.g., within or outside the guide tube 164A).

### (3) The Motor Control Circuit

In a representative embodiment (see Figs. 15A and 15B), the control circuit 190 for the motor includes an optical encoder 250 coupled to a counting function 252, to enable counting the revolutions of the battery powered motor 188. The control circuit 190 also includes a sensing function 254 that senses the magnitude of current being drawn by the motor 188, for deriving torque that the motor 188 is encountering. The control circuit 190 also includes a comparison function 256 that compares the magnitude of the sensed torque (current) with set torque limits in either the forward or reverse direction, to change the state of operation should excess torque conditions be encountered.

The control circuit 190 carries embedded code, which expresses pre-programmed rules or algorithms under which different operation states are entered and motor command signals are generated in response to input from the external control sources and the counting, sensing, and comparison functions. The pre-programmed rules or algorithms of the control circuit 190 are designed to conserve power consumption, placing the circuit into a standby (wait) mode between staple loading and deployment cycles. This makes it possible to power up the staple

applier just once and to leave the staple applier on during an entire procedure, avoiding time consumed in repeated power ups and power downs. The pre-programmed rules or algorithms of the control circuit also dictate  
5 that a desired sequence of steps is faithfully followed in loading, deploying, and reloading the staples, prompting the physician at the initiation of each step and not allowing any short-cuts or deviations along the way.

10 Further details of representative constructions of an endovascular staple applier 38 and methods of its use, including features of the pre-programmed rules or algorithms of a representative control circuit 190, can be found in co-pending, commonly owned United States  
15 Patent Application Serial No. 11/254,950, filed October 20, 2005, and entitled "Devices, Systems, and Methods for Prosthesis Delivery and Implantation, Including the Use of a Fastening Tool" and co-pending, commonly owned United States Patent Application Serial No. 11/488,305,  
20 filed July 18, 2006, and entitled "Endovascular Aneurysm Devices, Systems, and Methods", which are both incorporated herein by reference.

**C. The Instructions for Use, Including Deploying an Endovascular Graft**

25 The instructions for use 58 can direct use of catheter-based technology via a peripheral intravascular access site, such as in the femoral artery, optionally with the assistance of image guidance. Image guidance includes but is not limited to fluoroscopy, ultrasound,  
30 magnetic resonance, computed tomography, or combinations thereof. The instructions for use may include instructions for implanting an endovascular graft 12 to repair an aortic aneurysm, for example. The instructions for use may also include instructions for implanting  
35 endovascular staples 36 without the use of a graft 12,

for the repair of an aortic dissection, for example, as will be described below.

Figs. 16A through 18B show representative embodiments of the steps that representative instructions  
5 for use 58 can incorporate or direct.

In a representative embodiment, the instructions for use 58 may include the achievement of percutaneous vascular access by conventional methods into the femoral artery, for example. In this arrangement, the patient is  
10 placed on an imaging table, allowing fluoroscopic visualization from the aortic arch to the femoral artery bifurcations. Access is secured to one or both contralateral and ipsilateral branches by standard techniques using introducer sheaths (which can be  
15 supplied as part of the kit 40). Using fluoroscopic guidance, access to the patient's aortic arch can be achieved with an appropriately sized guide wire through one or both femoral access sites.

**1. Position the Endovascular Graft in the  
20 Targeted Endovascular Treatment Site**

In this arrangement, the instructions 58 for use may include positioning of the endovascular graft 12 to be deployed. An unsupported graft, and a delivery system 24 including stabilizing arms 106 are shown. It is to be  
25 appreciated that other configurations of grafts 12, and delivery systems 24, i.e., without stabilization arms, both as previously described, may be used and are intended to be included in the scope of the invention. It is also to be appreciated that at anytime during or after  
30 the retraction of the graft retention jacket, the entire graft assembly may be repositioned within the vasculature. The instructions may include a series of steps that can be followed to carry out this portion of the procedure. These steps may include, but are not  
35 limited to:

(i) after flushing the delivery system 24 with heparinized saline, positioning the delivery system 24 within an aortic abnormality over the guide wire via a femoral access site, which has been previously established in conventional fashion (Fig. 16A);

(ii) visualizing the proper position and orientation of the endovascular graft 12 using the radiopaque markers (e.g., proximal stent markers 78, distal stent markers 80 and the marker(s) 120 positioned at or near the leading edge of the graft retention jacket 102;)

(iii) withdrawing the graft retention jacket 102 of the delivery system 24 by rotating the jacket retraction knob 124 and/or sliding the jacket retraction slide 126 away from the patient. Alternatively, the mechanical advantage mechanism may be terminated by the physician at any point during the jacket retraction. The instructions may note that the proximal portion 65 of the endovascular graft 12 will not open during retraction of the jacket 102 and that the proximal portion 65 and distal portion 66 of the graft remain collapsed and connected to the delivery system 24, and that at anytime during or after the retraction of the jacket retention jacket the entire graft assembly may be repositioned within the vasculature (Fig 16B);

(iv) verifying the position and orientation of the endovascular graft 12 using the radiopaque markers (e.g., 78, 80, and 120,); and opening the distal portion 66 by retracting the distal release slide 118. Alternatively, the distal portion 66 may open on its own, without the need to operate any controls.

(v) releasing the endovascular graft proximal portion 65 from the delivery system by retracting the proximal end release slide 114 on the handle away from the patient (Fig. 16C). When a delivery system 24 incorporating stabilizing arms 106 or other release wires



are used, the instructions may note that the proximal portion (or other portions) of the endovascular graft 12 may still remain secured to the delivery system 24. The physician thereby maintains control and can manipulate the position and orientation of the graft assembly 12 during deployment of endovascular staples.

The instructions may also note that the use of release wires in place of stabilizing arms 106 may be used to attach the endovascular graft 12 to the inner assembly 100 to maintain control of the graft 12 while implantation of endovascular staples takes place.

With an alternative embodiment of a delivery system 24 without stabilizing arms, as previously described, after the proximal portion 65 and distal portion 66 are released from the delivery system, the graft 12 is free of the delivery system 24 and remains in position with the radial force of the proximal stent 70 and/or additional stents incorporated with the graft 12. It is to be appreciated that any of the delivery systems described herein may be removed at this stage of the procedure, or may be removed after endovascular staples have been deployed, as described below.

## **2. Deploy Endovascular Staples to Secure the Position of the Endovascular Graft**

The instructions for use 58 may next instruct securing of the position of the proximal portion of the endovascular graft 12 using endovascular staples 36. The instructions may include a series of steps that can be followed to carry out this portion of the procedure. These steps may include, but are not limited to:

(i) placing an appropriate length and sized guide wire via the femoral access site into the aortic arch. The endovascular graft 12 includes distal end radiopaque markers 80 that outline the opening of the distal portion 66 of the endovascular graft 12. The guide wire is to be

placed through this opening and its position verified using standard endovascular techniques;

(ii) using fluoroscopic guidance, advancing the second steerable endovascular guide 30B with the obturator 32 over the guide wire into a position within the proximal neck of the thoracic aneurism (Fig. 16D). The C-shaped radiopaque marker 172B located at the distal tip of the guide tube 164B will aid in fluoroscopic visualization. Position the steerable endovascular guide system 30 at the desired location for endovascular staple implantation within a desired location on the endovascular graft 12, (e.g., between the marker bands 78 on the proximal stent 70 and the bottom edge of the proximal stent 70.) In addition, the steerable endovascular guide system 30 may be used to contact and apply an apposition force to deflect a portion or portions of the proximal portion, or other portions of, the graft 12 and/or the stent 70 against the vessel wall to conform the shape of the endovascular graft 12 to the vessel wall at the desired location;

(iii) removing the guide wire and obturator 32 to open the lumen 168B of the second steerable endovascular guide 30B and inserting the guide tube 164A of the first steerable endovascular guide 30A into the lumen 168B. (Alternatively, the first steerable endovascular guide 30A and the second steerable endovascular guide 30B may be inserted at the same time with only one obturator in the lumen 168B of the second steerable endovascular guide 30B.)

(iv) deflecting the distal segments 167A and/or 167B of the two segment steerable endovascular guide system 30 toward the first intended staple implantation area by rotating the first and/or second deflector knobs 170A, 170B to achieve one or more bends or angles, while observing with fluoroscopic guidance. The instructions

may note that the C-shaped fluoroscopic markers 172A and 172B will appear as a straight line when their respective catheters are oriented laterally, as a right curve "(" when oriented anteriorly, and as a left curve ")" when oriented posteriorly. Alternatively, the manipulation of the guide system (deflecting the distal segments) can be performed after the insertion of the endovascular staple applier;

(v) turning on the endovascular staple applier 38 by pressing one or more of the control buttons 194, 192 for a predetermined amount of time. This can initiate a self-checking sequence with audible and/or visual indicators. At the end of this sequence, the reverse indicator 202 will indicate that the endovascular staple applier 38 is ready to load the first endovascular staple 36. The instructions may note that, if at the end of the self check sequence, the error light 204 is illuminated, the endovascular staple applier 38 has encountered an error. The error can be cleared by pressing one or more of the control buttons 194, 192 for a predetermined amount of time. After the error has been cleared, the self check sequence will initiate. If the error light 202 can not be cleared the endovascular staple applier 38 is not functional and should not be used;

(vi) load the staple by pressing the reverse command button 194 on the handle. While the motor 188 is running, insert the distal end of the endovascular staple applier catheter 182 into a port 210 having a precut "X" in the cover 212 of the cassette 34. The reverse indicator 202 will illuminate, and the endovascular staple will be drawn from the cassette into the distal end of the staple applier 38. When the endovascular staple 36 is loaded, an audible tone (e.g., two short beeps) will be heard, and the forward indicator 206 will illuminate. This indicates that the endovascular staple 36 is now preloaded in the

staple applier 38, and the applier 38 can be removed from the cassette 34. The precut "X" in the cover 212 deforms with the insertion of the staple applier 38. The instructions may urge the physician to verify that the endovascular staple 36 is in place by visually inspecting the distal tip of the applier 38;

(vii) while stabilizing the control handle 160C or handles 166A and 166B of the endovascular guide system 30 relative to the patient, inserting the now-loaded endovascular staple applier 38 through the hemostatic seal at the proximal end of the first steerable endovascular guide control handle 166A. The instructions may direct the physician to observe the location of the visible contrast-color tubing 198 or other indicia on the proximal end of the applier catheter 182 and to halt further insertion of the staple applier 38 when the end of the contrast-color tubing 198 registers with the insertion port/hemostatic seal on the handle of the steerable endovascular guide (as shown in Fig. 14B). This indicates that the distal end of applier catheter 182 rests a desired distance from the distal end of the guide tube 164 (as shown in Fig. 14C);

(viii) under fluoroscopic guidance, advancing the endovascular staple applier 38 through the steerable endovascular guide system 30 until the endovascular staple applier 38 emerges from the distal end of the endovascular guide system 30 and contacts the endovascular graft 12. Continue to advance the endovascular staple applier 38 until resistance is felt and/or visual indication of apposition can be seen using fluoroscopy. This indicates that the endovascular staple applier 38 is in apposition against the endovascular graft 12 and against the vessel wall at the desired location for staple deployment, and that the nested first and second steerable endovascular guide tubes 164A and

164B are fully or partially resolving the generally opposite apposition force. This resolution of force can be applied with either the staple applier 38 or endovascular guide system 30 alone, or in combination to  
5 deflect a portion or portions of the proximal portion, or other portions of the graft 12 and/or stent 70 against the vessel wall to conform the shape of the endovascular graft 12 to the vessel wall at the desired location.

(ix) using the control handle 184 of the  
10 endovascular staple applier 38, pressing the forward control button 192 for achieving the first stage of endovascular staple deployment. The endovascular staple will partially deploy and pause. An audible tone may be heard (e.g., four beeps) and the forward and reverse  
15 indicator 202 and 206 will illuminate (e.g., alternatively blink), indicating that the operator may continue deployment or withdraw the endovascular staple 36 back into the applier 38. The instructions may note that, in the event of a power loss when the staple 36 is  
20 partially deployed, the staple may be removed manually, for example, by manually rotating the handle 184 and catheter 182 in a counter-clockwise direction until the staple 36 disengages from the graft and tissue. The staple applier 38 can be removed from the endovascular  
25 guide 30 in this condition;

(x) if the endovascular staple 36 is not in the desired location, pressing the reverse control button 194 re-houses the staple 36 inside the staple applier 38 for re-positioning;

30 (xi) if the endovascular staple 36 is in the desired position, completing the final stage of staple deployment by pressing the forward control button 192 to implant the endovascular staple 36 through the graft materials and into the vessel wall (Fig. 16E). When complete, an  
35 audible tone (e.g., three beeps) is heard and the reverse

indicator 202 will illuminate; Fig. 16F shows an alternative configuration of the final stage of staple deployment, similar to Fig. 16E, except that an alternative deployment system 24 without stabilizing arms  
5 has been previously removed prior to the deployment of endovascular staples 36.

(xii) remove the endovascular staple applier 38, leaving the steerable endovascular guide system 30 in place;

10 (xiii) as needed, the steerable endovascular guide and/or the staple applier can be flushed with heparinized saline to prevent clotting in the lumens;

(xiv) identifying a port 210 having a precut "X" in the cover 212 to locate the next available endovascular  
15 staple port. Load the next endovascular staple in the manner described above;

(xv) repositioning the steerable endovascular guide system 30 to the next desired implantation site for an endovascular staple 36. Desirably, the physician  
20 straightens the first segment 167A and second segment 167B of the steerable endovascular guide system 30 between rotating in within the endovascular graft 12, to prevent accidental dislodgment or movement of the graft assembly 12;

25 (xvi) deploying the next endovascular staple 36 through the steerable endovascular guide 30 in the manner described above. Typically, 4 to 6 endovascular staples, evenly distributed about the circumference of the endovascular graft 12, will serve to secure the position  
30 of the graft 12 within the vessel (see Fig. 16G). Fig. 16H shows an alternative placement of the endovascular graft 12. As can be seen, the endovascular graft 12 incorporates an open graft portion 67 and is positioned more proximal within the aortic arch, proximal to the  
35 left subclavian artery. This position - proximal to the

left subclavian artery - may be necessary in anatomies where the diseased tissue is so extensive that there is insufficient healthy tissue distal to the left subclavian artery to provide a sufficient landing zone for one or more staples 36. In prior systems where there was insufficient healthy tissue distal to the left subclavian artery necessary to provide a sufficient landing zone for barbs or hooks, the left subclavian artery was sacrificed, and then grafted to the left common carotid artery. The present systems and methods overcome this problem with the use of the open graft section 12 that maintains a fluid flow communication path to the left subclavian artery, and the ability to secure and seal the endovascular graft 12 in this tortuous location.

(xii) after deployment of the last endovascular staple, removing the endovascular stapler applicator 38 from the steerable endovascular guide system 30;

(xiii) removing the steerable endovascular guide system 30 by first re-advancing the obturator 32 and guide wire (if appropriate) into the steerable endovascular guide system 30.

### **3. Complete the Endovascular Graft**

#### **Deployment**

The instructions for use 58 may next include the completion of the deployment of the endovascular graft 12, which may (or may not) remain in a secured but partially deployed condition during the deployment of the endovascular staples, as above described. The instructions may include a series of steps that can be followed to carry out this portion of the procedure. These steps may include, but are not limited to:

(i) moving to the femoral access site, where the delivery system 24 resides;

(ii) releasing the stabilizing arms 106 or other release wires from the graft by retracting the graft

release slide 116 on the handle of the delivery system away from the patient. The endovascular graft 12 is now fully released (Fig. 16J);

(iii) rejacketing the delivery system 24 by holding the jacket retention slide 126 and slowly retract the delivery system 24, until the nosecone seals into the proximal end of the jacket 102;

(iv) remove the delivery system 24 from the patient, leaving the guide wire and femoral access introducer sheath in place if appropriate.

#### 4. Completion of the Procedure

The instructions for use 58 may next include the completion of the procedure. The instructions may include a series of steps that can be followed to carry out this portion of the procedure. These steps may include, but are not limited to:

(i) performing post-implant aortic angiography to evaluate the implantation;

(ii) checking for endovascular leaks around the endovascular graft 12. If a leak is observed, standard endovascular techniques can be used to resolve. Additional staples may be placed, in the manner described above;

(iii) checking for proper location, blood flow, and patency of the endovascular graft 12;

(iv) removing the guide wires and femoral access sheaths and close the femoral arteriotomies according to standard practice to complete the procedure (Fig. 16K).

It is to be appreciated that the general steps just described do not necessarily need to follow the order in which they were described. It is also to be appreciated that fasteners may be applied to the distal region 66 of the endovascular graft 12 as well (as can be seen in Fig. 16K).

D. The Instructions for Use, Without Deploying



### **an Endovascular Graft**

Figs. 17A through 17C show a representative embodiment of the steps that a representative instructions for use 58 can incorporate or direct, without deploying an endovascular graft 12.

#### **1. Deploy Endovascular Staples to Close an Aortic Dissection**

In a representative embodiment, the instructions for use 58 may include the achievement of percutaneous vascular access by conventional methods into the femoral artery, for example. In this arrangement, the patient is placed on an imaging table, allowing fluoroscopic visualization from the aortic arch to the femoral artery bifurcations. Access may be secured to one or both contralateral and ipsilateral branches by standard techniques using introducer sheaths (which can be supplied as part of the kit 40). Using fluoroscopic guidance, access to the patient's aortic arch can be achieved with an appropriately sized guide wire through one or both femoral access sites.

These steps may include, but are not limited to:

- (i) placing an appropriate length and sized guide wire via the femoral access site into the aortic arch.
  - (ii) using fluoroscopic guidance, advancing the second steerable endovascular guide 30B with the obturator 32 over the guide wire into a position at or near the tear in the aortic wall (Fig. 17A). The C-shaped radiopaque marker 172B located at the distal tip of the guide tube 164B will aid in fluoroscopic visualization.
- Position the steerable endovascular guide system 30 at the desired location for endovascular staple implantation within a desired stapling zone on the aortic dissection. In addition, the steerable endovascular guide system 30 may be used to contact the vessel wall and apply an apposition force desired for staple deployment. The

instructions may note that the endovascular staples should be evenly distributed around the tear of the vessel wall in order to close the entrance of the dissection to blood flow;

5           (iii) removing the guide wire and obturator 32 to open the lumen 168B of the second steerable endovascular guide 30B and inserting the guide tube 164A of the first steerable endovascular guide 30A into the lumen 168B. (Alternatively, the first steerable endovascular guide  
10 30A and the second steerable endovascular guide 30B may be inserted at the same time with only one obturator in the lumen 168B of the second steerable endovascular guide 30B.)

          (iv) deflecting the distal segments 167A and/or  
15 167B of the two segment steerable endovascular guide system 30 toward the first intended staple implantation area by rotating the first and/or second deflector knobs 170A, 170B to achieve one or more bends or angles, while observing with fluoroscopic guidance. The instructions  
20 may note that the C-shaped fluoroscopic markers 172A and 172B will appear as a straight line when their respective catheters are oriented laterally, as a right curve "(" when oriented anteriorly, and as a left curve ")" when oriented posteriorly. Alternatively, the manipulation of  
25 the guide system (deflecting the distal segments) can be performed after the insertion of the endovascular staple applier;

          (v) turning on the endovascular staple applier 38 by pressing one or more of the control buttons 194, 192  
30 for a predetermined amount of time. This can initiate a self-checking sequence with audible and/or visual indicators. At the end of this sequence, the reverse indicator 202 will indicate that the endovascular staple applier 38 is ready to load the first endovascular staple  
35 36. The instructions may note that, if at the end of the

self check sequence, the error light 204 is illuminated, the endovascular staple applier 38 has encountered an error. The error can be cleared by pressing one or more of the control buttons 194, 192 for a predetermined amount  
5 of time. After the error has been cleared, the self check sequence will initiate. If the error light 202 can not be cleared the endovascular staple applier 38 is not functional and should not be used;

(vi) load the staple by pressing the reverse command  
10 button 194 on the handle. While the motor 188 is running, insert the distal end of the endovascular staple applier catheter 182 into a port 210 having a precut "X" in the cover 212 of the cassette 34. The reverse indicator 202 will illuminate, and the endovascular staple will be  
15 drawn from the cassette into the distal end of the staple applier 38. When the endovascular staple 36 is loaded, an audible tone (e.g., two short beeps) will be heard, and the forward indicator 206 will illuminate. This indicates that the endovascular staple 36 is now preloaded in the  
20 staple applier 38, and the applier 38 can be removed from the cassette 34. The precut "X" in the cover 212 deforms with the insertion of the staple applier 38. The instructions may urge the physician to verify that the endovascular staple 36 is in place by visually inspecting  
25 the distal tip of the applier 38;

(vii) while stabilizing the control handle 160C or handles 166A and 166B of the endovascular guide system 30 relative to the patient, inserting the now-loaded endovascular staple applier 38 through the hemostatic  
30 seal at the proximal end of the first steerable endovascular guide control handle 166A. The instructions may direct the physician to observe the location of the visible contrast-color tubing 198 or other indicia on the proximal end of the applier catheter 182 and to halt  
35 further insertion of the staple applier 38 when the end

of the contrast-color tubing 198 registers with the insertion port/hemostatic seal on the handle of the steerable endovascular guide (as shown in Fig. 14B). This indicates that the distal end of applicator catheter 182  
5 rests a desired distance from the distal end of the guide tube 164 (as shown in Fig. 14C);

(viii) under fluoroscopic guidance, advancing the endovascular staple applicator 38 through the steerable endovascular guide system 30 until the endovascular  
10 staple applicator 38 emerges from the distal end of the endovascular guide system 30 and contacts the torn vessel wall. Slowly, continue to advance the endovascular staple applicator 38 until resistance is felt, and/or visual indication of apposition can be seen using fluoroscopy.  
15 This indicates that the endovascular staple applicator 38 is firmly pushing against the vessel wall at the desired location for staple deployment, and that the nested first and second steerable endovascular guide tubes 164A and 164B are firmly pushing against the generally opposite  
20 vessel wall and applying the apposition force desired for staple deployment. This resolution of force can be applied with either the staple applicator 38 or endovascular guide system 30 alone, or in combination to deflect a portion or portions of the vessel wall at the desired  
25 location.

(ix) using the control handle 184 of the endovascular staple applicator 38, pressing the forward control button 192 for achieving the first stage of endovascular staple deployment. The endovascular staple  
30 will partially deploy and pause. An audible tone may be heard (e.g., four beeps) and the forward and reverse indicator 202 and 206 will illuminate (e.g., alternatively blink), indicating that the operator may continue deployment or withdraw the endovascular staple  
35 back into the applicator 38. The instructions may note

that, in the event of a power loss when the staple 36 is partially deployed, the staple may be removed manually, for example, by manually rotating the handle 184 and catheter 182 in a counter-clockwise direction until the  
5 staple 36 disengages from the tissue. The staple applier 38 can be removed from the endovascular guide 30 in this condition;

(x) if the endovascular staple 36 is not in the desired location, pressing the reverse control button 194  
10 re-houses the staple 36 inside the staple applier 38 for re-positioning;

(xi) if the endovascular staple 36 is in the desired position, completing the final stage of staple deployment by pressing the forward control button 192 to implant the  
15 endovascular staple 36 into the vessel wall (Fig. 17B). When complete, an audible tone (e.g., three beeps) is heard and the reverse indicator 202 will illuminate;

(xii) remove the endovascular staple applier 38, leaving the steerable endovascular guide system 30 in  
20 place;

(xiii) as needed, the steerable endovascular guide and/or the staple applier can be flushed with heparinized saline to prevent clotting in the lumens;

(xiv) identifying a port 210 having a precut "X" in  
25 the cover 212 to locate the next available endovascular staple port. Load the next endovascular staple in the manner described above;

(xv) repositioning the steerable endovascular guide system 30 to the next desired implantation site for an  
30 endovascular staple 36. Desirably, the physician straightens the first segment 167A and second segment 167B of the steerable endovascular guide system 30 between rotating in within the endovascular graft 12, to prevent accidental dislodgment of previously deployed  
35 staples or unnecessary contact with the vessel wall;

(xvi) deploying the next endovascular staple 36 through the steerable endovascular guide 30 in the manner described above;

(xvii) after deployment of the last endovascular staple, removing the endovascular stapler applier 38 from the steerable endovascular guide system 30;

(xviii) removing the steerable endovascular guide system 30 by first re-advancing the obturator 32 and guide wire (if appropriate) into the steerable endovascular guide system 30.

## 2. Completion of the Procedure

The instructions for use 58 may next include the completion of the procedure. The instructions may include a series of steps that can be followed to carry out this portion of the procedure. These steps may include, but are not limited to:

(i) performing post-implant aortic angiography to evaluate the staple(s) implantation;

(ii) checking for endovascular leaks around the tear in the vessel wall. If a leak is observed, standard endovascular techniques can be used to resolve. Additional staples may be placed, in the manner described above;

(iii) removing the guide wire and femoral access sheath and close the femoral arteriotomies according to standard practice to complete the procedure (Fig. 17C).

