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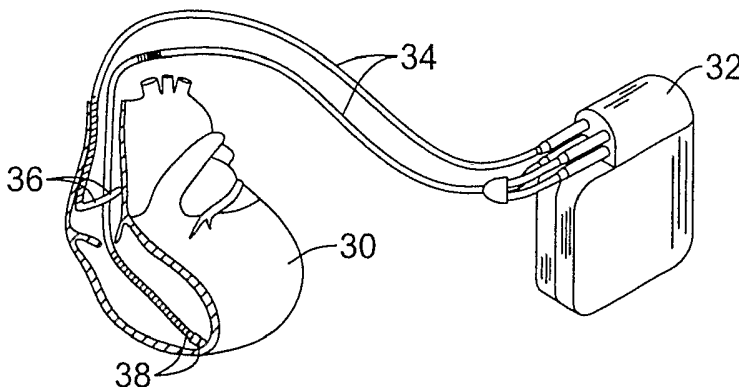
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(54) Title: DEVICES FOR ADAPTING CHARGE INITIATION FOR AN IMPLANTABLE CARDIOVERTER-DEFIBRILLATOR



(57) Abstract: The present invention is directed toward devices (12,32,300) configured to perform an adaptive method for initiating the charging and delivering therapy to treat patients experiencing recurrent non-sustained arrhythmic events. The adaptive methods may modify threshold used to test the persistence of an arrhythmia prior to initiating the charging sequence to deliver therapy.

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## DEVICES FOR ADAPTING CHARGE INITIATION FOR AN IMPLANTABLE CARDIOVERTER-DEFIBRILLATOR

### FIELD

5           The present invention relates generally to implantable cardiac systems that detect, sense and classify cardiac signals. More particularly, the present invention relates to implantable medical devices that can adapt the initiation of a therapeutic therapy for patients who experience recurring non-sustained arrhythmic episodes.

### BACKGROUND

10           Ventricular tachycardia (VT) is a difficult clinical problem for the physician. Its evaluation and treatment are complicated because it often occurs in life-threatening situations that dictate rapid diagnosis and treatment. VT is defined as three or more beats of ventricular origin in succession at a rate greater than 100 beats/minute. The  
15           rhythm is frequently regular, but on occasion it may be modestly to wholly irregular. The arrhythmia may be either well-tolerated or associated with grave, life-threatening hemodynamic compromise. The hemodynamic consequences of VT depend largely on the presence or absence of myocardial dysfunction (such as might result from  
                  ischemia or infarction) and on the rate of VT.

20           VT can be referred to as sustained or nonsustained. Sustained VT refers to an episode that lasts at least 30 seconds and generally requires termination by antiarrhythmic drugs, antitachycardia pacing techniques or electrical cardioversion. Nonsustained VT refers to episodes that are longer than three beats but terminate spontaneously generally within 30 seconds.

25           Implantable cardiac rhythm management devices are an effective treatment in managing irregular cardiac rhythms in particular patients. Implantable cardiac rhythm management devices are capable of recognizing and treating arrhythmias with a variety of therapies. For the reasons stated above, and for other reasons stated  
                  below, which will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon reading and  
30           understanding the present specification, there is a need in the art for providing a method for adapting the initiation of a therapeutic therapy for those patients who experience recurring non-sustained arrhythmic episodes.

SUMMARY

An illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of determining that cardiac stimulus is indicated at a first time, initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system, determining whether the cardiac stimulus is no longer indicated at a second time after the first time but prior to delivery of the indicated cardiac stimulus, and if the cardiac stimulus is no longer indicated, changing a threshold used to determine whether cardiac stimulus is indicated. The operational circuitry may also be configured such that the second time occurs prior to completion of the charging operation. The operational circuitry may be further configured such that the second time occurs after completion of the charging operation. The operational circuitry may also be configured such that the determining step is performed repeatedly during the charging operation. Further, the operational circuitry may be configured such that, if the cardiac stimulus continues to be indicated during the charging operation, the determining step is performed at least once after the charging operation is completed. The operational circuitry may also be configured such that if the determining step fails, the operational circuitry is configured to cause cardiac stimulus to be delivered by discharging the energy storage system via the electrodes.

Another illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient. The operational circuitry may be configured to perform the steps of capturing a predetermined number of selected cardiac events using the electrodes, determining whether a threshold proportion of the predetermined number of selected cardiac events are abnormal as part of determining whether treatment is indicated, and if treatment is indicated, initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system, and determining whether cardiac rhythm has returned to normal and, if so, increasing the threshold proportion.