It is to be appreciated that the general steps just described do not necessarily need to follow the order in which they were described.

## E. Alternative Graft Configurations

The systems and methods described herein may be used to implant an endovascular graft having one or more extensions 13, as can be seen in Fig. 18A and 18B. Extensions 13 may be secured to the graft 12, or other extensions 13, using interlocking stents, for example.

Or, the stapling system 16 may be used to apply a staple 36 at an overlap. The staple 36 may pierce the overlapped graft segments of graft 12 and extension 13, and further may pierce into tissue, or, the tissue may not be pierced.

Fig. 18A shows one embodiment of a graft 12 including one or more extensions 13. In this embodiment, the graft 12 may be implanted first in the desired region of the vessel. Successive extensions may then be coupled to the graft 12 and/or a previously placed extension 13. This may be repeated until the aorta is covered from the desired proximal to distal landing zones. As can be seen, the proximal portion of the distal most two extensions 13 are shown as positioned inside of the graft/extension proximal to each extension.

Fig. 18B shows an alternative embodiment where the proximal portion of the distal most two extensions 13 are shown as positioned exterior to the outer diameter of the graft/extension proximal to each extension. In this embodiment, the first distal extension 13 may be placed at or above the level of the celiac artery, for example. The column strength and/or radial expansion of the extension 13 may allow it to remain in position. One or more additional extensions 13 may be deployed further proximal to the first extension 13 with the distal portion of the second extension positioned inside of the proximal portion of the second extension 13 (or the graft 12) to extend the graft further proximal in the vessel. This may be repeated until the aorta is covered from the desired distal to proximal landing zones.

It will be appreciated that the components and/or features of the preferred embodiments described herein may be used together or separately, while the depicted methods and devices may be combined or modified in whole or in part. It is contemplated that the components of the

guiding device, fastener device, and helical fastener may be alternately oriented relative to each other, for example, offset, bi-axial, etc. Further, it will be understood that the various embodiments may be used in  
5 additional procedures not described herein, such as vascular trauma, arterial dissections, artificial heart valve attachment and attachment of other prosthetic device within the vascular system and generally within the body.

10       The foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. Furthermore, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown  
15 and described. While the preferred embodiment has been described, the details may be changed without departing from the invention, which is defined by the claims.



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I Claim:

1. A prosthesis for a blood vessel or hollow body organ comprising:
  - a tubular body having a circumference and including
  - 5 a prosthetic material having an interior and an exterior surface,
  - a plurality of circumferential stents, the plurality of stents coupled to the tubular body along a length of the tubular body,
  - 10 a circumferential spacing of prosthetic material free of the plurality of stents, the spacing of prosthetic material located between at least two of the plurality of stents, and
  - the spacing of prosthetic material sized and
  - 15 configured to allow one of the at least two of the plurality of stents to at least partially overlap the other of the at least two of the plurality of stents to form a fold of the prosthetic material.
2. A prosthesis according to Claim 1:
  - 20 wherein the fold of the prosthetic material extends completely around the circumference of the tubular body.
3. A prosthesis according to Claim 1:
  - wherein the fold of the prosthetic material extends only partially around the circumference of the tubular
  - 25 body.
4. A prosthesis according to Claim 1:
  - wherein the plurality of stents are coupled to the exterior surface of the tubular body along a length of the tubular body.
5. A prosthesis according to Claim 1:
  - 30 wherein the prosthesis is preconfigurable to expand into a predefined shape after implantation in the blood vessel or hollow body organ.
6. A prosthesis according to Claim 1:
  - 35 wherein the spacing of prosthetic material causes

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the plurality of stents to be in a non-contact relationship.

7. A prosthesis according to Claim 1:

wherein the prosthesis is expandable between a  
5 longitudinally compressed configuration and a  
longitudinally expanded configuration.

8. A prosthesis according to Claim 1:

wherein the prosthesis includes both a  
longitudinally compressed configuration and a  
10 longitudinally expanded configuration.

9. A method comprising:

providing a tubular body comprising a prosthetic  
material having an interior and an exterior surface, the  
tubular body including a plurality of circumferential  
15 stents, the plurality of stents coupled to the tubular  
body along a length of the tubular body, and a  
circumferential spacing of prosthetic material free of  
the plurality of stents, the spacing of prosthetic  
material located between at least two of the plurality of  
20 stents,

radially compressing one stent and the tubular body  
coupled to the one stent,

inserting at least a portion of the one stent and  
the tubular body coupled to the one stent into an  
25 adjacent stent causing the stents to at least partially  
overlap, and

forming a fold in the prosthetic material free of  
the plurality of stents, the fold located between the at  
least partially overlapping stents.

30 10. A method comprising:

providing a tubular body comprising a prosthetic  
material having an interior and an exterior surface, the  
tubular body including a plurality of circumferential  
stents, the plurality of stents coupled to the tubular  
35 body along a length of the tubular body, and a

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circumferential spacing of prosthetic material free of the plurality of stents, the spacing of prosthetic material located between at least two of the plurality of stents,

5        implanting the tubular body within a vessel, and  
allowing one of the at least two of the plurality of stents to at least partially overlap the other of the at least two of the plurality of stents to form a fold of the prosthetic material.

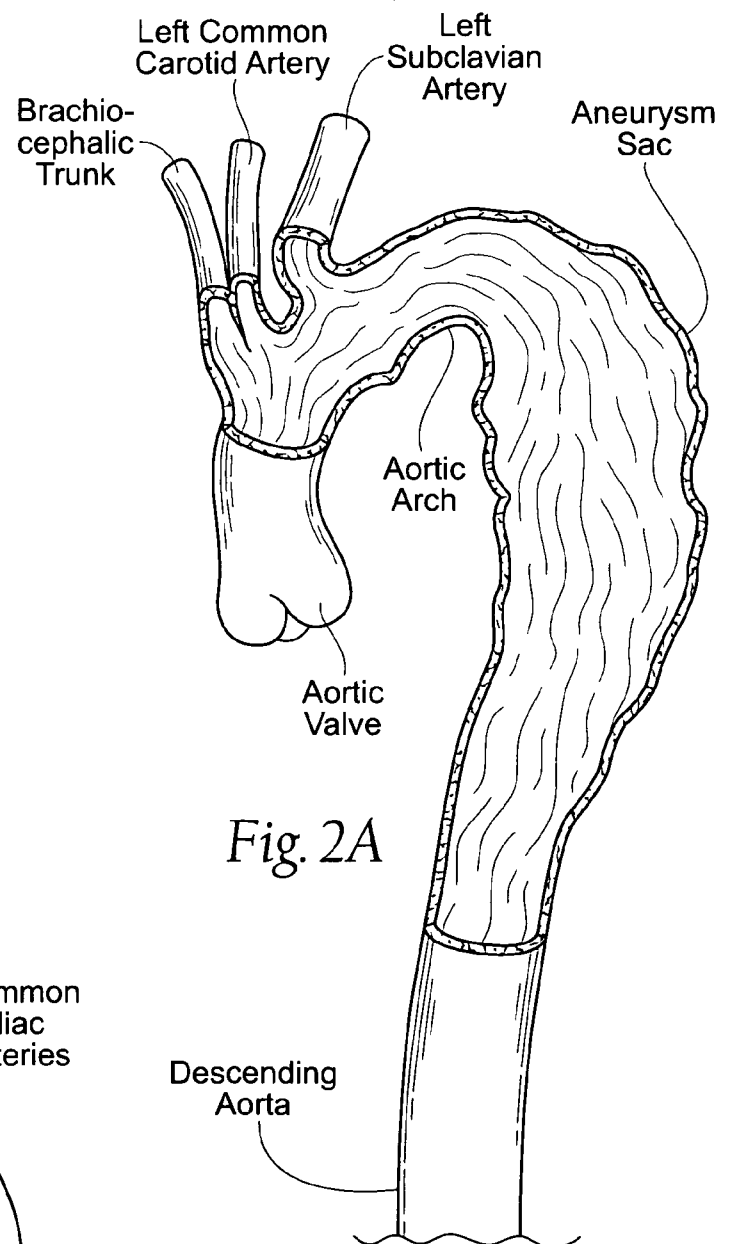
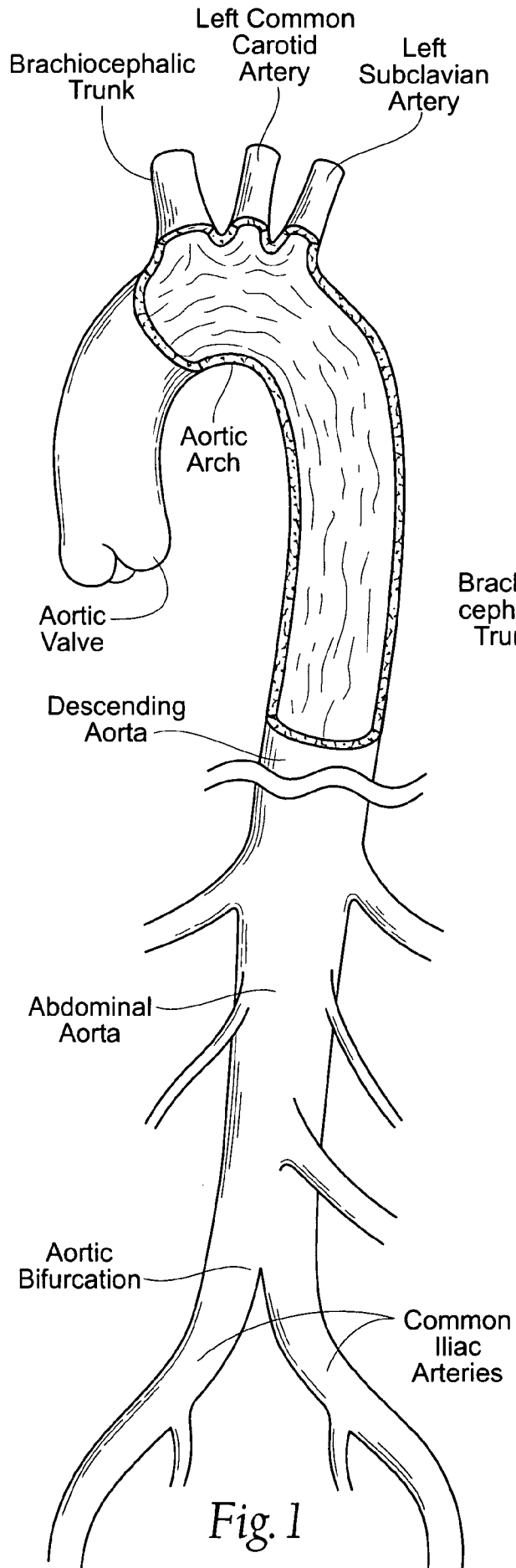
10        11. A system comprising:

a tubular body having a circumference and including a prosthetic material having an interior and an exterior surface,

15        a plurality of circumferential stents, the plurality  
of stents coupled to the tubular body along a length of the tubular body,

20        a circumferential spacing of prosthetic material  
free of the plurality of stents, the spacing of prosthetic material located between at least two of the plurality of stents, the spacing of prosthetic material sized and configured to allow one of the at least two of the plurality of stents to at least partially overlap the other of the at least two of the plurality of stents to form a fold of the prosthetic material, and

25        instructions for use describing the use of the  
tubular body, the instructions comprising the operations of implanting the tubular body within a vessel, and allowing one of the at least two of the plurality of stents to at least partially overlap the other of the at  
30        least two of the plurality of stents to form a fold of  
the prosthetic material.



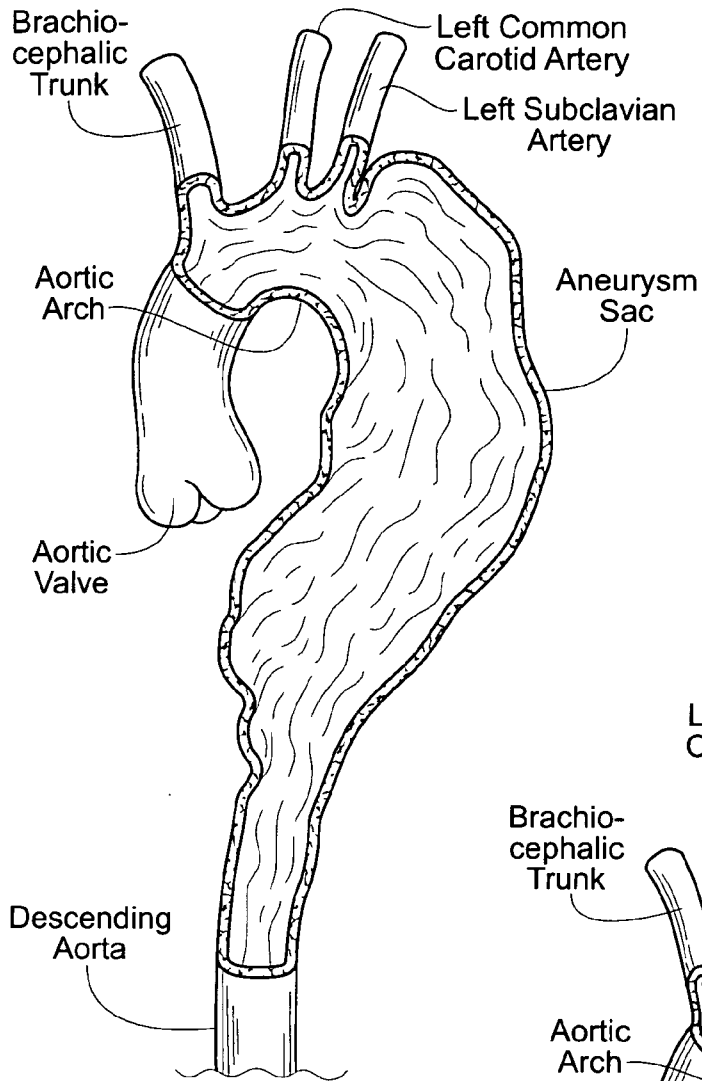


Fig. 2B

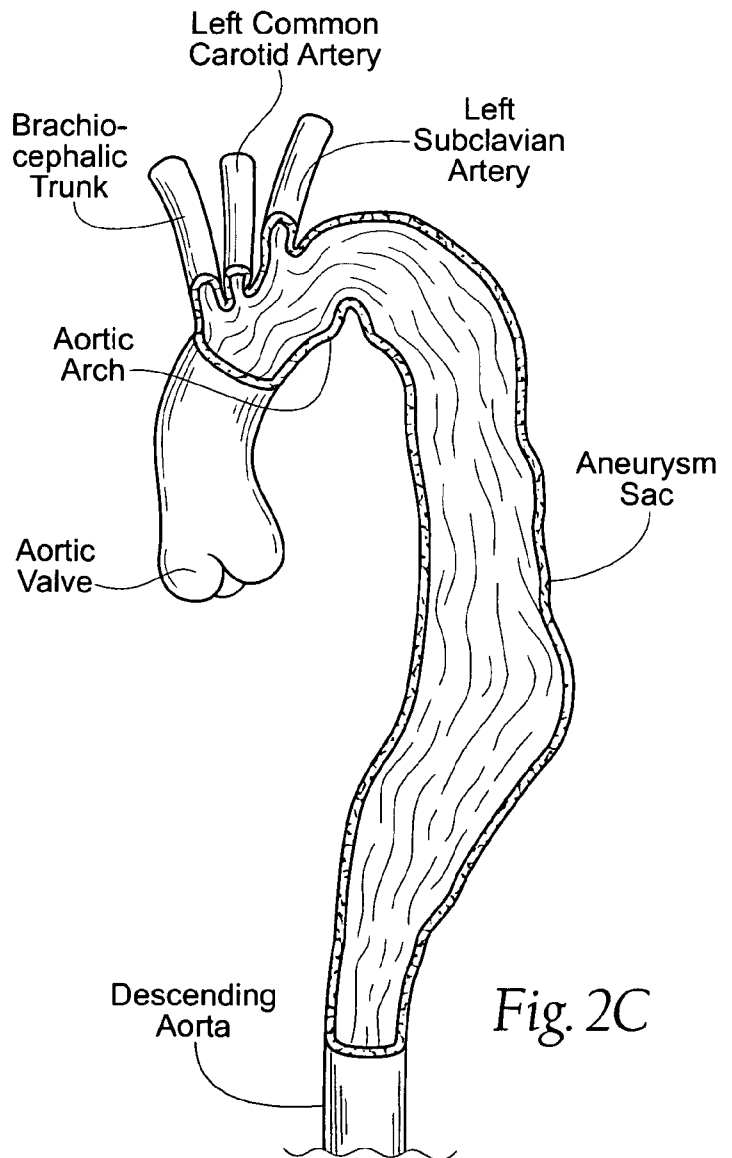


Fig. 2C

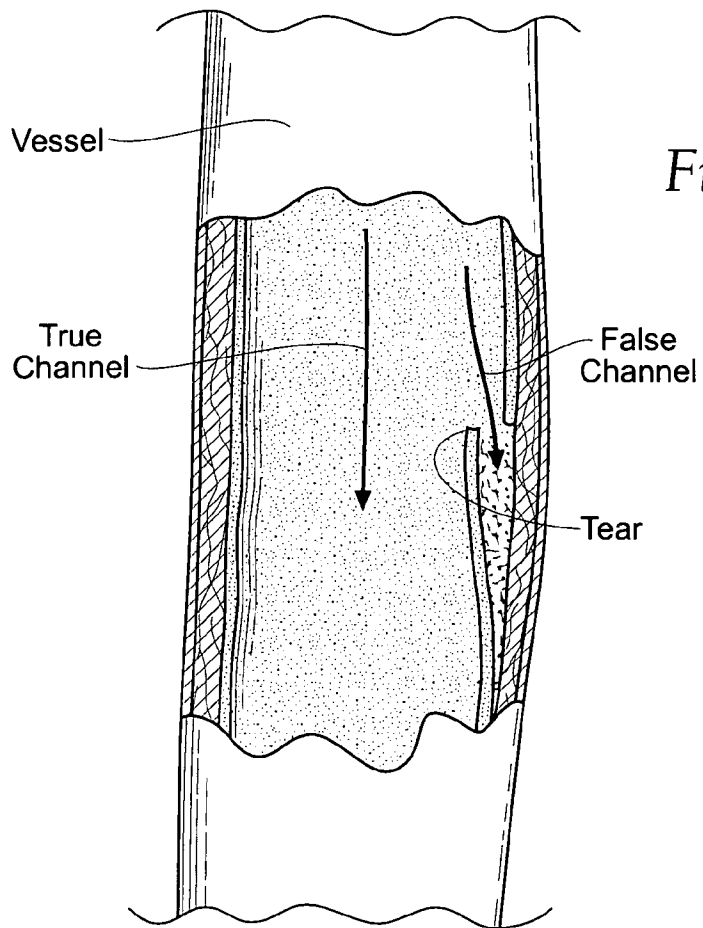


Fig. 3A

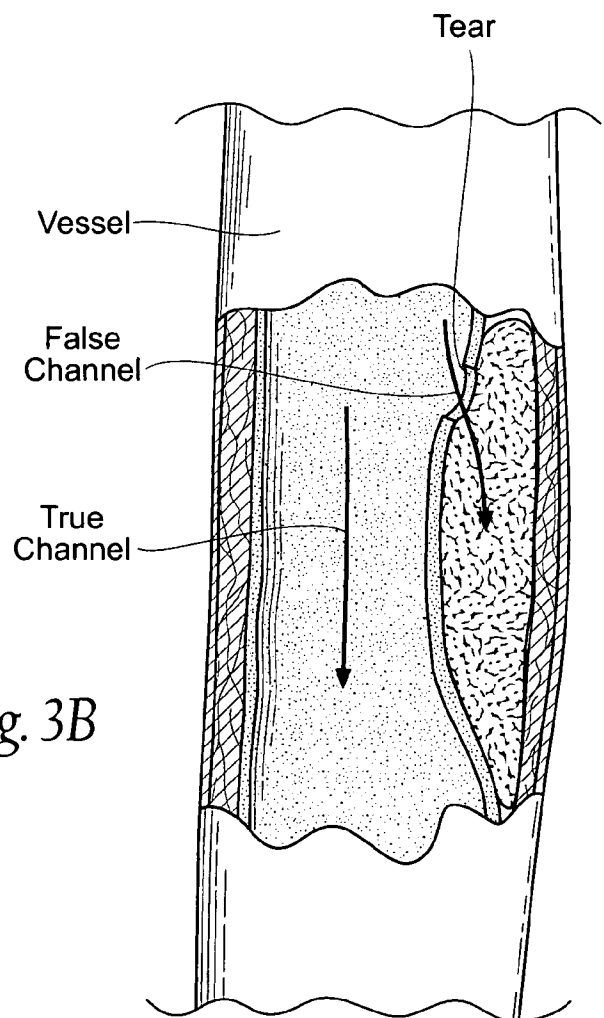


Fig. 3B

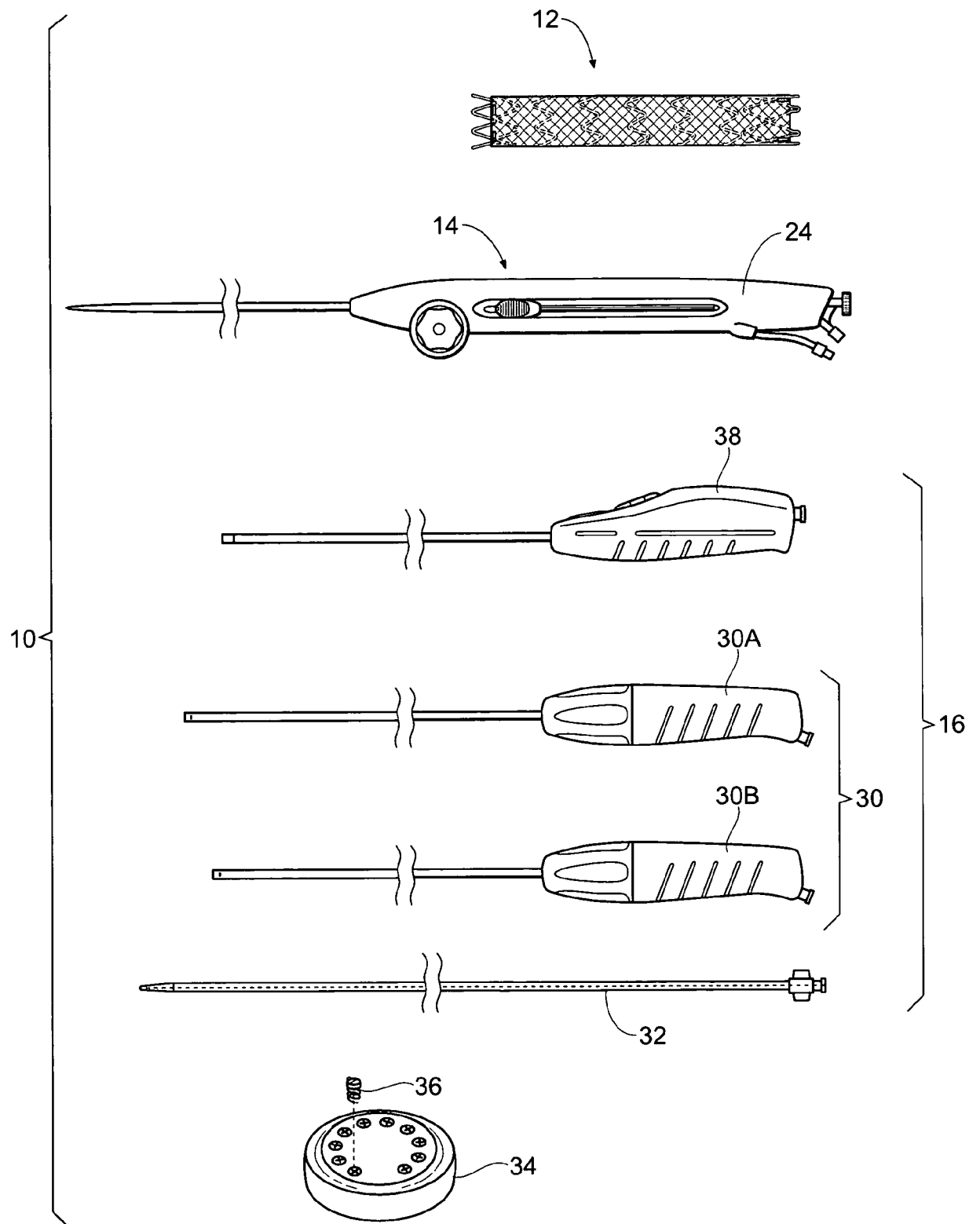


Fig. 4

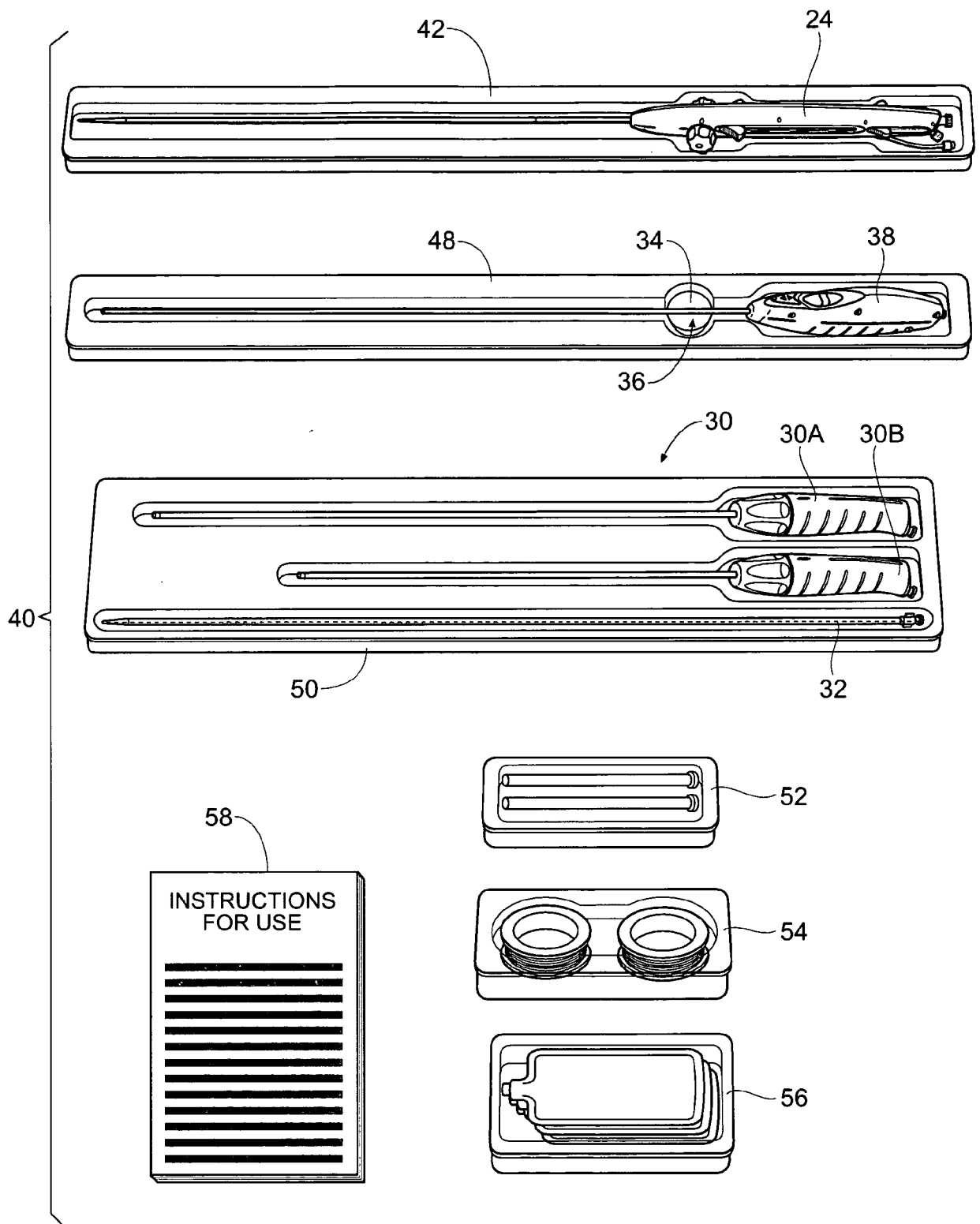


Fig. 5



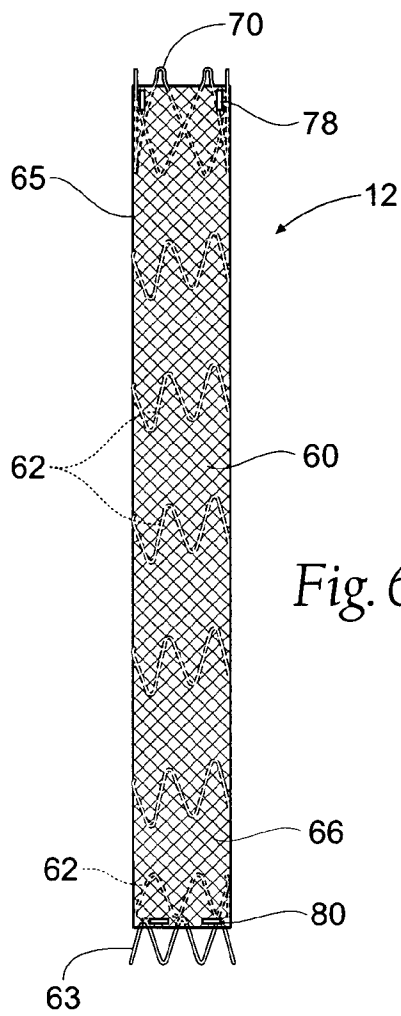


Fig. 6A

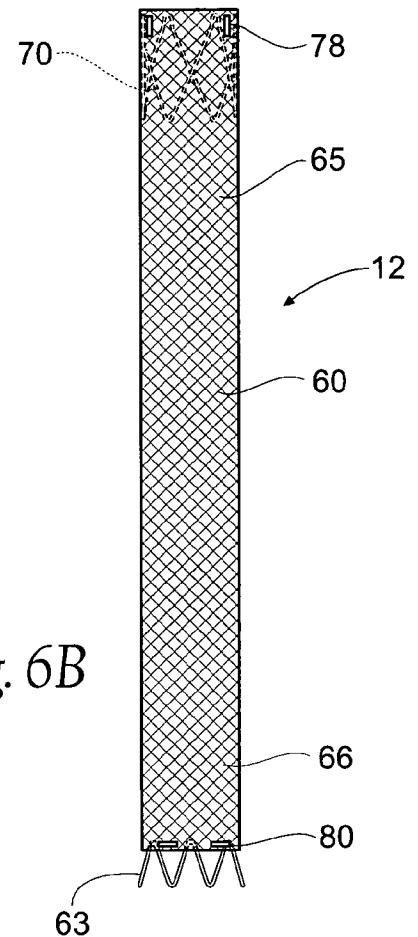


Fig. 6B

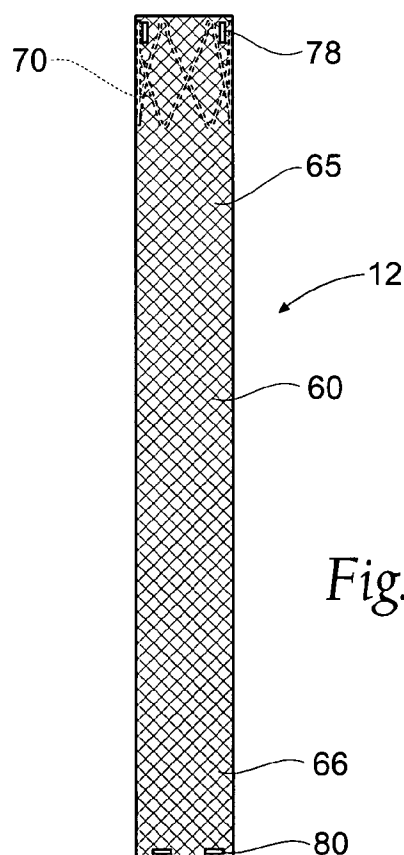
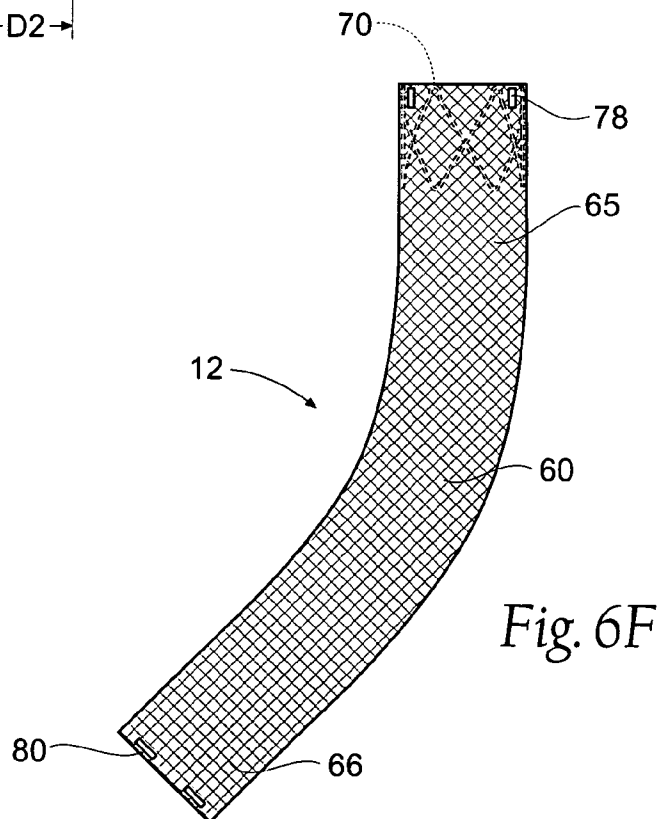
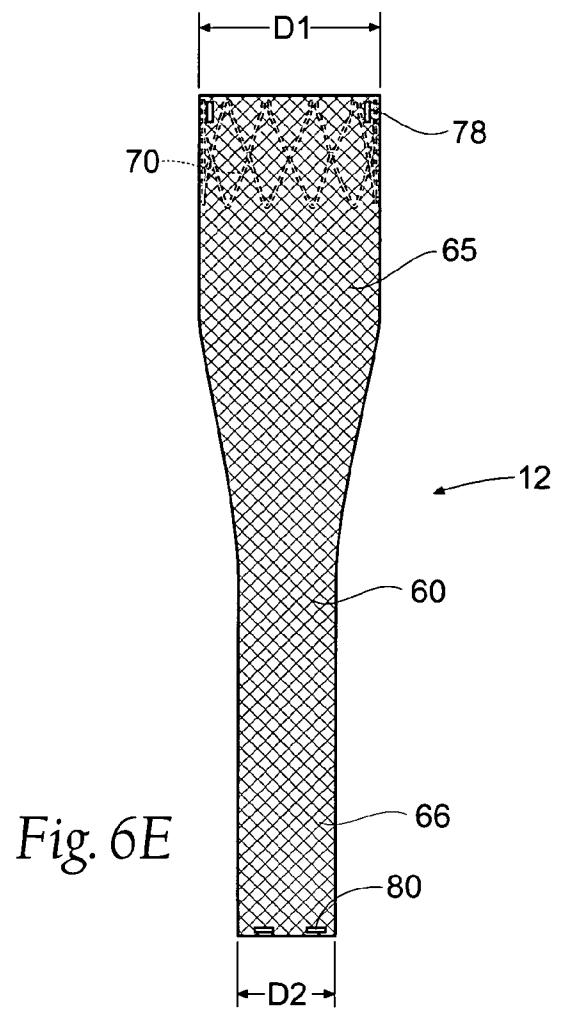
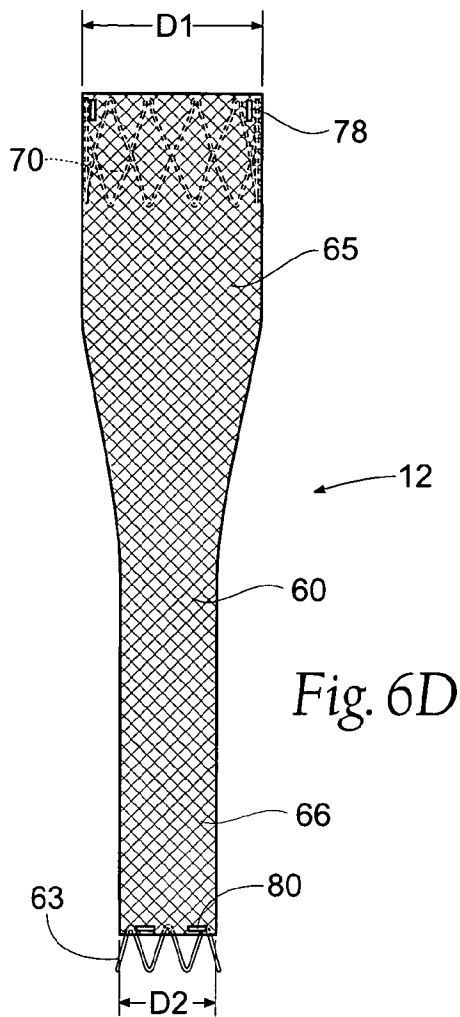
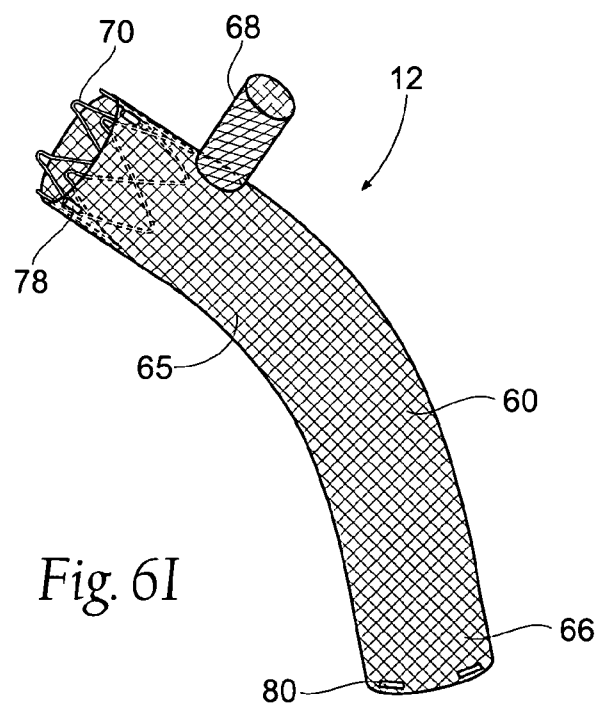
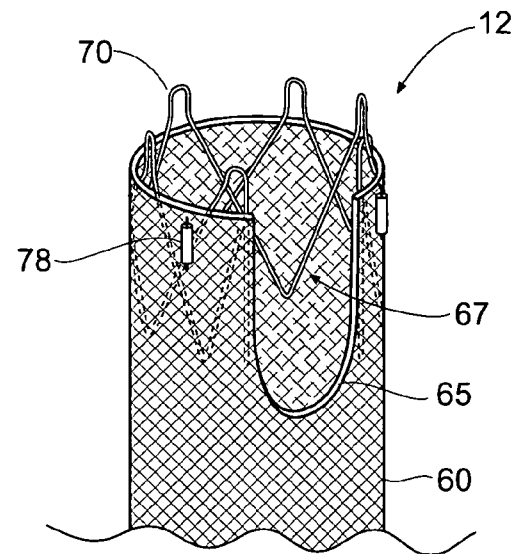
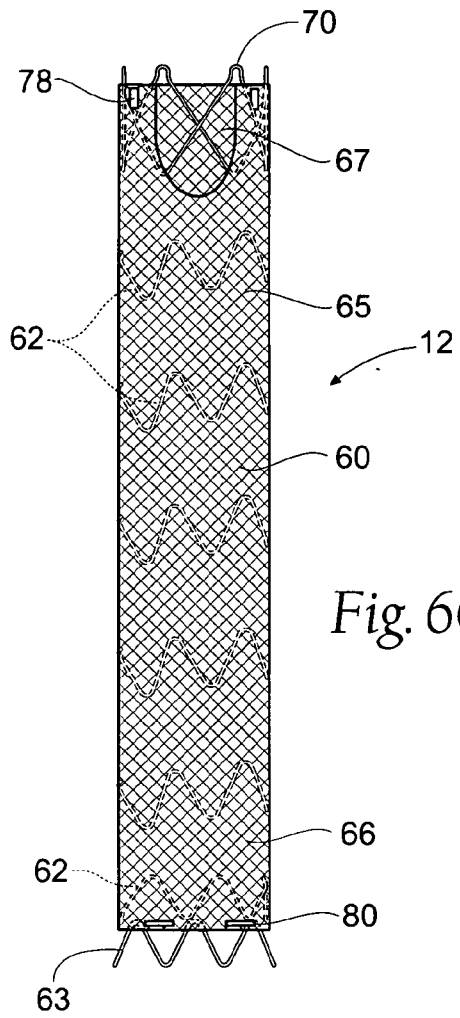
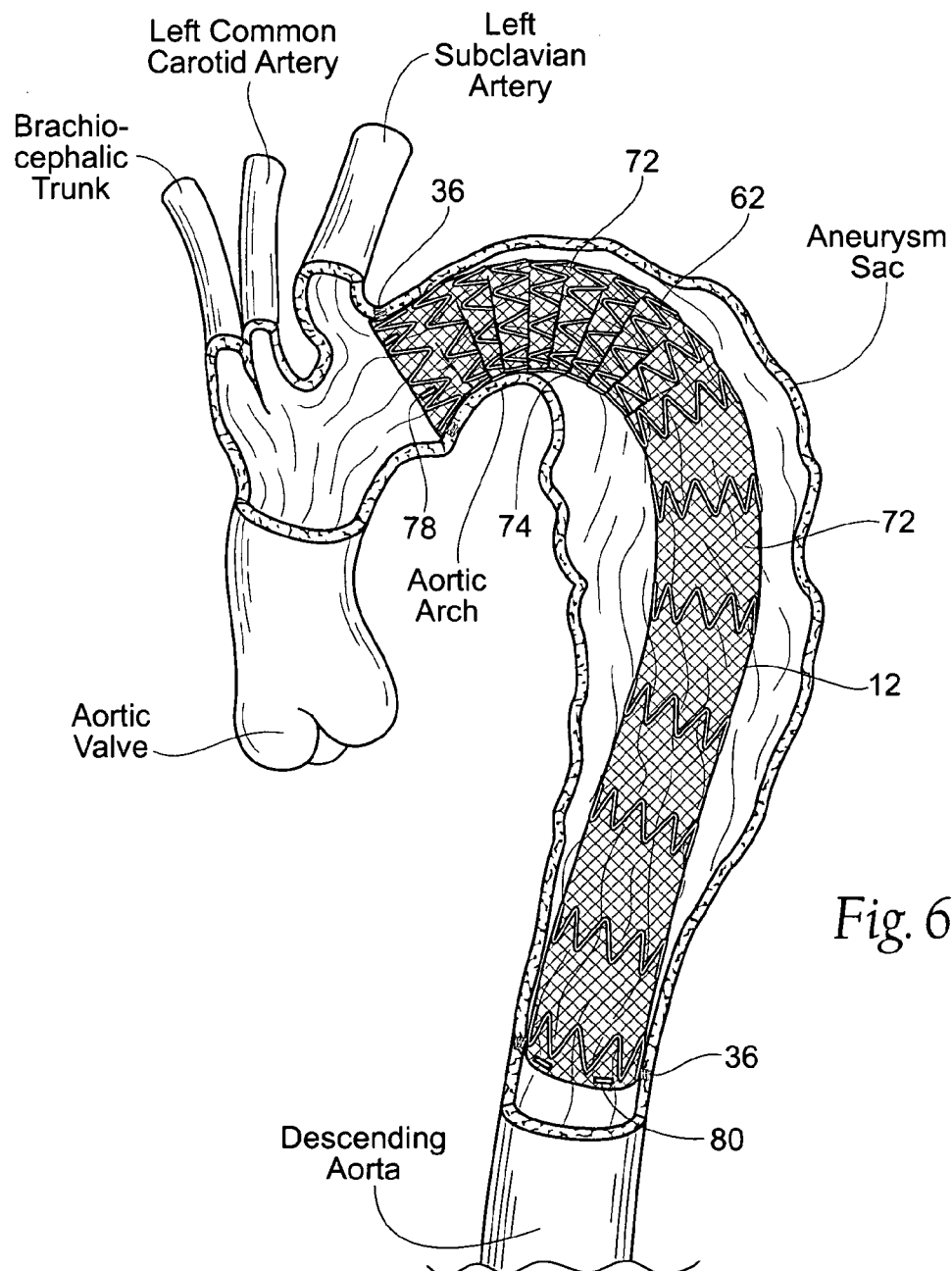
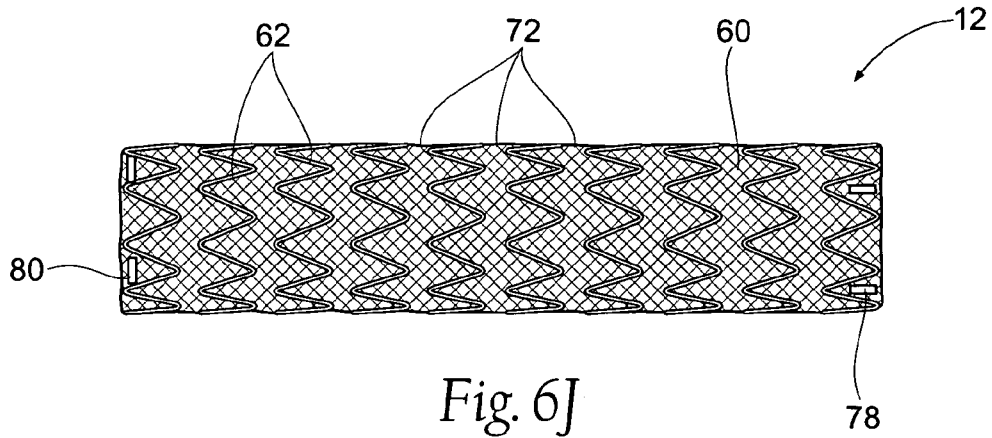


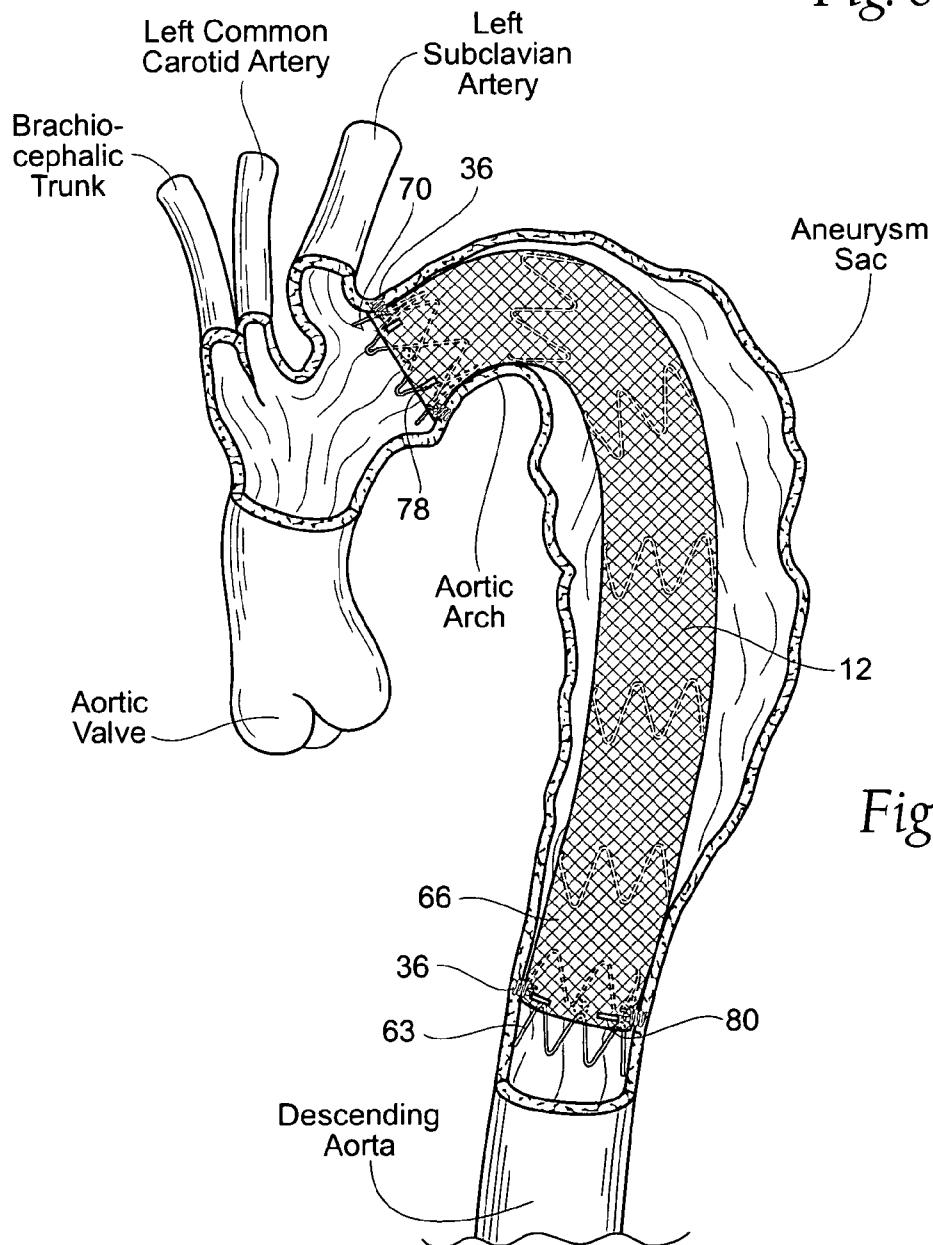
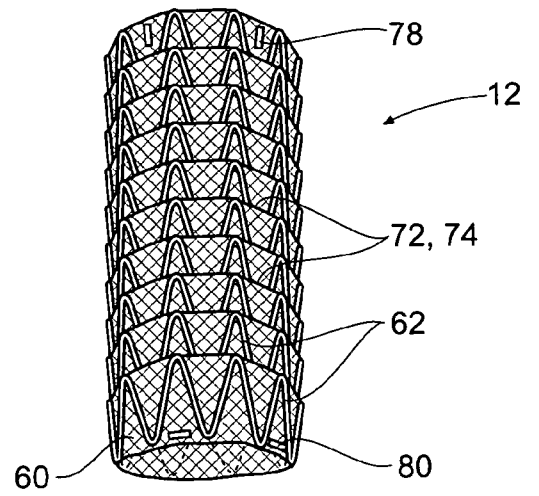
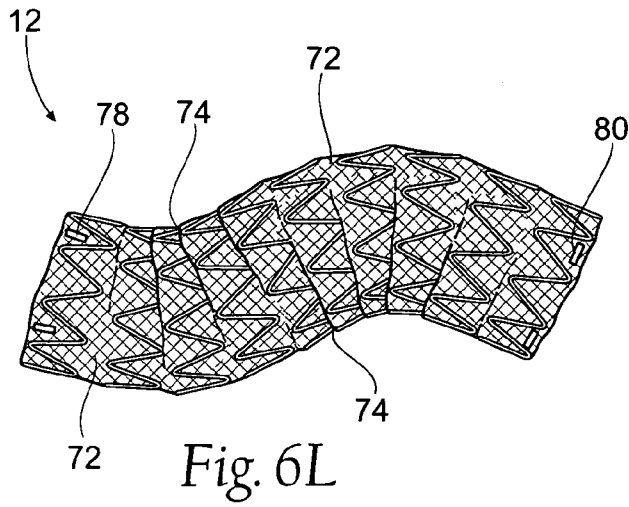
Fig. 6C