In a further embodiment, the operational circuitry may be configured such that the threshold proportion is initially in the range of 70-80%. The operational circuitry may also be configured such that the step of increasing the threshold proportion

includes increasing the predetermined number. The operational circuitry may be configured to determine that treatment is indicated if at least the threshold proportion of the predetermined number of selected events are abnormal, and at least the threshold proportion of the predetermined number of selected events is abnormal for  
5 at least a threshold number of events out of a preselected number of events. Further, the operational circuitry may be configured such that, if the threshold proportion is increased, the operational circuitry also increases the threshold number and the preselected number.

Yet another illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm  
10 management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of capturing a predetermined number of selected cardiac events using the electrodes, observing whether a likely malignant cardiac  
15 condition exists for at least one of the selected cardiac events, determining whether the likely malignant cardiac condition persists for at least a threshold duration or threshold number of cardiac events, and, if so, initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system, and determining whether cardiac condition has terminated prior to delivery of cardiac stimulus and, if so, extending the threshold duration or  
20 increasing the threshold number.

Another illustrative embodiment includes a implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry  
25 configured to perform the steps of observing electrical activity in a patient's thorax to discern cardiac function, using the discerned cardiac function to establish a metric related to the patient's cardiac function, determining whether treatment is indicated by comparing the metric to a threshold, preparing to deliver treatment by initiating a charging sequence for the energy storage system, observing whether treatment  
30 continues to be indicated, and, if treatment continues to be indicated, discharging energy from the energy storage system to the patient; or if treatment is no longer indicated, changing the threshold.

In a further embodiment, the operational circuitry may be configured such that the metric is related to a proportion of cardiac events that are abnormal within a set of

cardiac events. The operational circuitry may be configured such that the metric is related to a duration of time or a number of sensed cardiac events in which a malignant cardiac condition is detected.

Another illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of observing cardiac function using the electrodes by capturing signals from the electrodes while implanted and analyzing the captured signals, determining whether electrical cardiac stimulus is likely indicated using a first metric; if so, verifying that electrical cardiac stimulus is indicated using a second metric; if so, initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system; after initiating the charging operation, at least once checking that one of the first metric or the second metric continues to indicate electrical cardiac stimulus and, if not, modifying a threshold used for comparison with either: the first metric in the determining step, or the second metric in the verifying step, to cause the threshold to become more rigorous.

In a further embodiment, the operational circuitry may be configured such that the checking step is performed at least once during the charging operation. The operational circuitry may also be configured such that the checking step is performed at least once after the charging operation is completed.

Yet another illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of observing a first threshold to determine whether the patient likely needs cardiac stimulus; and, if so, observing a second threshold to determine whether the cardiac stimulus is currently indicated; and, if so, initiating a charging sequence for the energy storage system; if not, again performing to the step of observing the first threshold. If the charging sequence is initiated, the operational circuitry may be configured for performing the following steps if the charging sequence is completed: observing a third threshold to determine whether cardiac stimulus is currently indicated, and, if so, delivering cardiac stimulus to the patient using the electrodes, if not, observing the first threshold to determine whether the

patient likely needs cardiac stimulus. If the patient still likely needs cardiac stimulus, the operational circuitry may be configured for returning to the step of observing the third threshold, or if the patient no longer likely needs cardiac stimulus, adjusting at least one of the first threshold and the second threshold.

5 In yet a further embodiment, the operational circuitry is further configured to perform the step of observing whether the first threshold remains crossed during a time period between initiation and completion of the charging sequence and, if so, continuing the charging sequence until completion; or, if not, stopping the charging sequence and changing at least one of the first threshold and the second threshold.

10 Another illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, an energy storage system, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of: A) determining whether an  
15 abnormal event threshold is crossed, the abnormal event threshold being crossed if a specified number of abnormal events occur within a selected number of most recent detected cardiac events, and, if so, determining whether the abnormal event threshold has been exceeded for a threshold number of most recent events and observing whether a most recent events is abnormal, and, if so, initiating a charge sequence for  
20 the energy storage system; and once the charge sequence is complete, B) determining whether a most recent event is abnormal and, if so, delivering therapeutic energy to the patient; and if not, determining whether the abnormal event threshold remains exceeded when measured from a most recent event, and, if so, waiting for a next cardiac event and again performing step B), or if not, raising the threshold number of  
25 most recent events and returning to step A).