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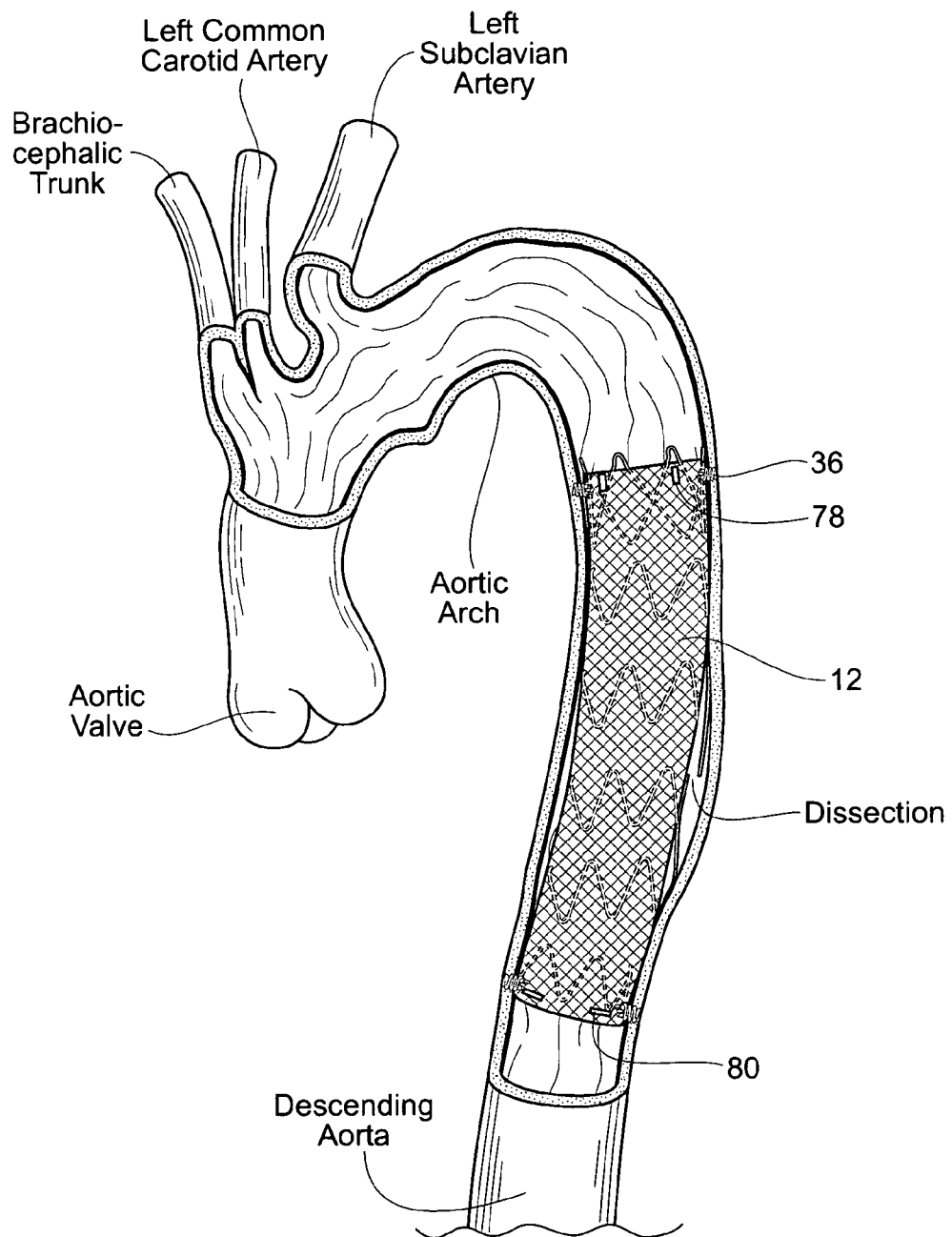
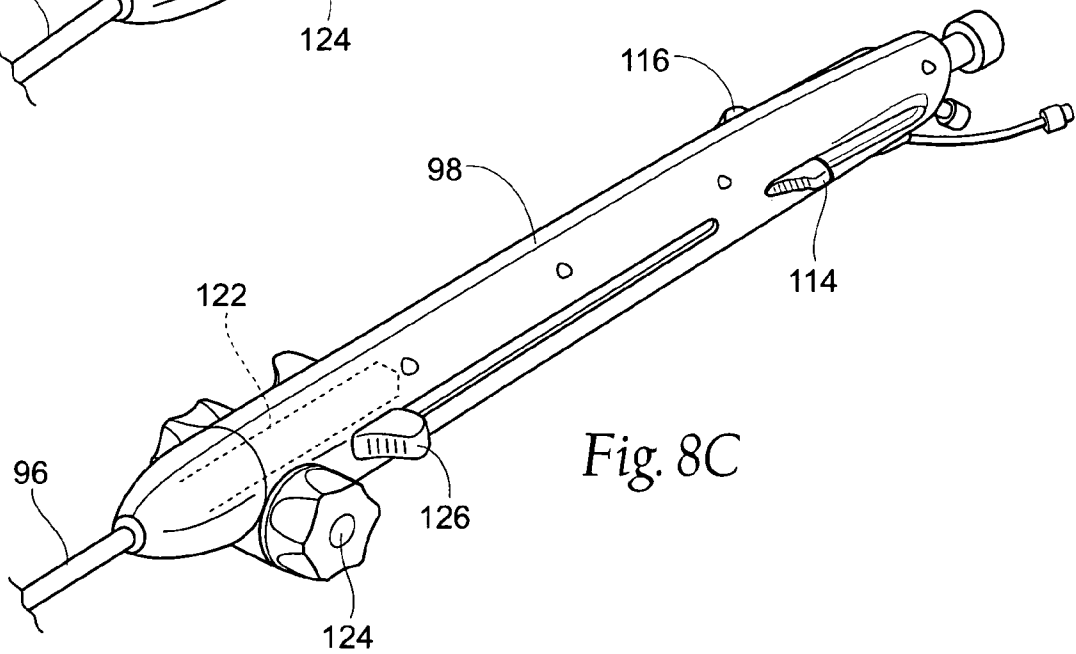
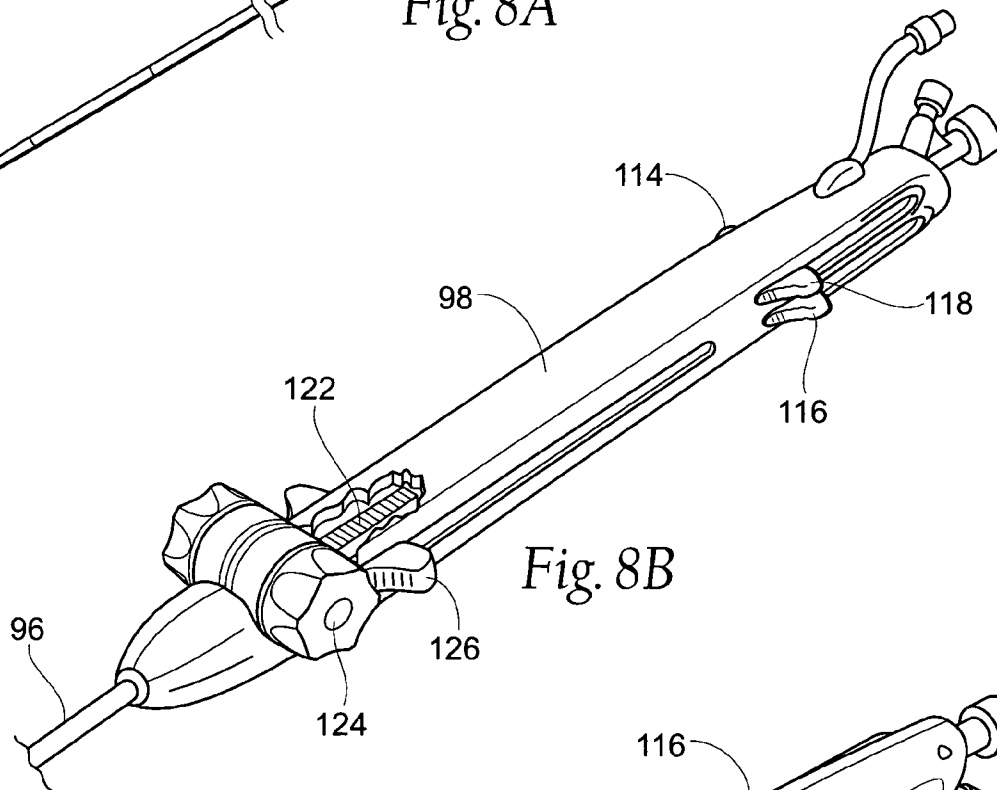
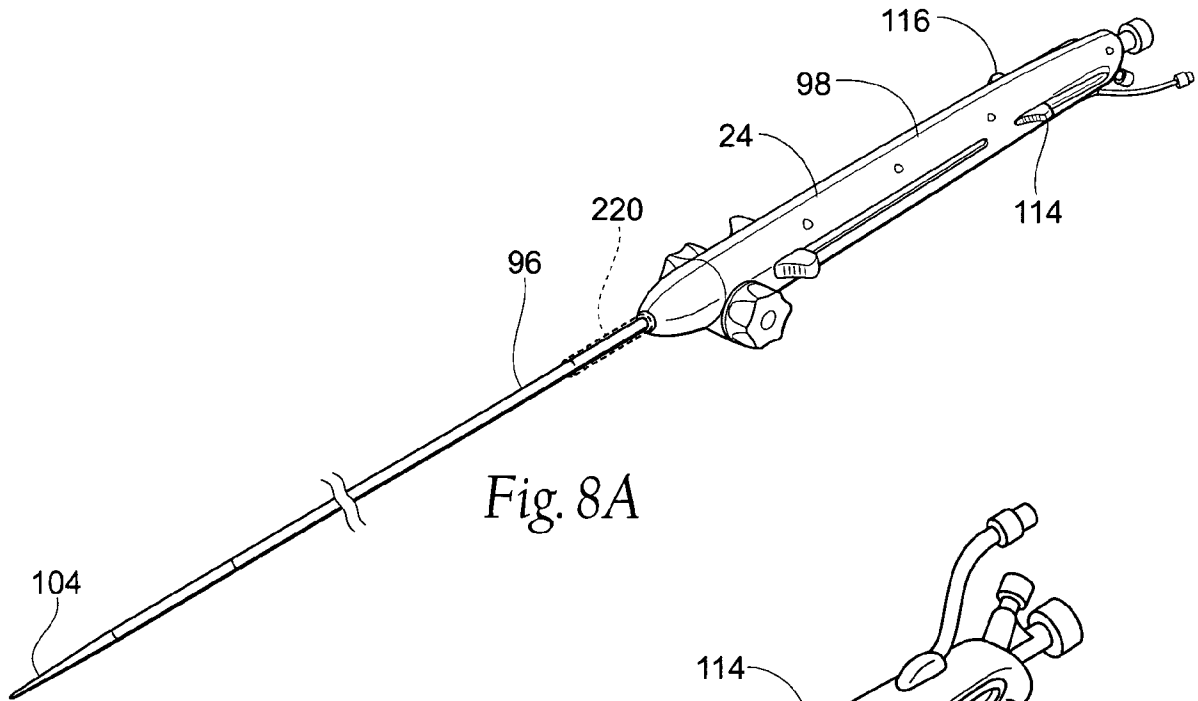
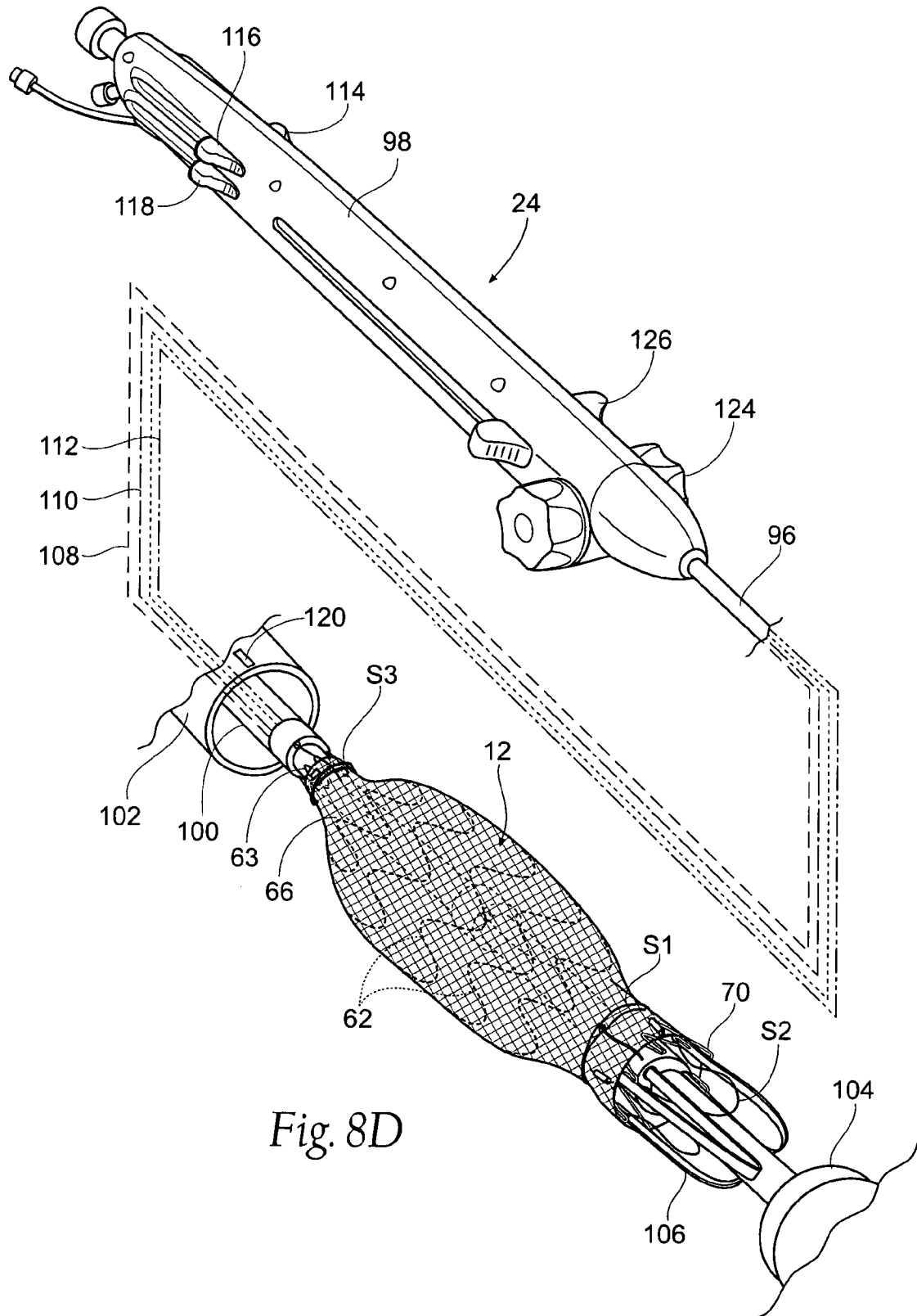
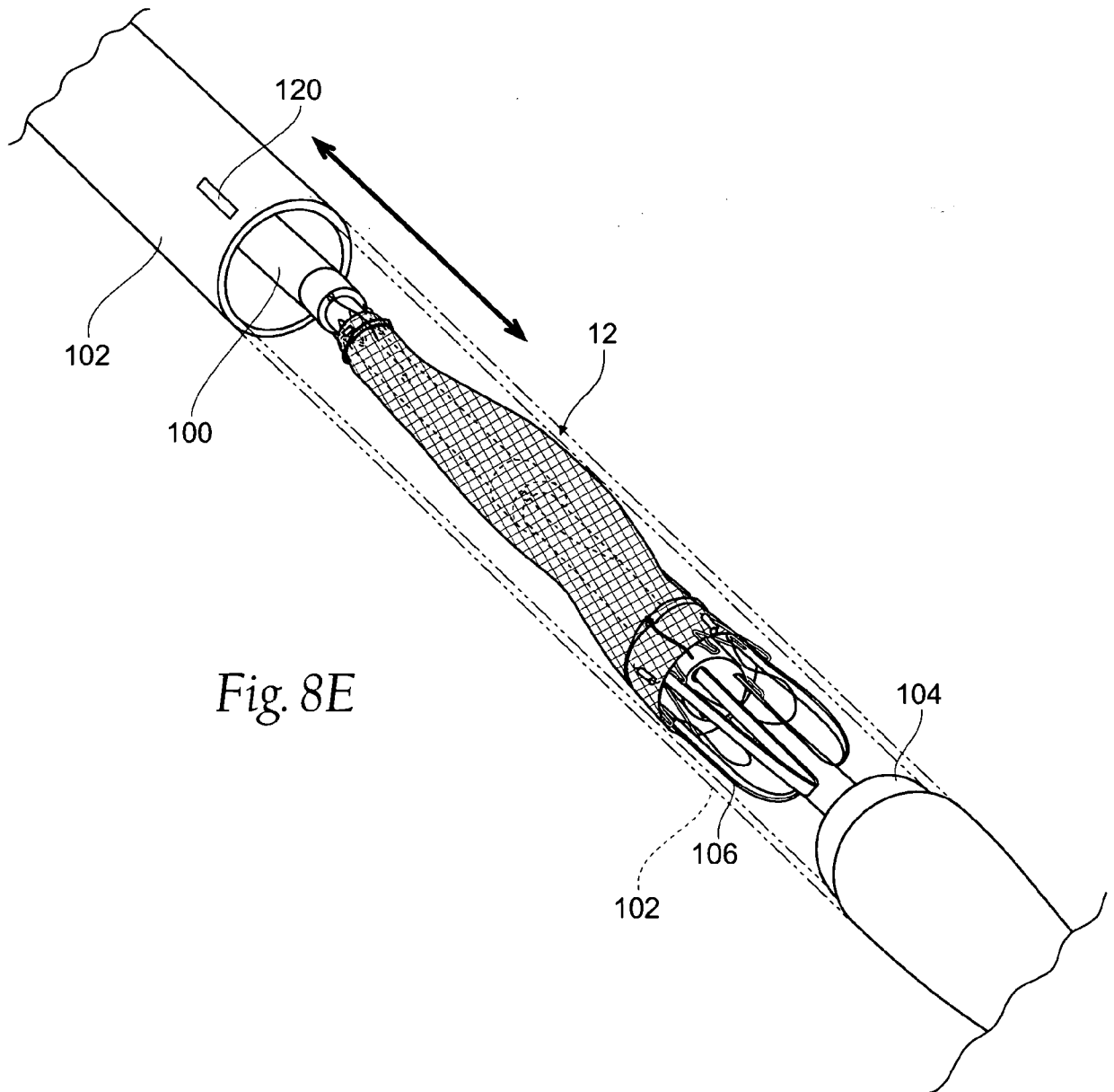