In another embodiment, the operational circuitry may be further configured to perform the step of determining whether the abnormal event threshold continues to be crossed while the charge sequence is being performed. The operational circuitry may also be further configured to perform the step of observing a cardiac rate for a patient,  
30 and determining whether the cardiac rate exceeds a predetermined rate threshold before performing step A).

Yet another embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, an energy storage system, operational circuitry, and at least first

and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of capturing a number of cardiac events, determining whether a first cardiac event, along with a set of previously captured cardiac events, indicates a malignant cardiac condition and, if so, flagging the first cardiac event, observing whether a threshold number of cardiac events within a set of cardiac events have been flagged, if so, initiating a charging sequence for charging the energy storage system in preparation for delivery of electrical cardiac stimulus, after the charging sequence is initiated, at least once observing whether treatment of the patient continues to be indicated due to a malignant cardiac condition, if treatment is no longer indicated, modifying the size of the threshold number and/or the set of cardiac events.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIGS. 1A-1B illustrate, respectively, representative subcutaneous and transvenous implantable cardiac treatment systems;

FIG. 2 shows an illustrative method for delivering therapy;

FIG. 3 depicts a charge initiation scheme in accordance with an illustrative embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 4A-4C depict heart rhythm sections where each individual cardiac event is characterized;

FIG. 5 depicts a charge initiation sequence where an illustrative cardiac rhythm management device is unable to sense during charging;

FIG. 6 depicts a charge initiation sequence where an illustrative cardiac rhythm management device is able to sense during charging;

FIG. 7 illustrates a dual testing approach for charging and therapy delivery decisions; and

FIG. 8 is a functional block diagram for an implantable cardiac rhythm management device.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following detailed description should be read with reference to the drawings, in which like elements in different drawings are numbered identically. The drawings, which are not necessarily to scale, depict selected embodiments and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention. Those skilled in the art will recognize that many of the examples provided have suitable alternatives that may be utilized.

The present invention is generally related to implantable cardiac treatment systems that provide therapy for patients who are experiencing particular arrhythmias, including, for example, ventricular tachycardia. The present invention is directed toward therapy delivery architectures for use in cardiac rhythm devices, as well as  
5 devices incorporating such architectures. In particular, the present invention is suited for implantable cardiac treatment systems capable of detecting and treating harmful arrhythmias.

To date, implantable cardiac treatment systems have been either epicardial systems or transvenous systems such as the transvenous system implanted generally  
10 as shown in FIG. 1B. However, as further explained herein, the present invention is also adapted to function with a subcutaneous implantable cardiac treatment system as shown in FIG. 1A.

FIG. 1A illustrates a subcutaneously placed implantable cardiac treatment system, in particular, an implantable cardioverter/defibrillator (ICD) system. In this  
15 illustrative embodiment, the heart 10 is monitored using a canister 12 coupled to a lead system 14. The canister 12 may include an electrode 16 thereon, while the lead system 14 connects to sensing electrodes 18, 20, and a coil electrode 22 that may serve as a shock or stimulus delivery electrode as well as a sensing electrode. The system may be implanted subcutaneously as illustrated, for example, in U.S. Pat Nos.  
20 6,647,292 and 6,721,597, the disclosures of which are both incorporated herein by reference. By subcutaneous placement, it is meant that electrode placement does not require insertion of an electrode into a heart chamber, in or on the heart muscle, or the patient's vasculature.

FIG. 1B illustrates a transvenous ICD system. The heart 30 is monitored and  
25 treated by a system including a canister 32 coupled to a lead system 34 including atrial electrodes 36 and ventricular electrodes 38. A number of configurations for the electrodes may be used, including placement within the heart, adherence to the heart, or disposition within the patient's vasculature.

The present invention may be embodied by operational circuitry including  
30 select electrical components provided within the canister 2 (FIG. 1A) or canister 11 (FIG. 1B). In such embodiments, the operational circuitry may be configured to enable the methods to be performed. In some similar embodiments, the present invention may be embodied in readable instruction sets such as a program encoded in machine or controller readable media, wherein the readable instruction sets are



provided to enable the operational circuitry to perform the analysis discussed in the described embodiments. Further embodiments may include a controller or microcontroller adapted to read and execute the described methods.