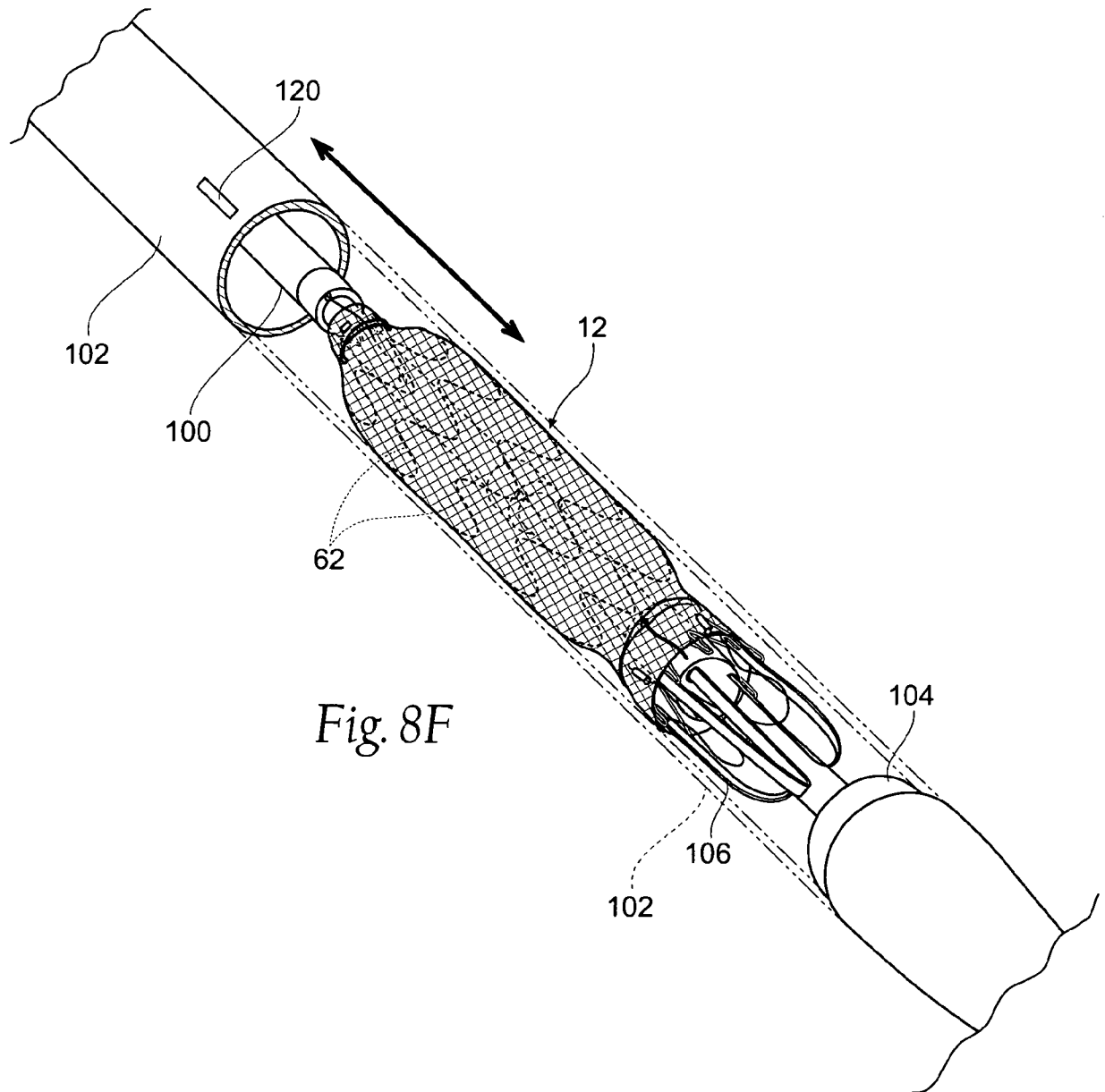
Fig. 7B

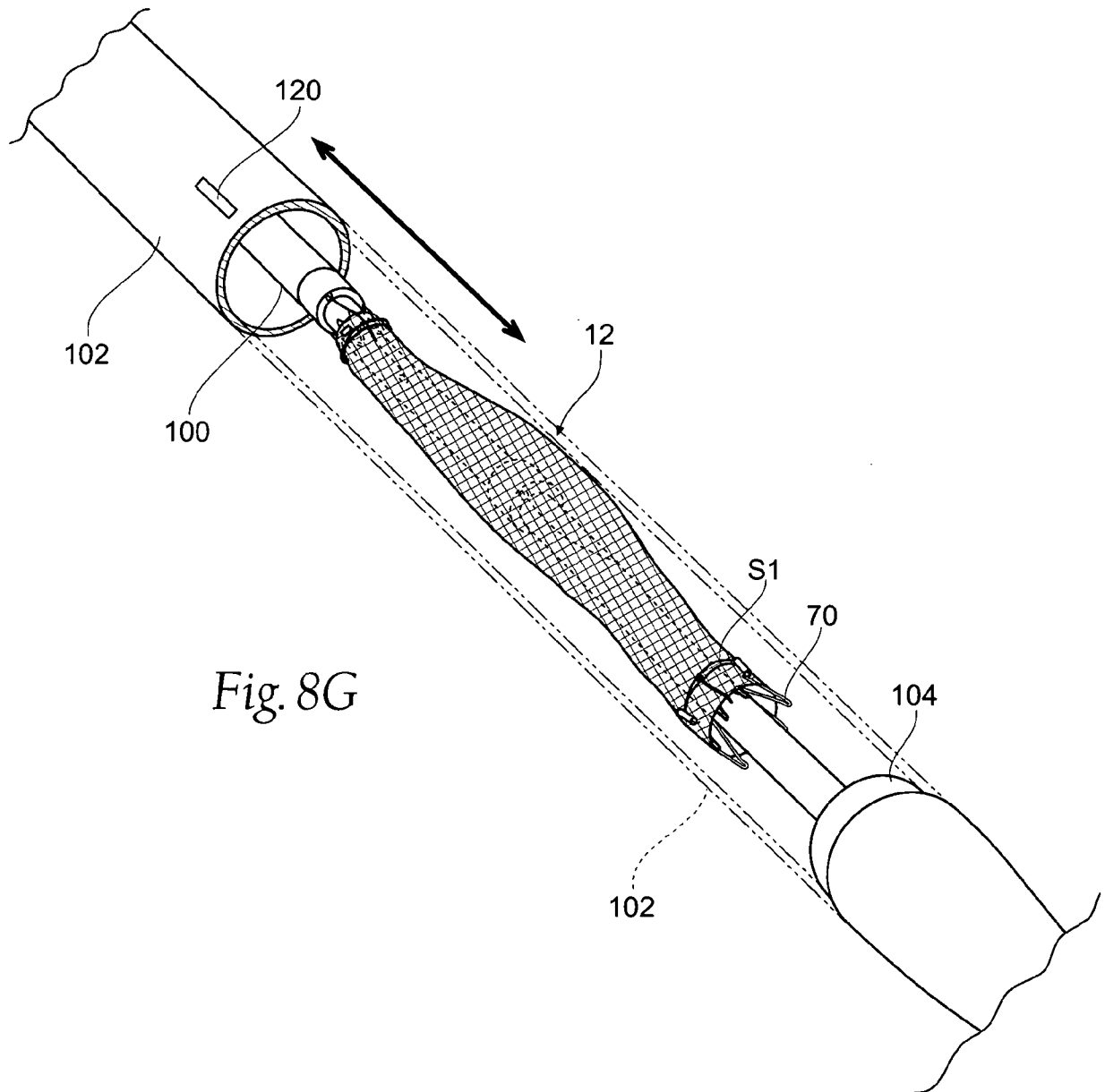












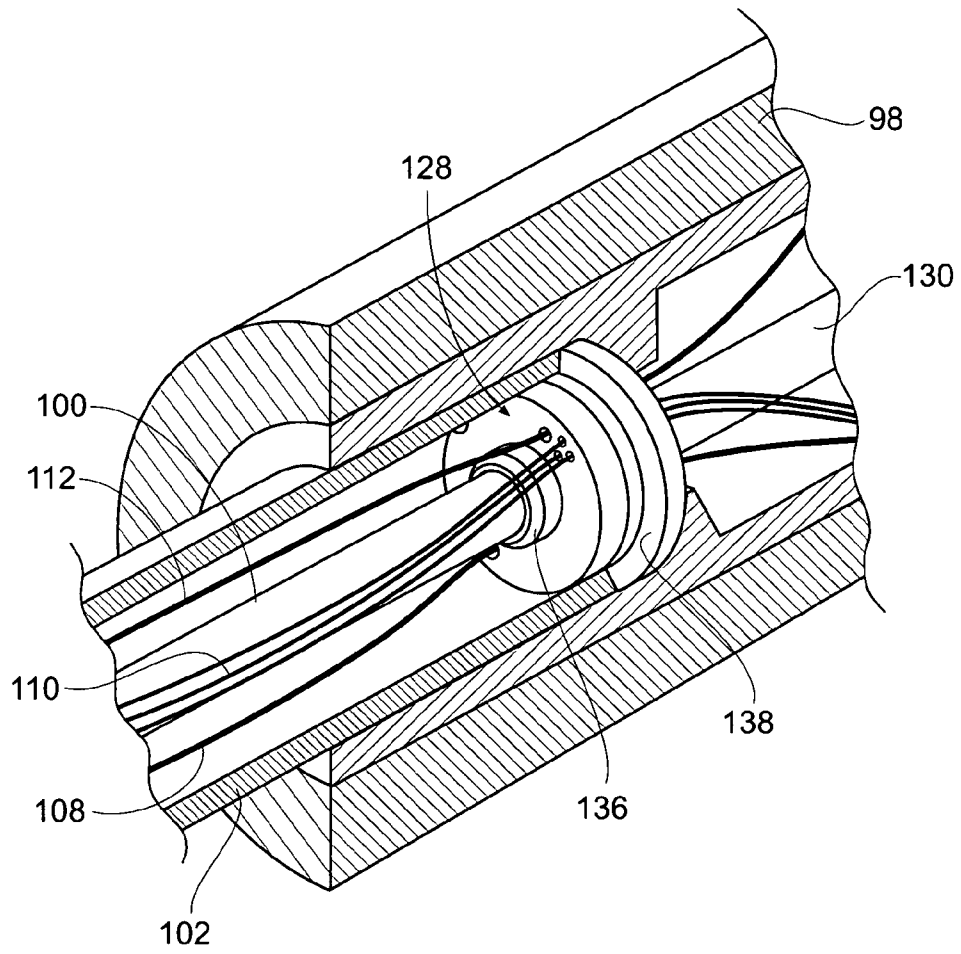


Fig. 9

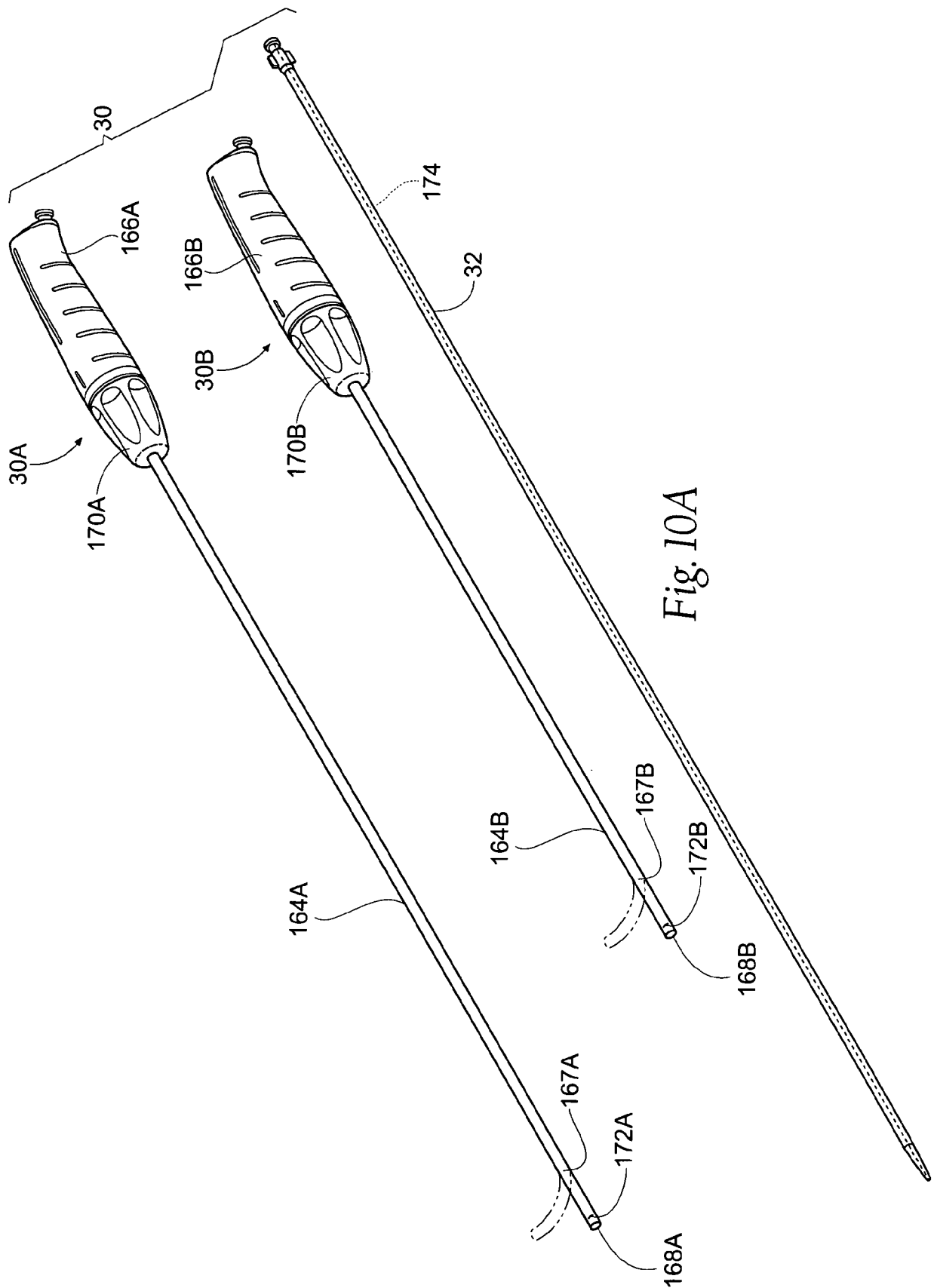
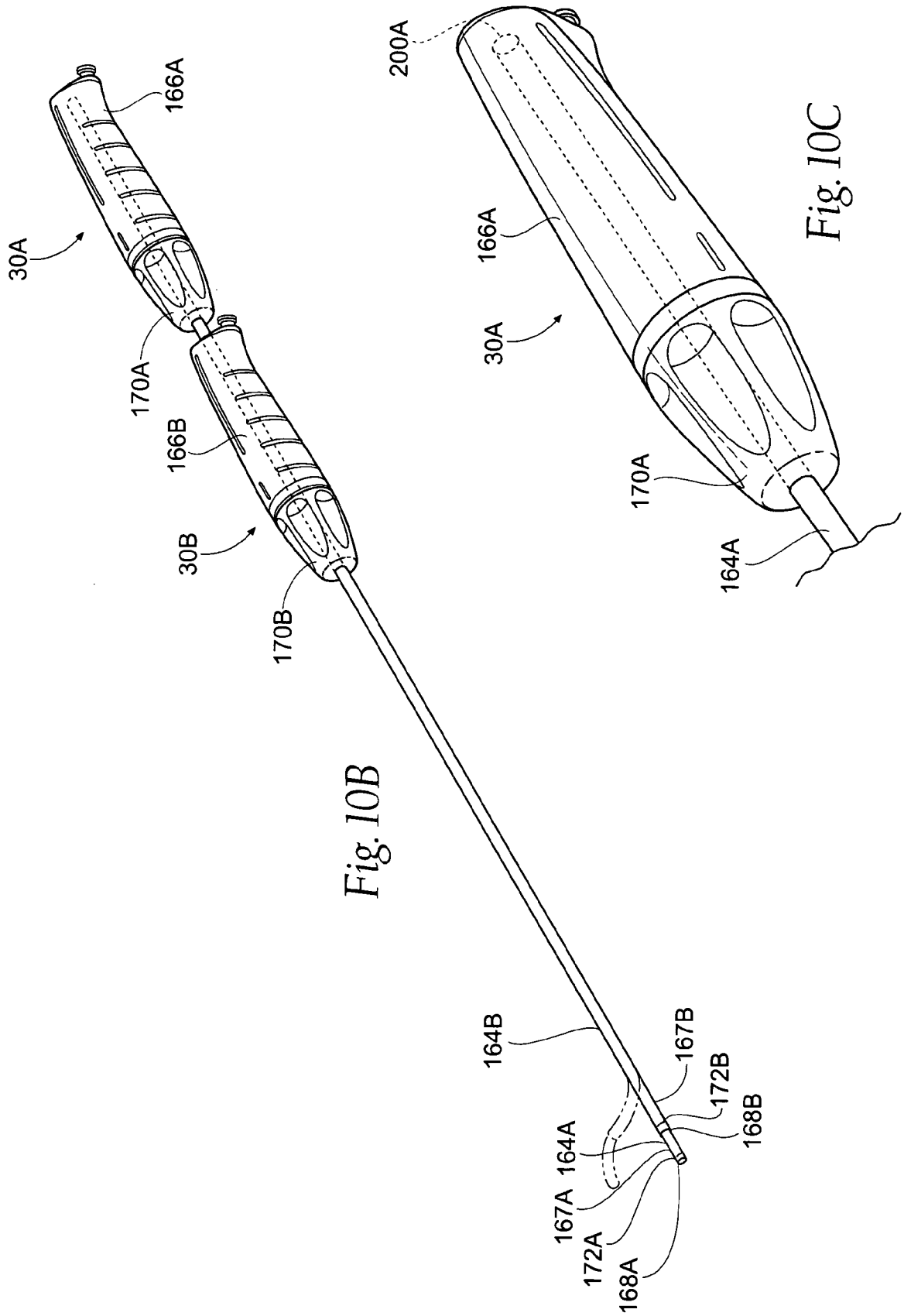
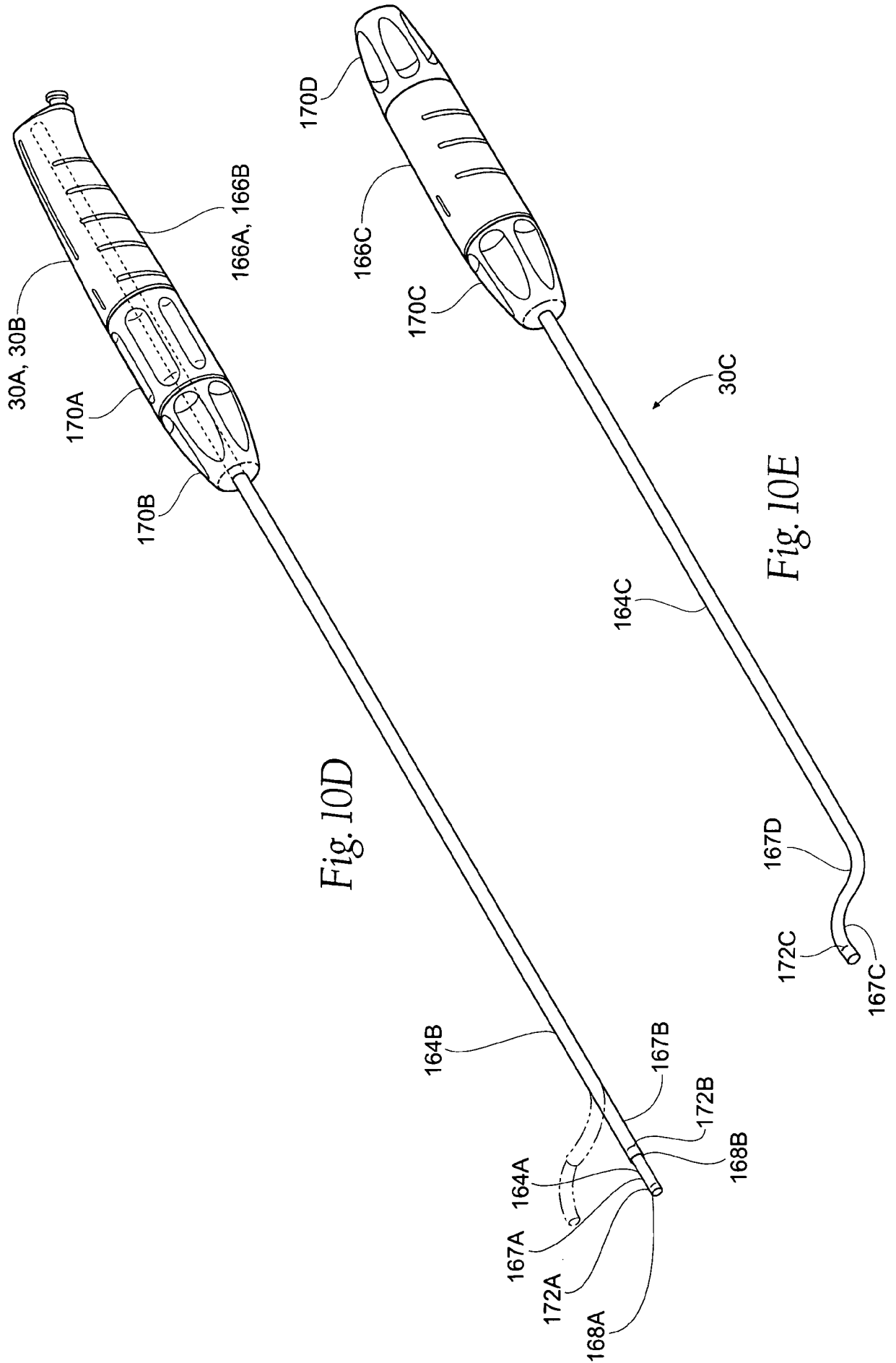


Fig. 10A





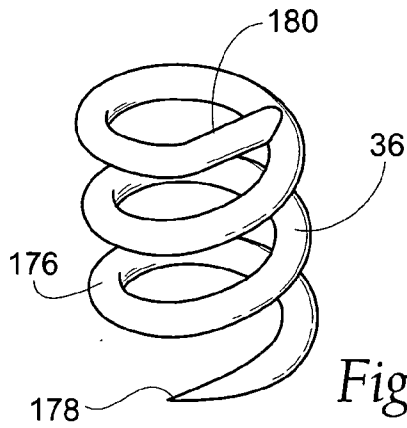


Fig. 11A

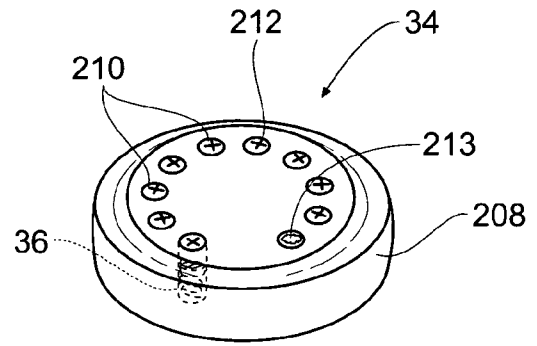


Fig. 11B

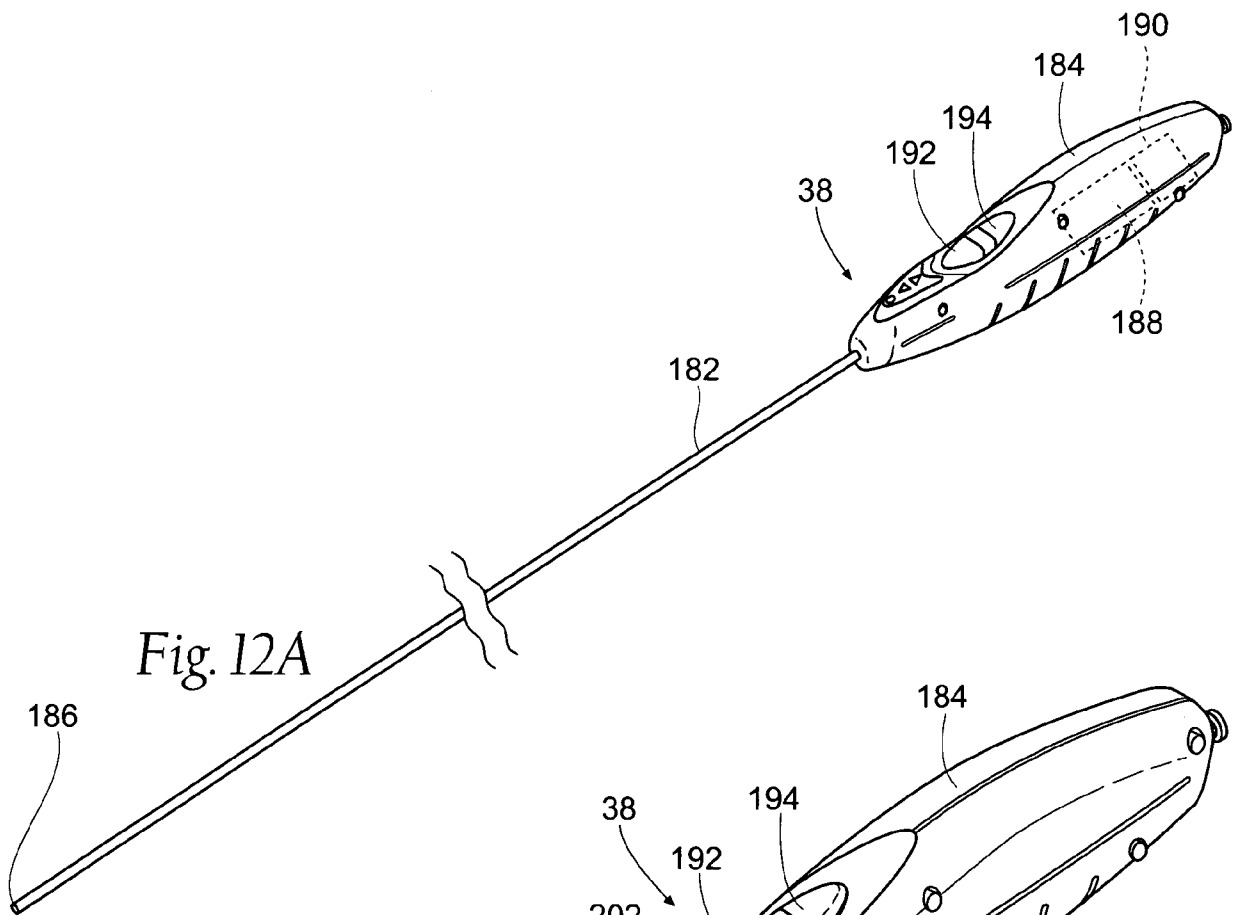


Fig. 12A

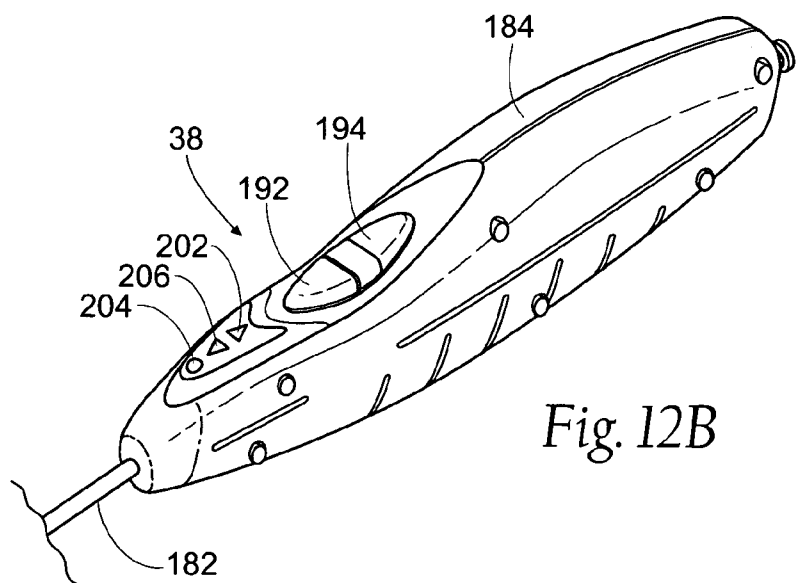
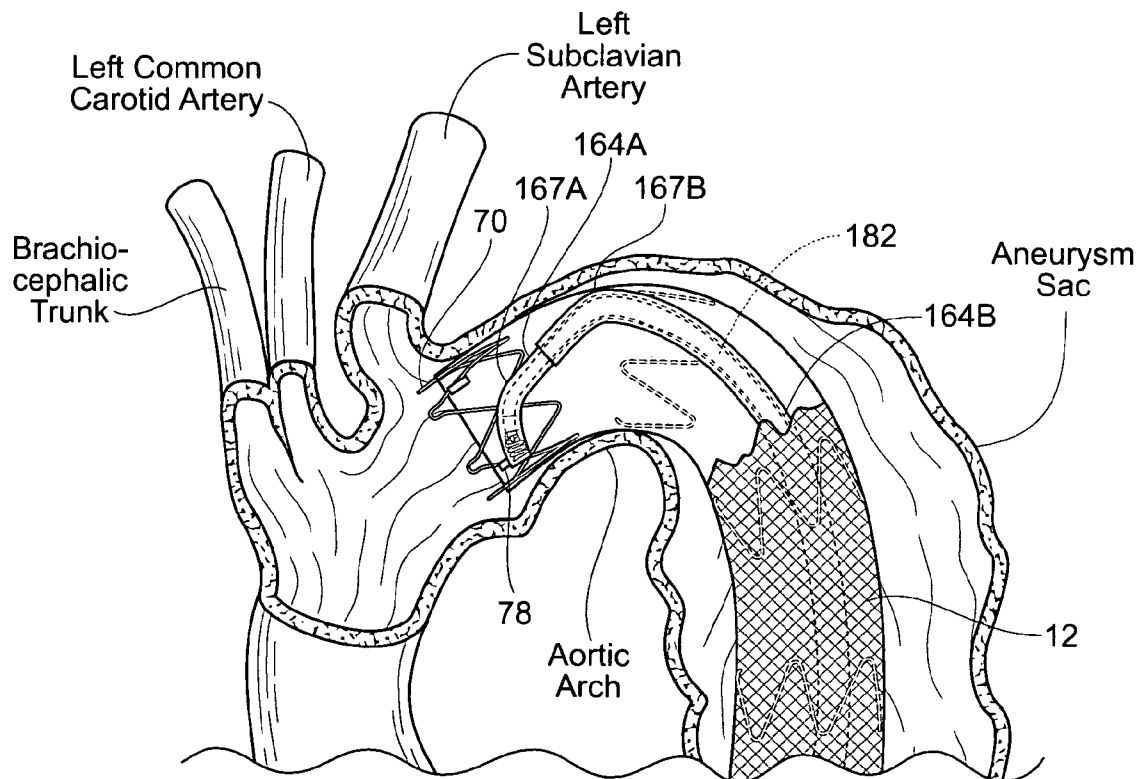
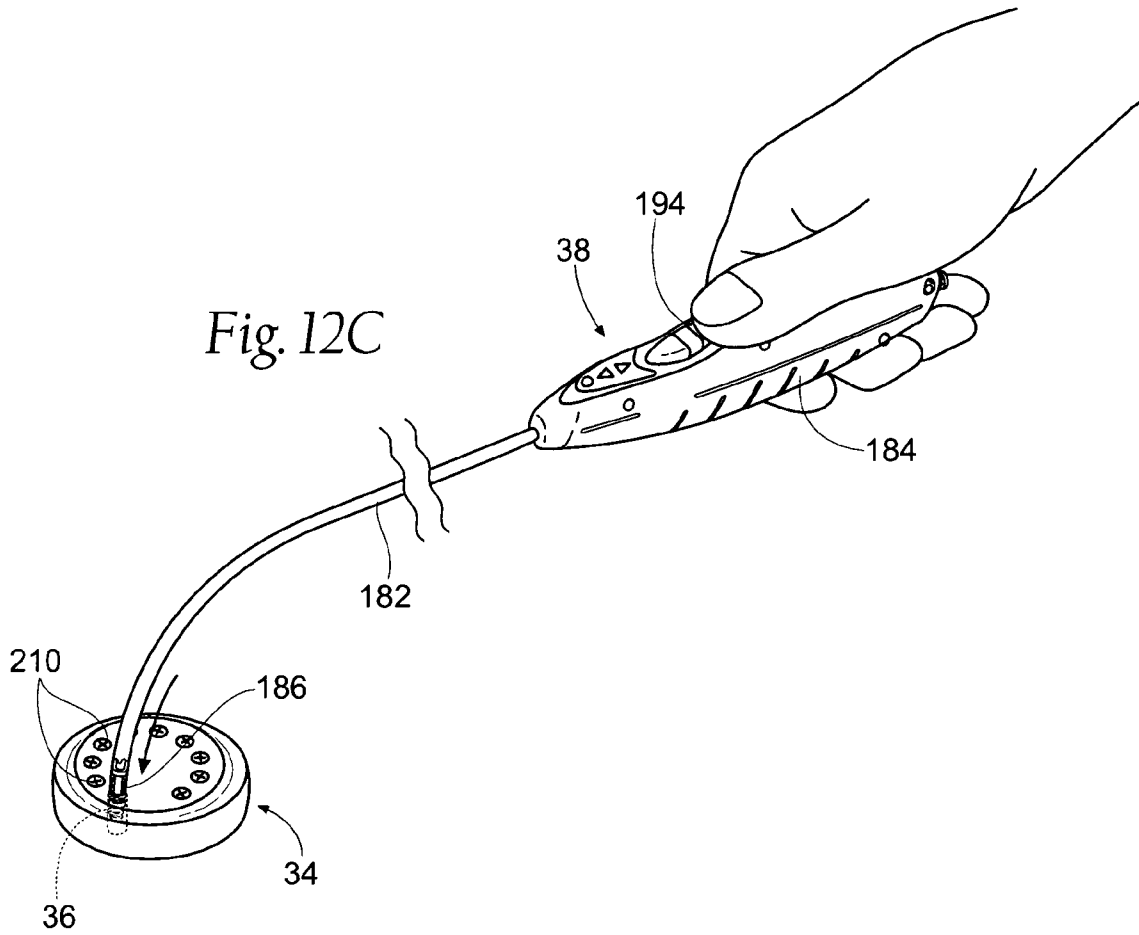


Fig. 12B





*Fig. 13A*

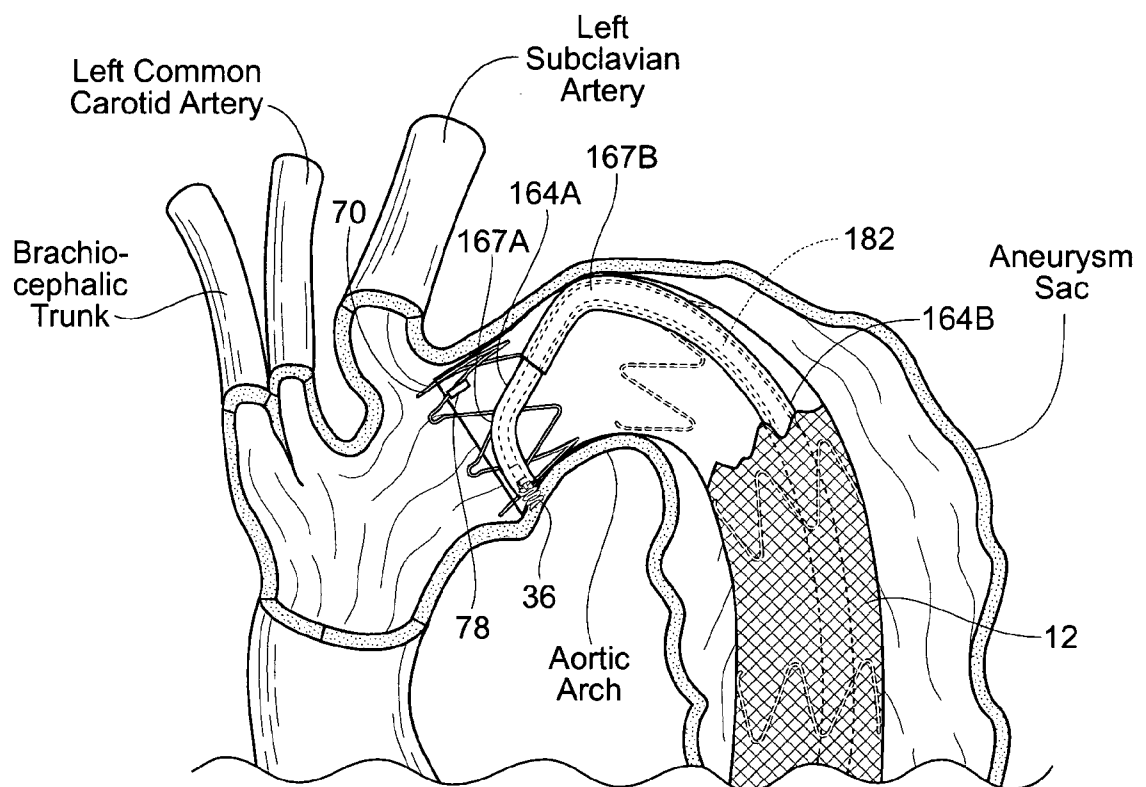


Fig. 13B

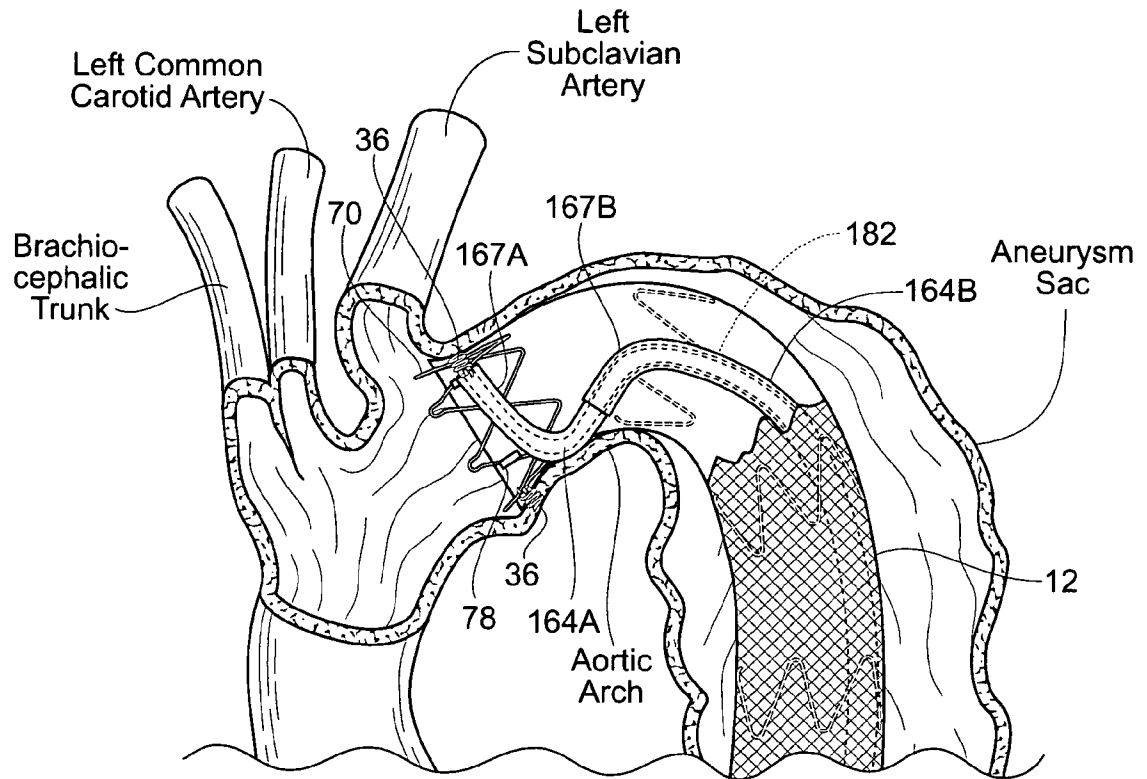


Fig. 13C

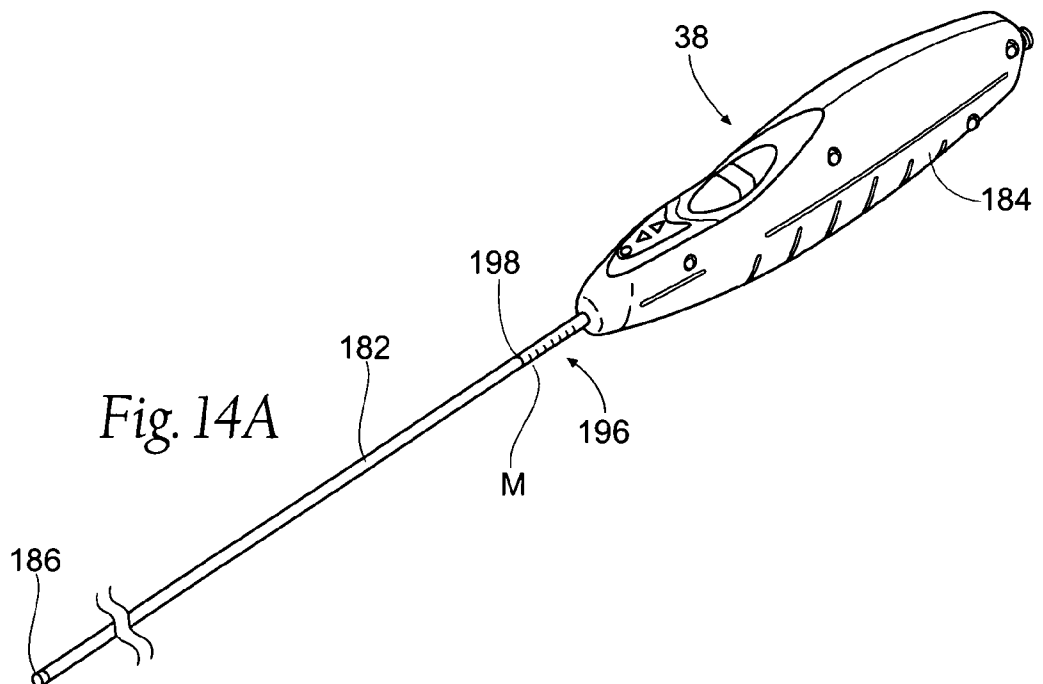
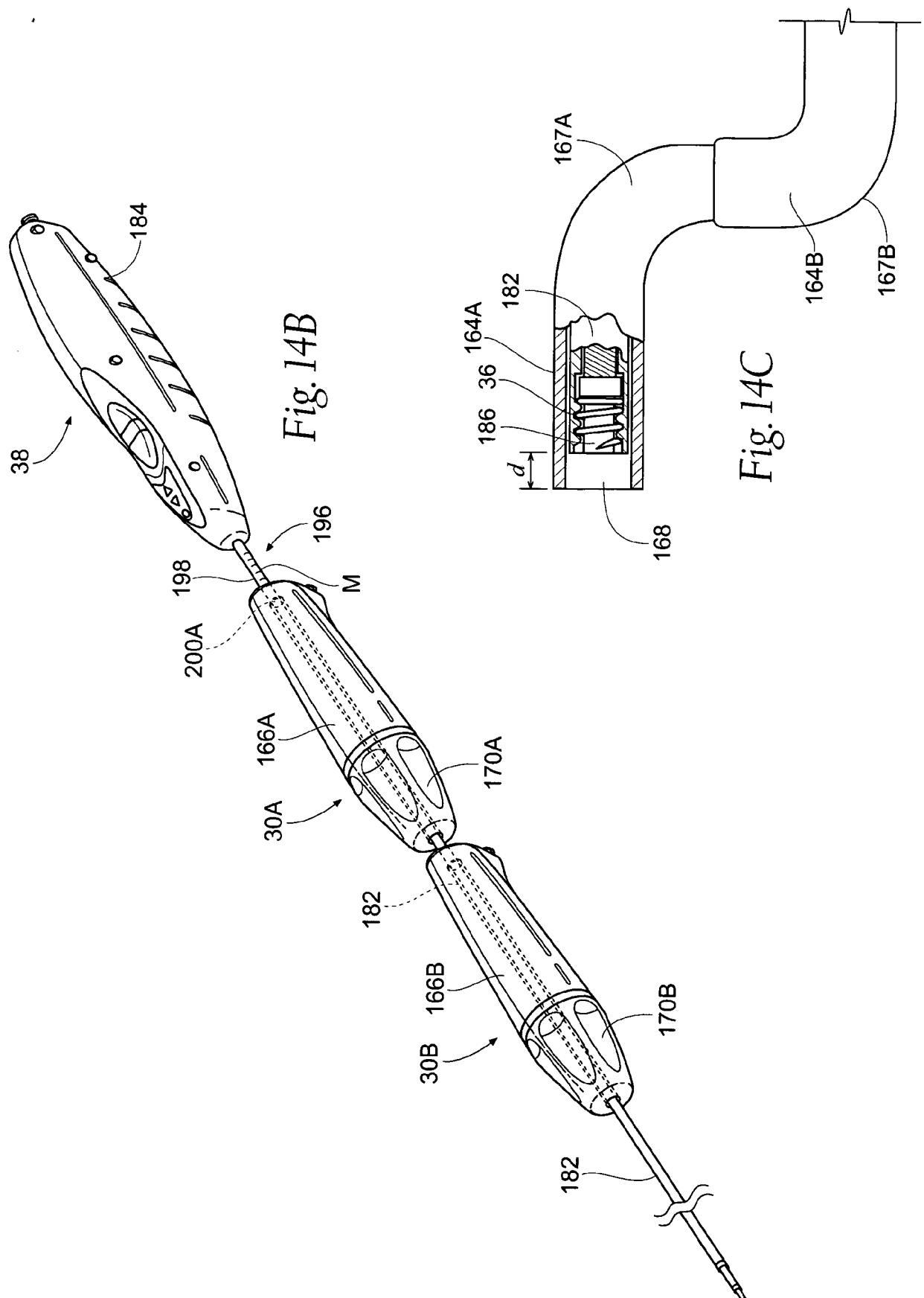
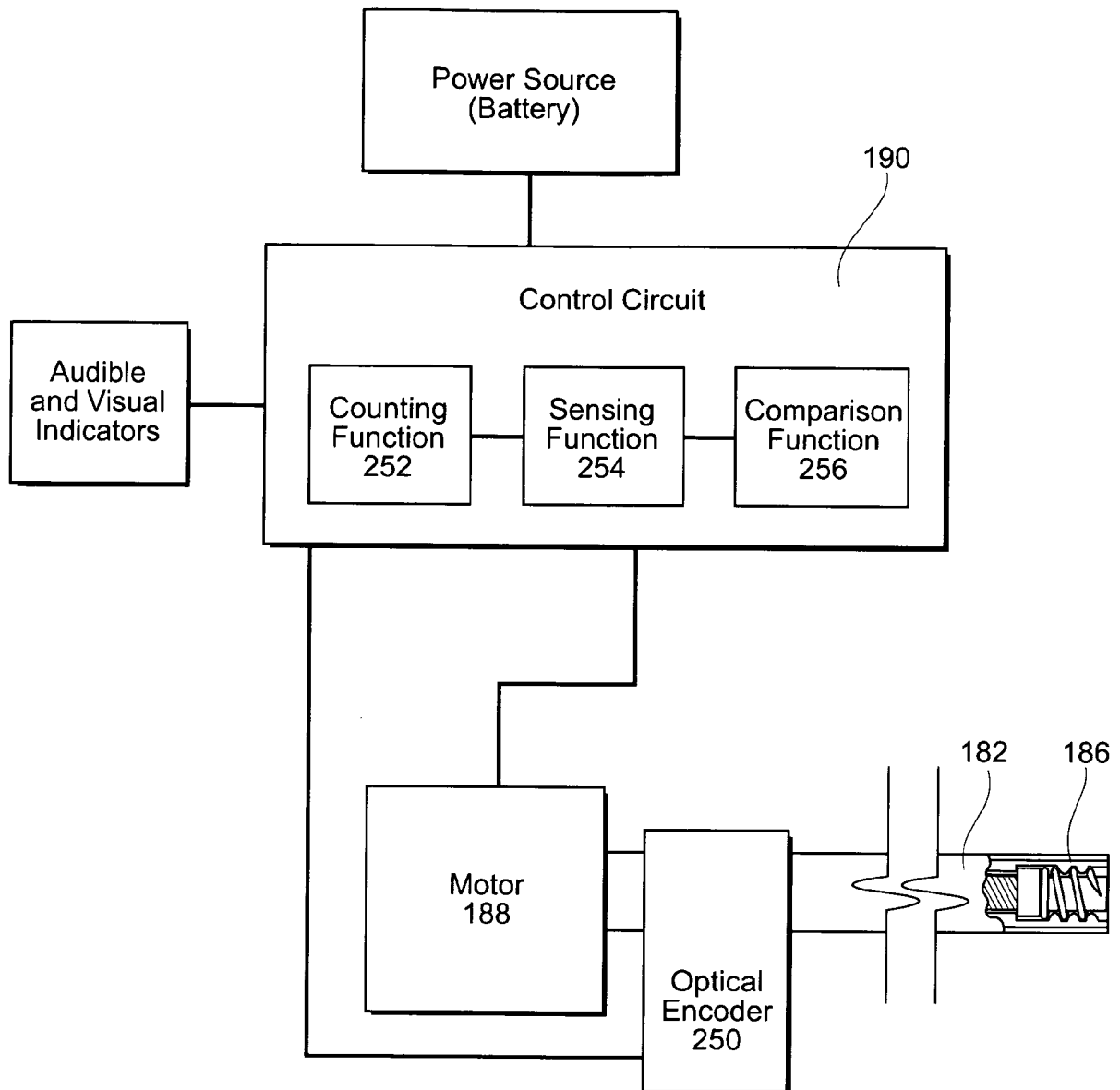
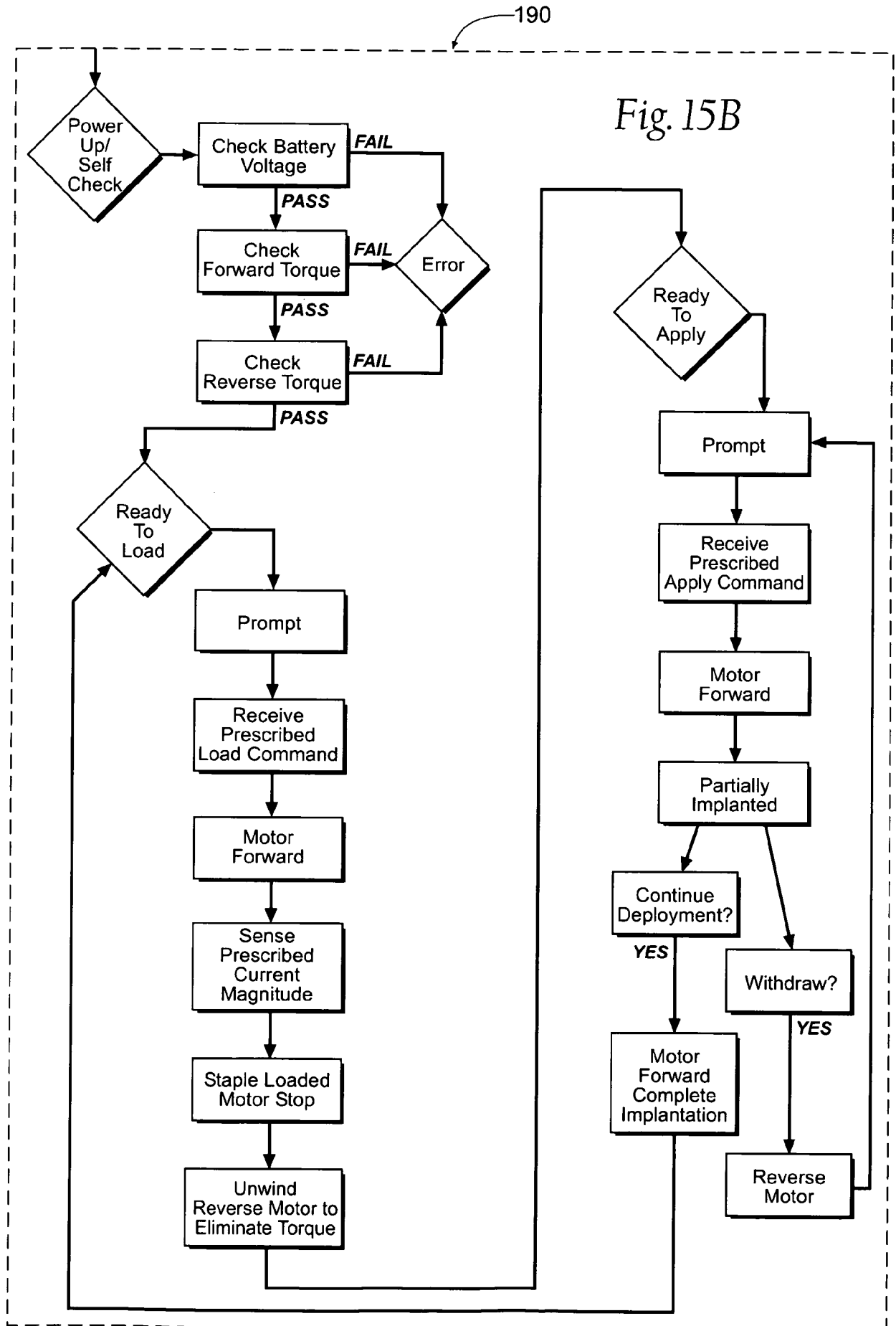
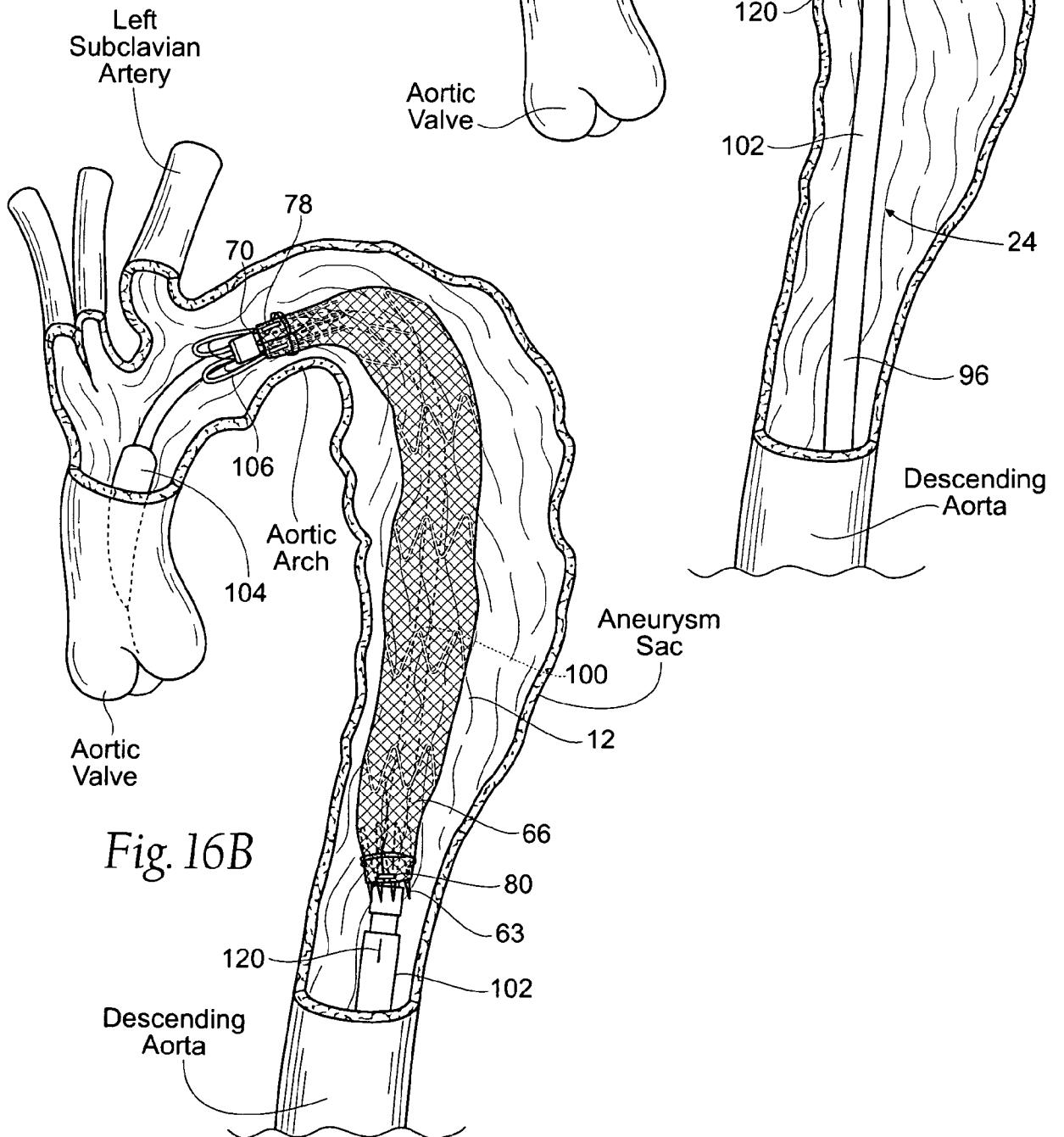
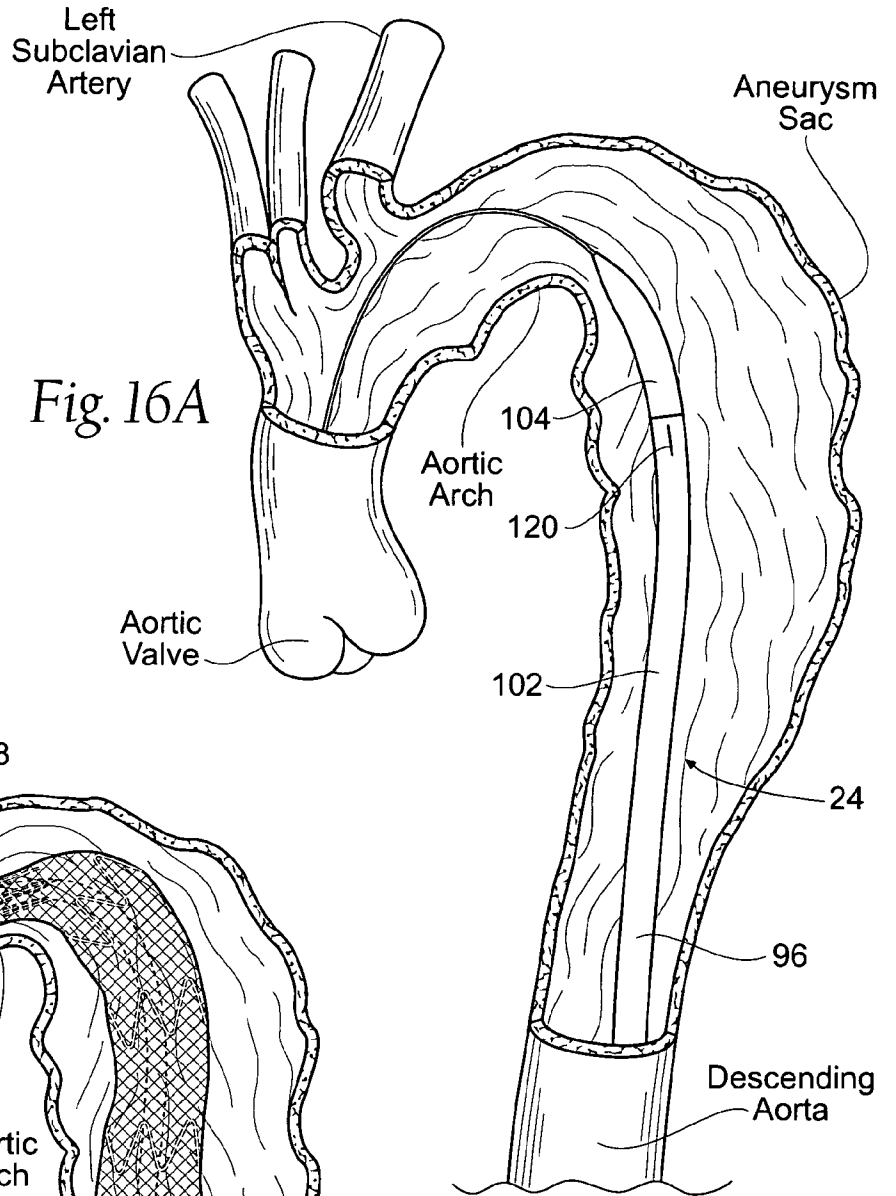


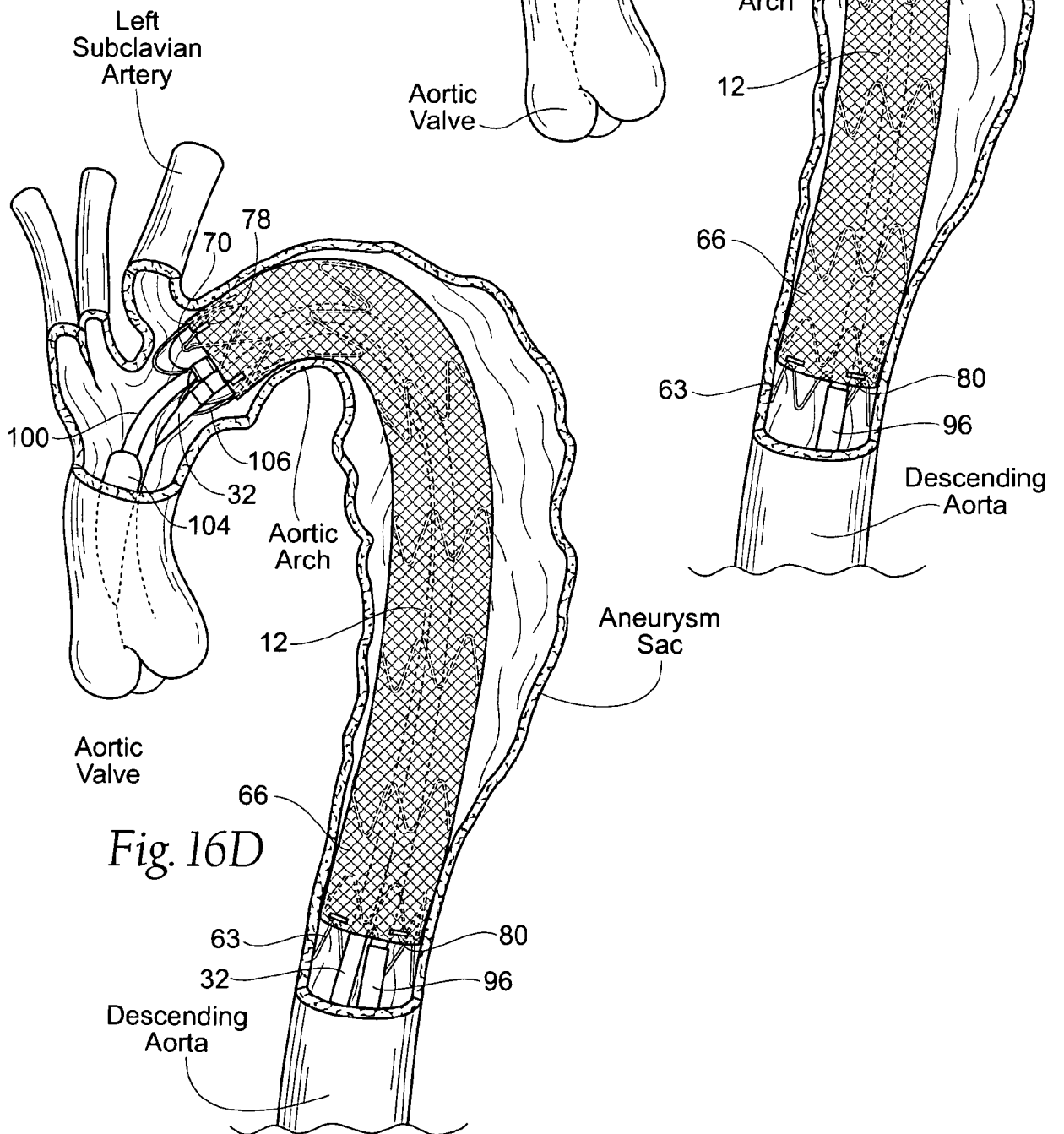
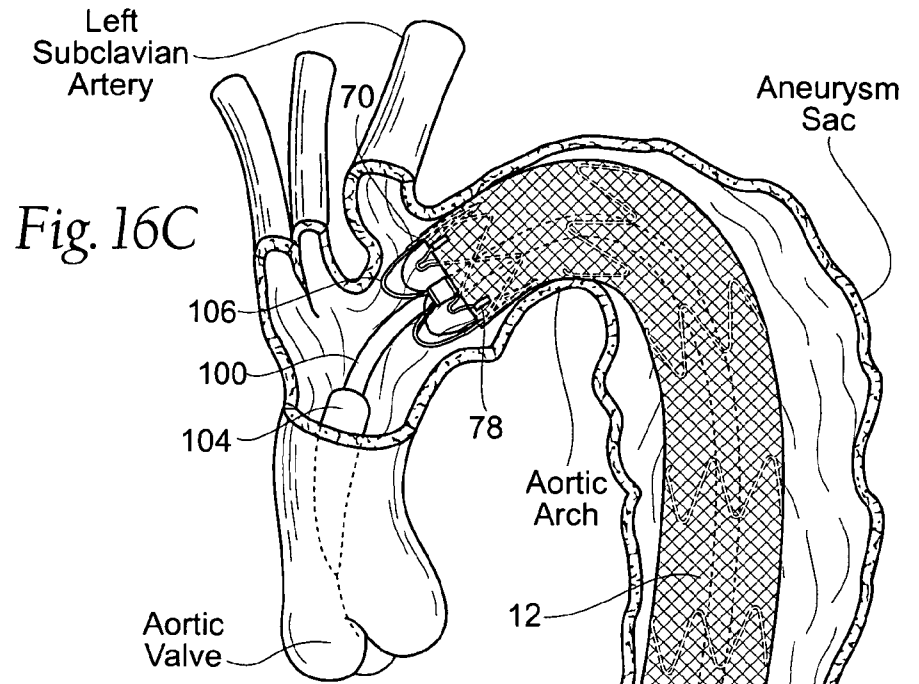
Fig. 14A



*Fig. 15A*









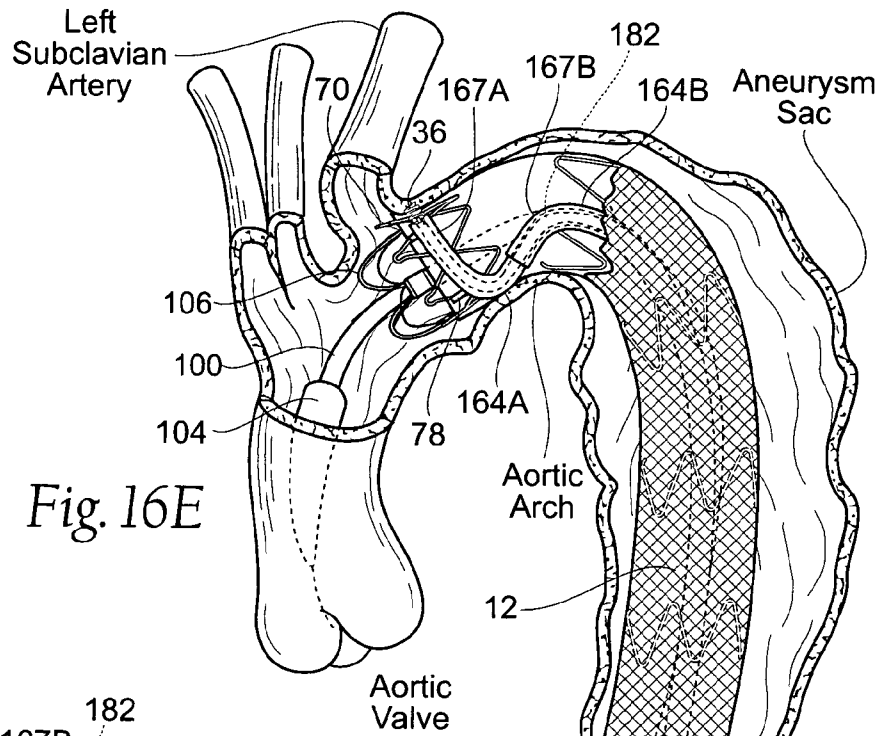


Fig. 16E

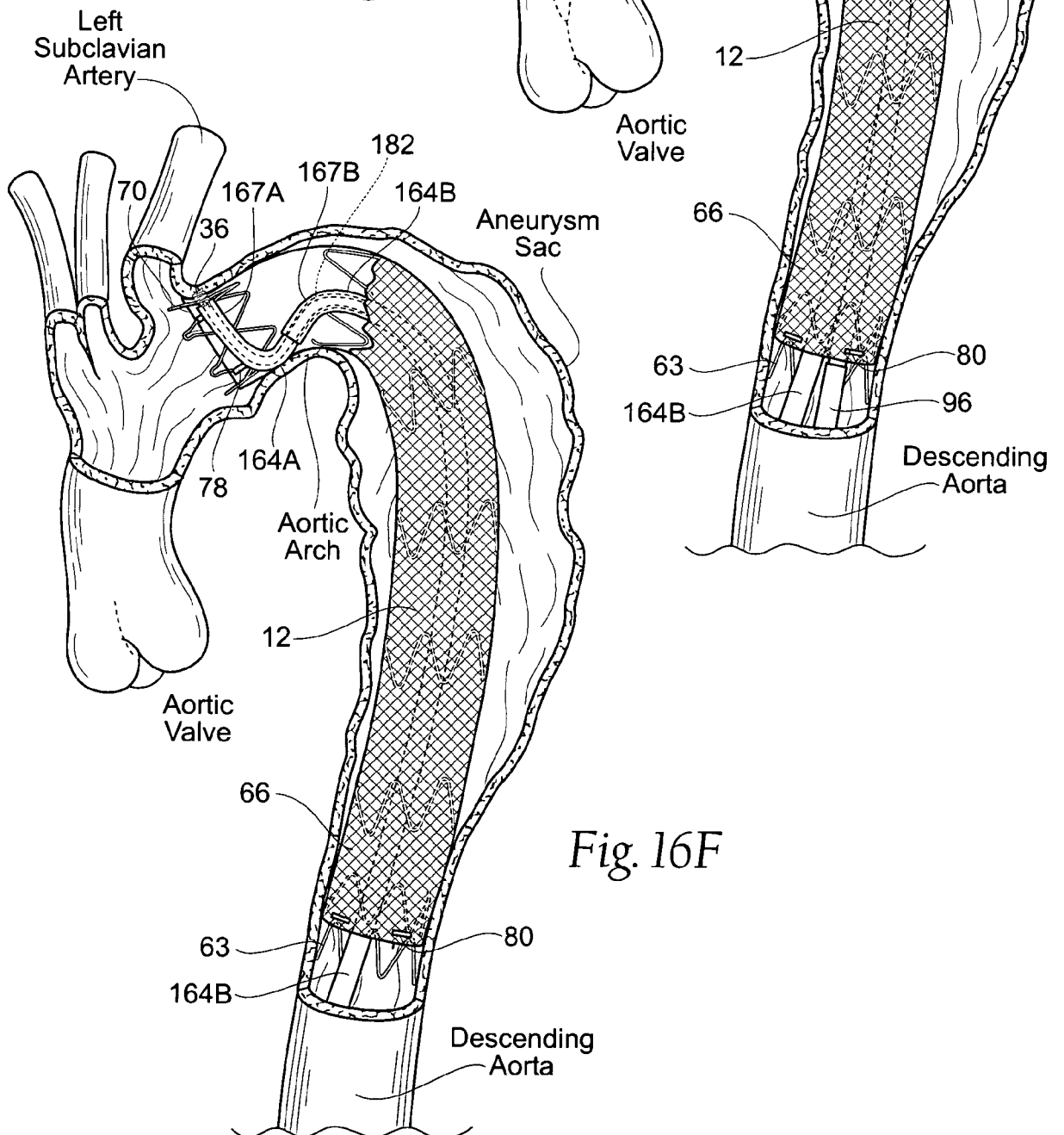


Fig. 16F

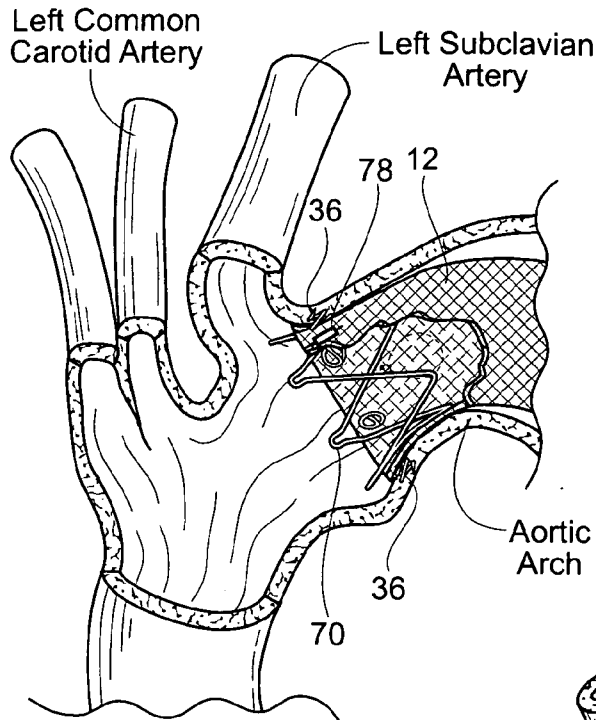


Fig. 16G

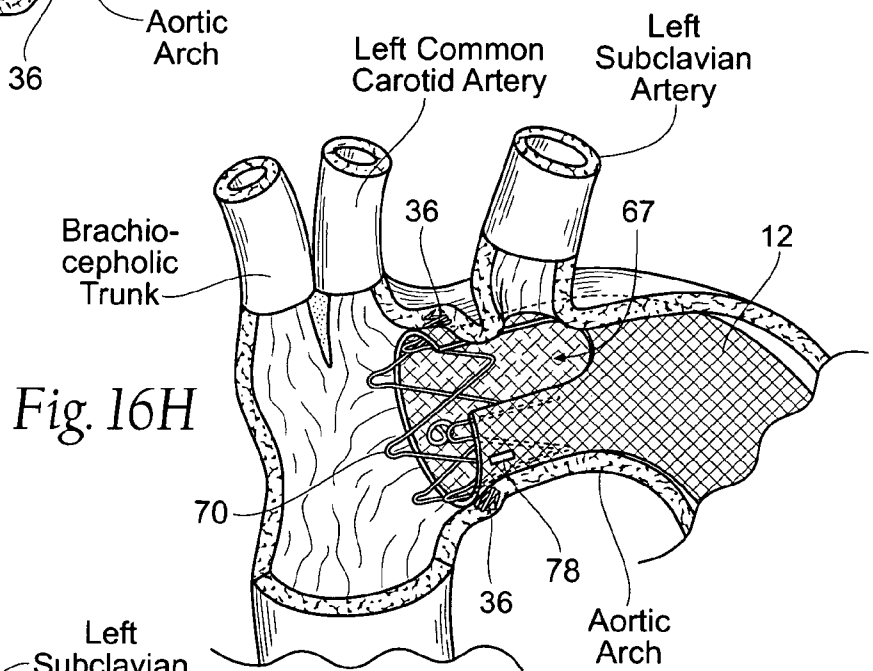


Fig. 16H

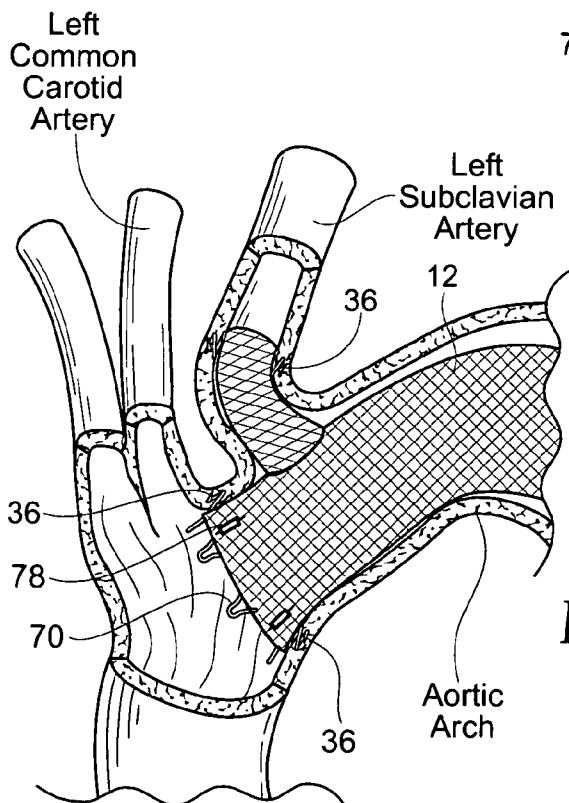
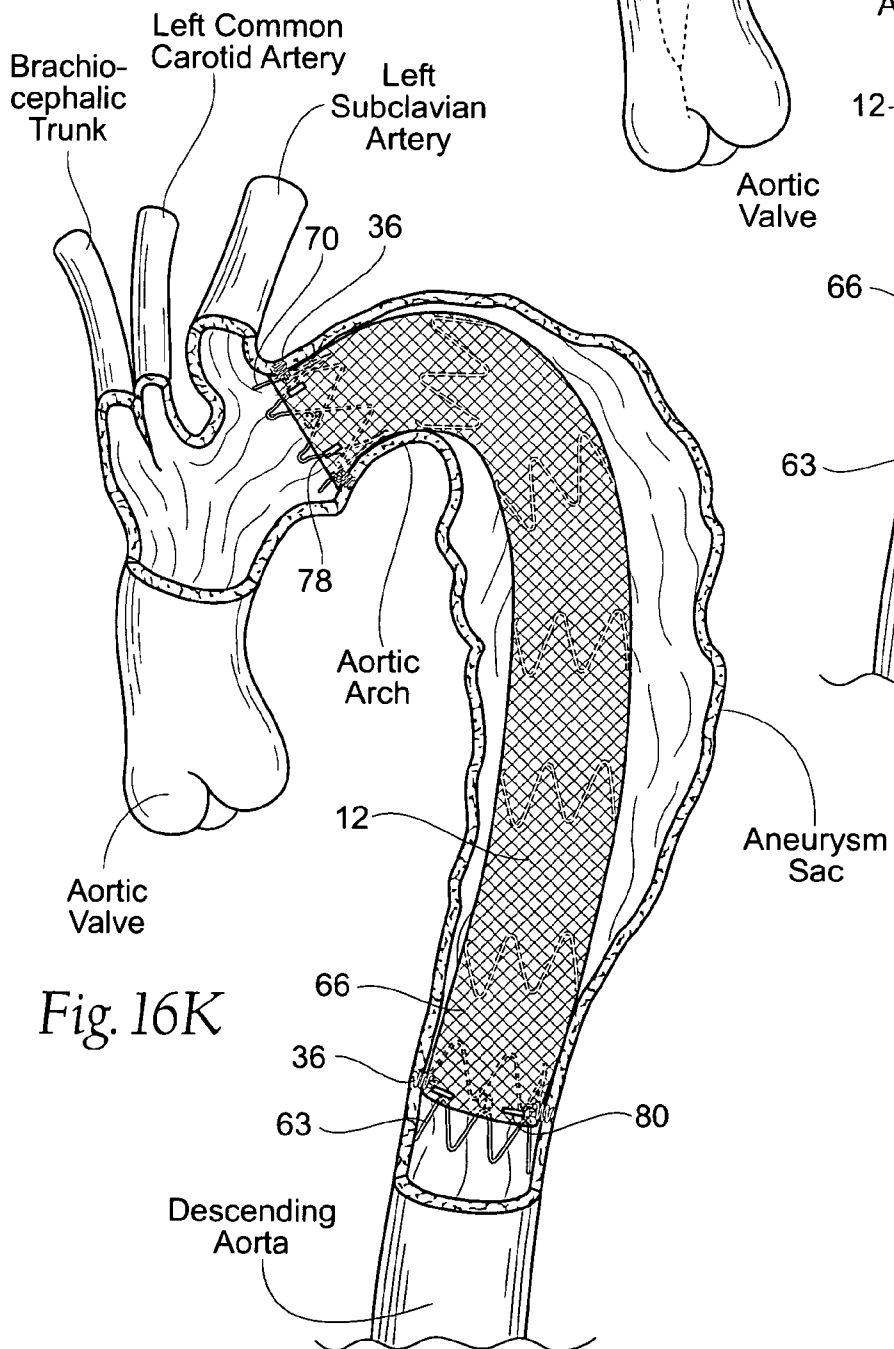
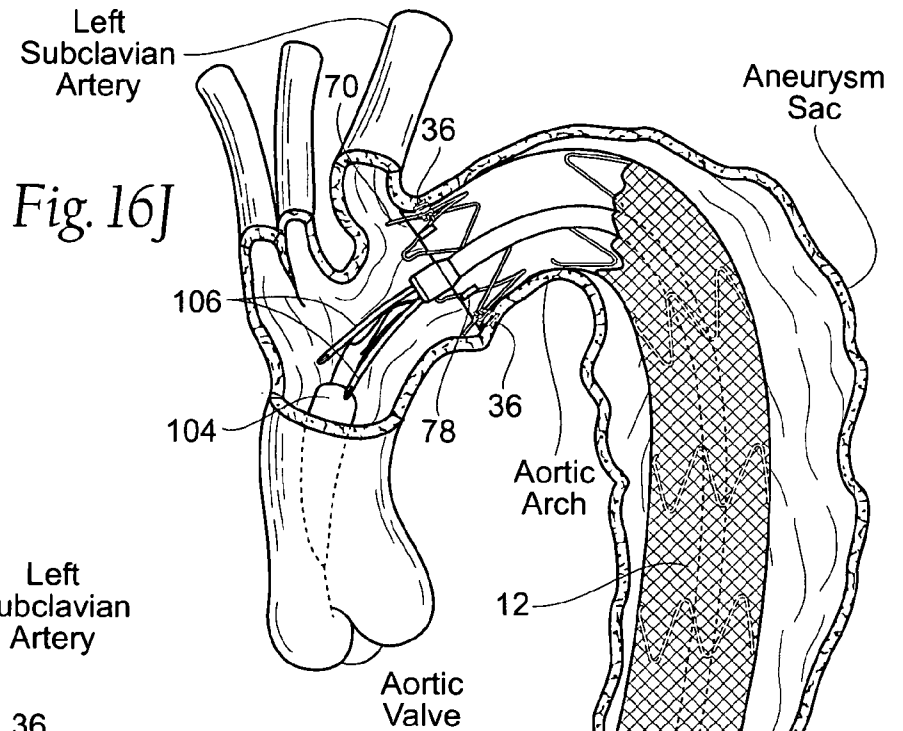
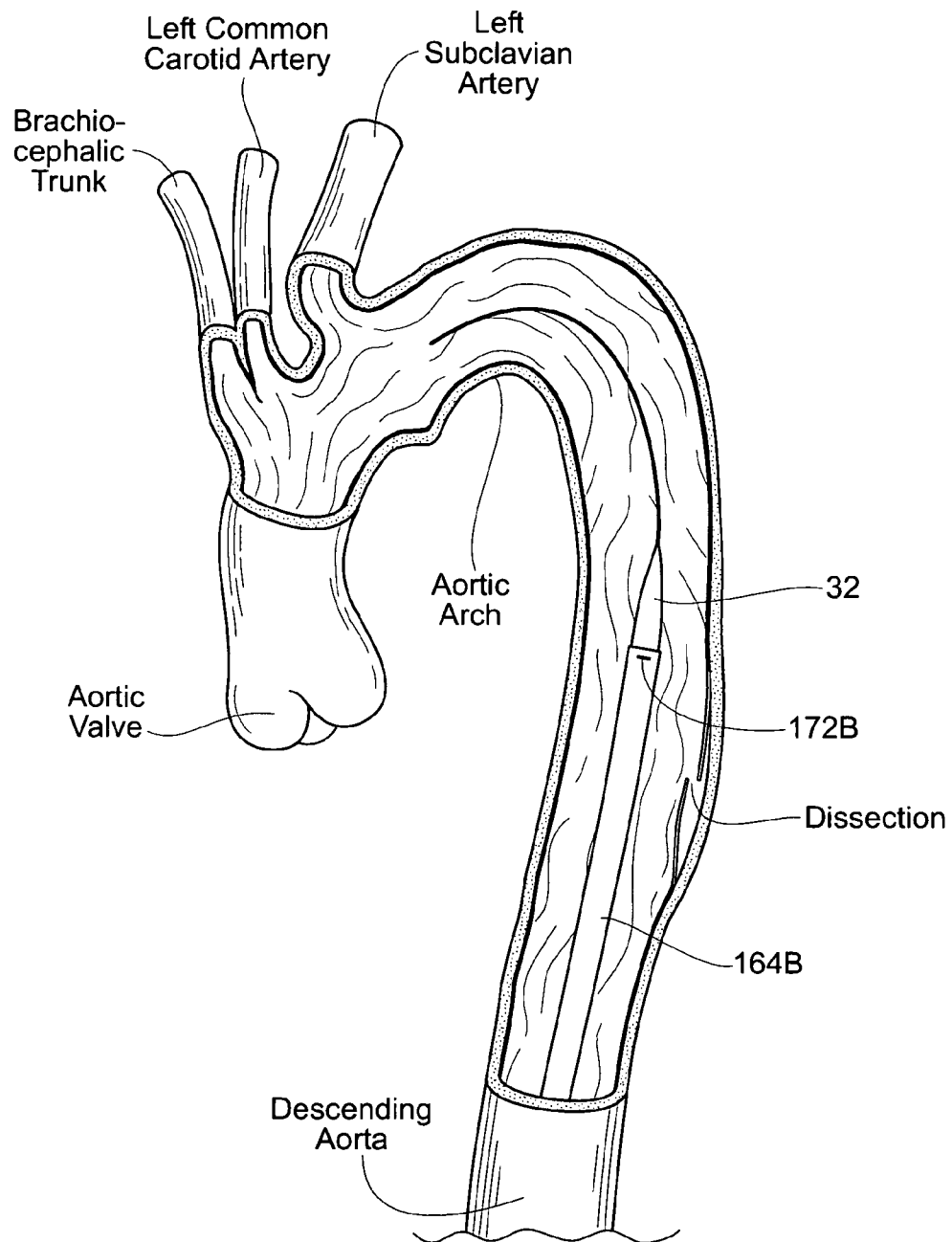


Fig. 16I



*Fig. 17A*

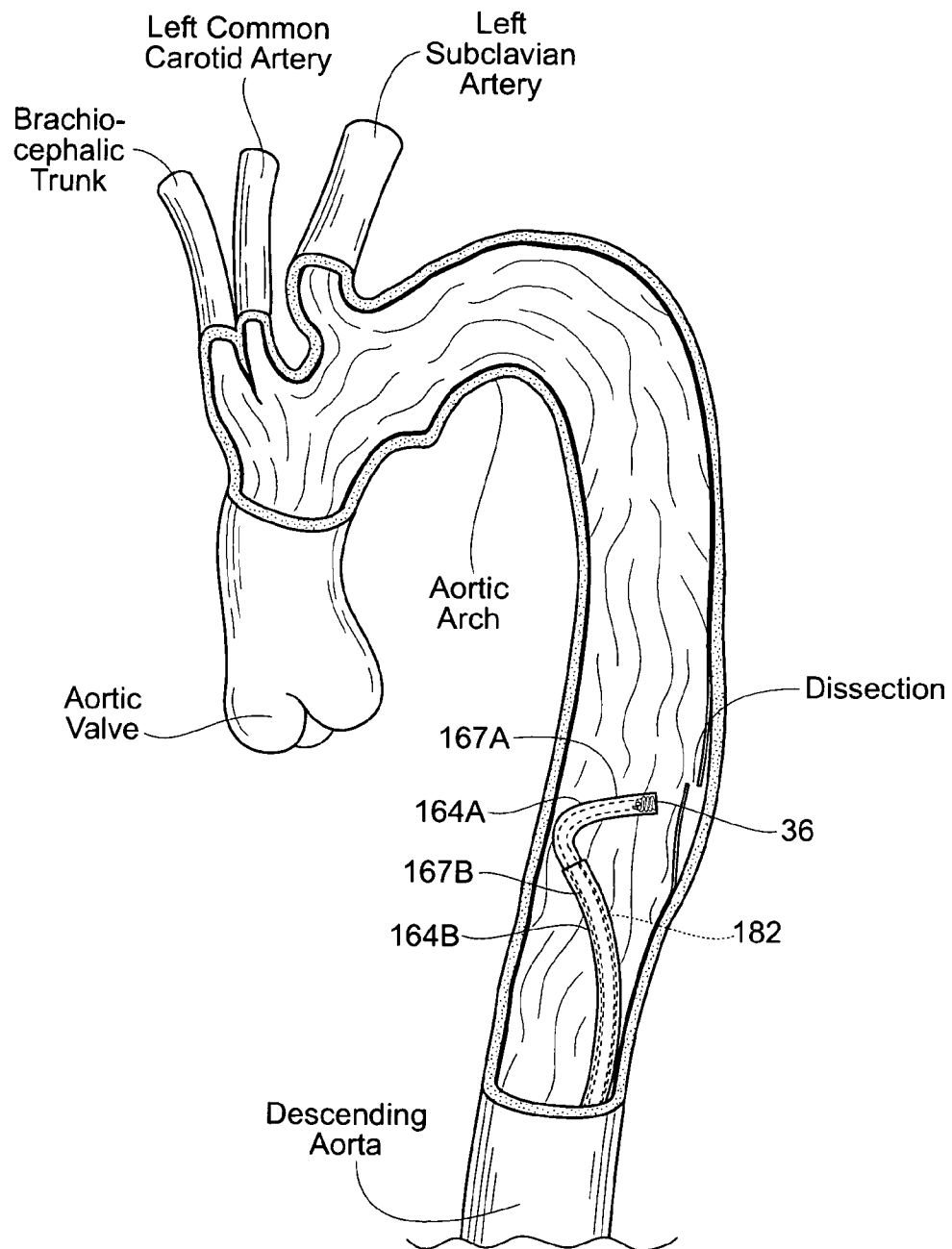
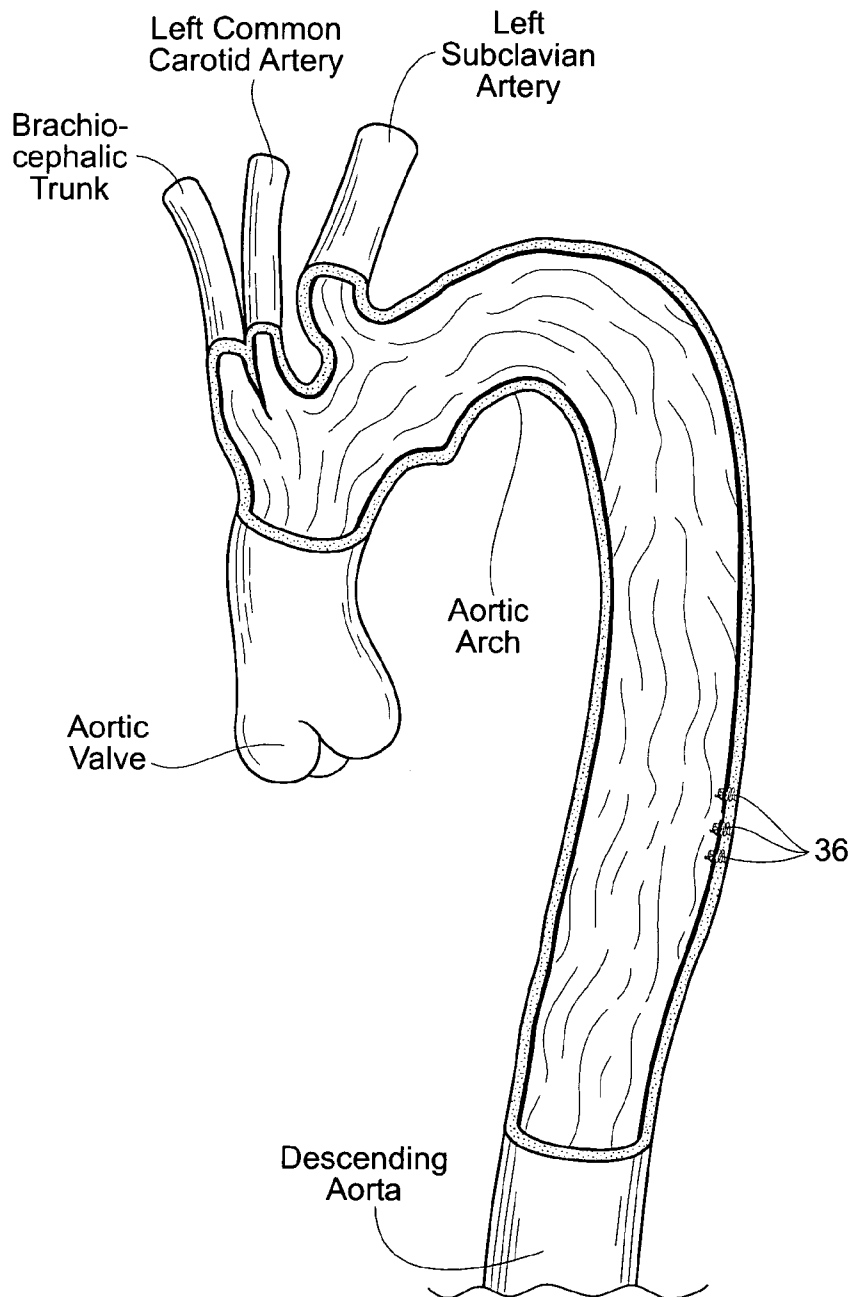


Fig. 17B

*Fig. 17C*

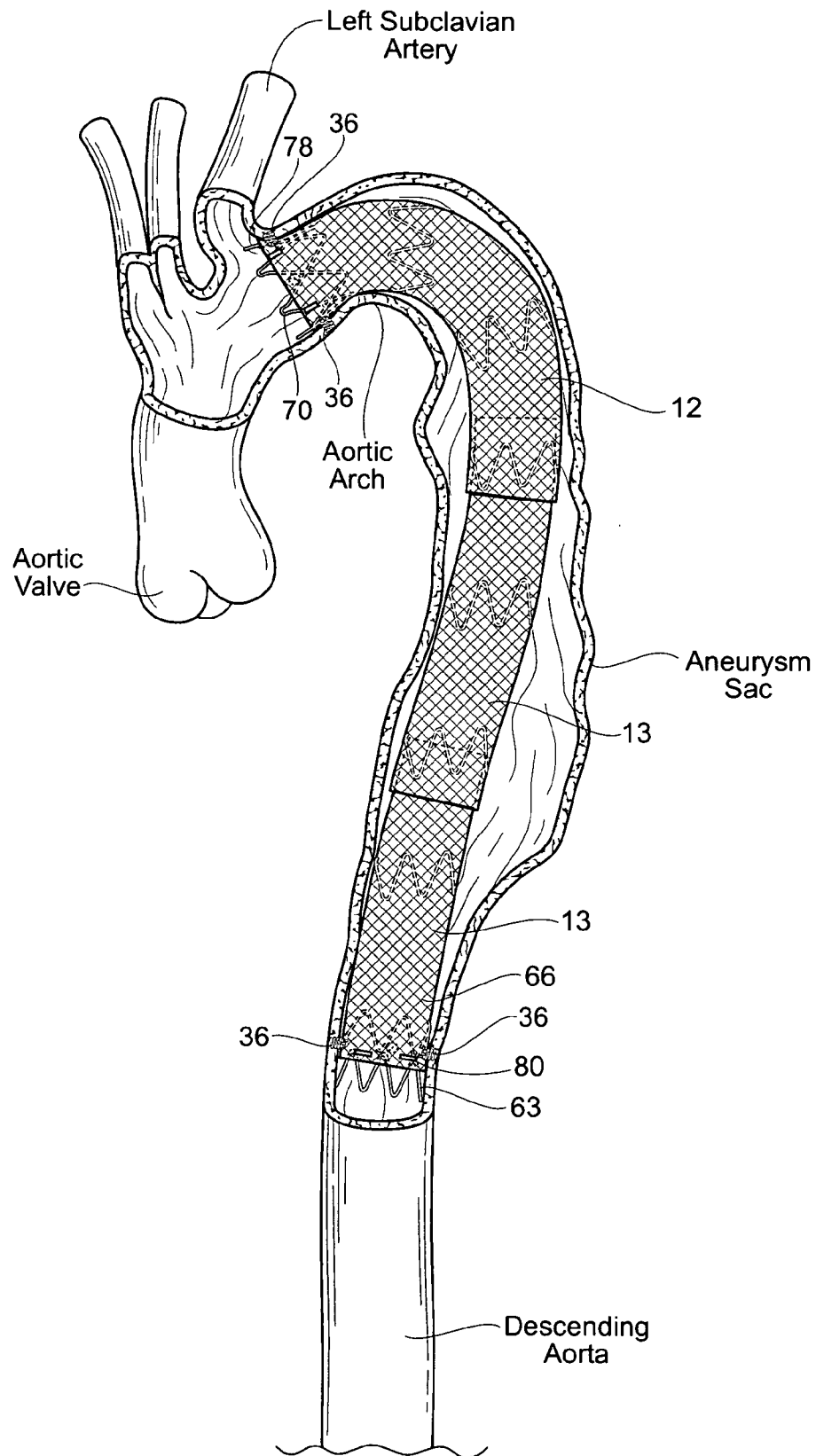


Fig. 18A

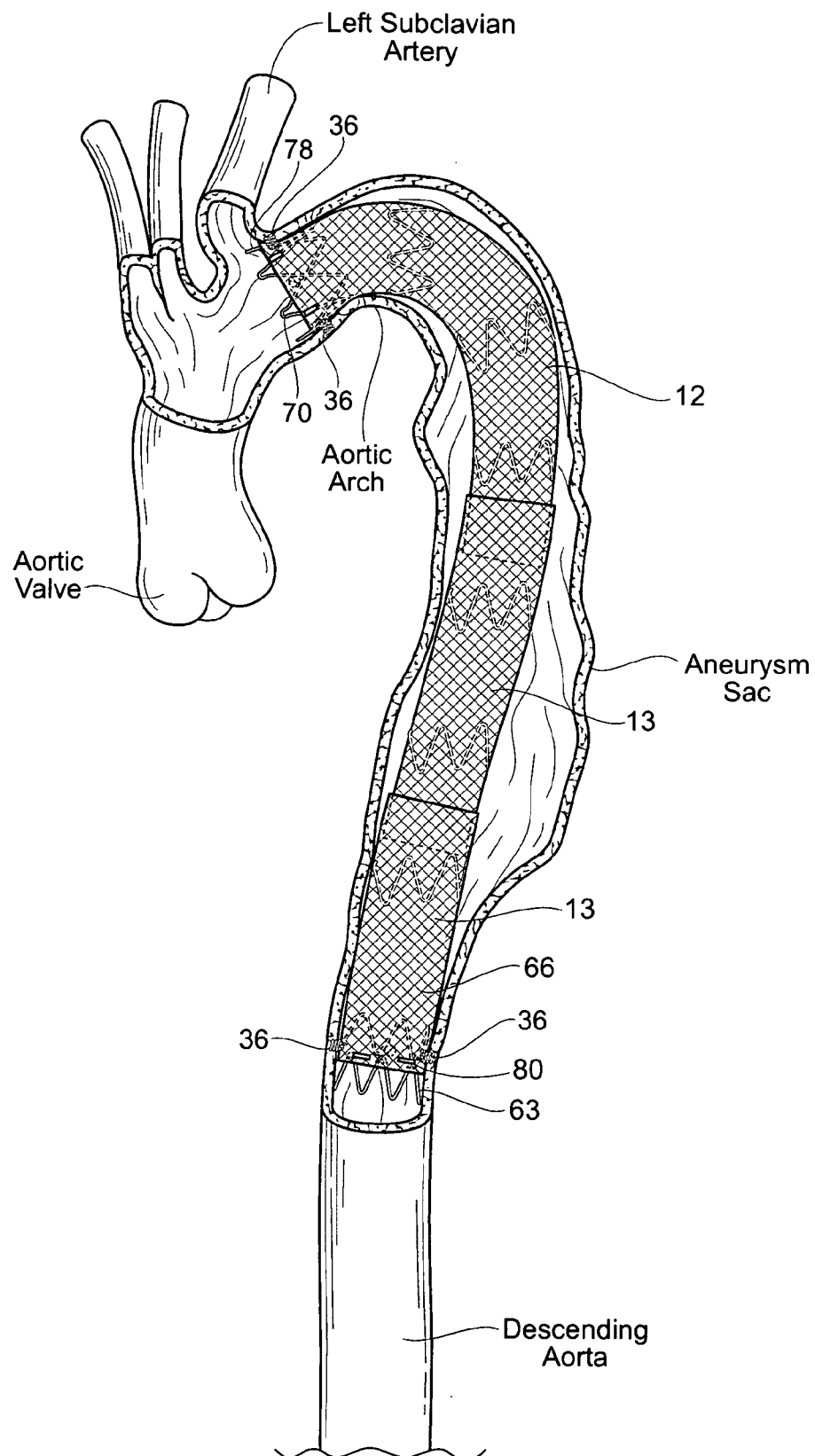


Fig. 18B



## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.  
PCT/US 09/05607

## A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - A61F 2/06 (2009.01)

USPC - 623/1.16

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)

IPC(8): A61F 2/06 (2009.01)

USPC: 623/1.16

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

USPC: 606/191, 200; 623/1.1, 1.13, 1.15, 1.16, 1.2, 1.49

IPC(8): A61F 2/06 (2009.01)

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

Electronic Databases Searched: Google Scholar; PubWest (US Patents full-text, US PGPubs full-text, EPO Abstracts, and JPO Abstracts) Search Terms Used: cardiac, heart, aneurysm, stent, stents, graft, implant, prosthesis, implants, medical, patient, biocompatible, polyester, PTFE, fold, folds, plurality, several, more

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 6,123,722 A (FOGARTY et al.) 26 September 2000 (26.09.2000) entire document especially Fig. 3, Fig. 3A, Fig. 3B, Fig. 10B, Fig. 14D, abstract, col 3, ln 53-56, col 4, ln 47-49, col 9, ln 56-68, col 10, ln 1-48, col 10, ln 62-66, col 11, ln 22-24, col 13, ln 5-17, col 16, ln 28-40, col 18, ln 48-55	1-11
A	US 5,876,432 A (LAU et al.) 2 March 1999 (2.03.1999) entire document generally	1-11
A	US 6,878,164 B2 (KUJAWSKI et al.) 12 April 2005 (12.04.2005) entire document generally	1-11
A	US 7,081,129 B2 (CHOBOTOV) 25 July 2006 (25.07.2006) entire document generally	1-11
A	US 7,306,623 B2 (WATSON) 11 December 2007 (11.12.2007) entire document generally	1-11
A	US 2006/0259125 A1 (PEACOCK, III) 16 November 2006 (16.11.2006) entire document generally	1-11
A	US 2008/0132996 A1 (DRASLER et al.) 5 June 2008 (05.06.2008) entire document generally	1-11



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



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Date of the actual completion of the international search

3 December 2009 (03.12.2009)

Date of mailing of the international search report

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