5 The cardiac rhythm management device, whether subcutaneous or transvenous, senses cardiac signals from the patient's heart. The manner in which the data is collected and the type of data collected is dependent on the cardiac rhythm management device being used. Moreover, the cardiac rhythm management device may be programmed to, or may automatically adapt to, optimally detect a particular form of data which is sought by the cardiac rhythm management device.

10 FIG. 2 shows an illustrative method for delivering therapy. As shown, the method includes a first step of observing cardiac function, as shown at 50. The method determines whether treatment is indicated, as shown at 52. Treatment may be indicated by a number of different methods, for example, by reliance upon any number of characteristics or features of the sensed cardiac function. For the  
15 illustrative method, treatment may be indicated by the use of a defined threshold. The threshold utilized may take any number of forms depending upon the device's functionality. For example, the threshold may relate to cardiac event rates, cardiac event intervals, lack of cardiac events (asystole or fibrillation), cardiac event morphology (QRS width being an example), or event-to-event correlation.

20 If treatment is indicated, the method goes on to begin a charging operation, as shown at 54. The initiation of the charge is stored in an associated energy system (sometimes a capacitor or bank of capacitors). During and/or after the charging operation is completed, the method then includes the step of determining whether treatment is still indicated, as shown at 56. If treatment is still indicated when  
25 charging is complete (and/or at intermediate times during charging, if so enabled) then the therapy is delivered as shown at 58. If step 56 is performed while charging is occurring, then charging may continue until charging is completed. If treatment is no longer indicated when step 56 is performed, then the method includes changing the threshold, as shown at 60. In an illustrative embodiment, the threshold may be  
30 changed to make the threshold more rigorous for satisfying. By making the threshold more rigorous, it is believed that it is less likely that a charge initiation will commence (step 52) without ultimately delivering a therapy (step 58).

The following illustrative example, encompassing FIGS. 3 and 4A-4C, with further illustration shown in FIGS. 5-6, is a relatively complete example. It should be

understood that the claims which follow recite parts of the illustrative methods shown, and that not all steps or aspects of the illustrative example are necessary to the invention. Instead, the relatively complete example shown in FIGS. 3-6 is aiding the understanding of those of skill in the art.

5           FIG. 3 depicts a charge initiation method in accordance with an illustrative embodiment of the present invention. The illustrative cardiac rhythm management device detects cardiac information, as shown at 70, which includes raw signal data from the patient. This raw signal data may be preprocessed by the device, if so required or desired. Preprocessing steps may include smoothing of the detected data,  
10           differentiation, filtering and/or other preprocessing methodologies known in the art.

          Detected data, whether preprocessed or raw, is then classified as being either a cardiac event (a heartbeat) or not a cardiac event (extraneous noise). This classification may merely be an initial determination. In particular embodiments, sensed events may then be secondarily examined in an additional waveform appraisal  
15           phase. The waveform appraisal phase further appraises the sensed cardiac events and substantiates the classification of those detected signals as true cardiac events. Illustrative details of an example waveform appraisal method are disclosed in detail in U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/858,598, filed June 1, 2004 and entitled  
          METHOD AND DEVICES FOR PERFORMING CARDIAC WAVEFORM  
20           APPRAISAL, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

          Whether from the raw or appraised cardiac data, the illustrative cardiac rhythm management device may then calculate a patient's representative cardiac rate, as shown at 72. In one embodiment, the cardiac rate is calculated from the average R-R interval between four (4) consecutive sensed cardiac events. Other methods known in  
25           the art for calculating a patient's cardiac rate may also be utilized.

          The illustrative cardiac rhythm management device then assesses whether the cardiac rate is tachyarrhythmic, as shown at 74. Cardiac rates in excess of 100 bpm are defined as tachyarrhythmias in adults. For most patients, however, a higher cardiac rate threshold is more indicative of a pathologic tachyarrhythmia. Some  
30           illustrative embodiments of the invention account for this inconsistency with patients by permitting a physician to adjust the cardiac rate threshold to meet the needs of a particular patient. For example, a physician may adjust the cardiac rate threshold to 120 bpm, instead of 100 bpm, to indicate tachyarrhythmia. This attribute is

particularly beneficial for children, who generally have higher pathologic tachyarrhythmic thresholds (around 180 bpm) than adults.

When a patient's cardiac rate is below the tachyarrhythmic threshold, the illustrative cardiac rhythm management device takes no further action other than to  
5 continue monitoring the patient's cardiac rate. However, in instances where a patient's cardiac rate does exceed the threshold, the illustrative device then further evaluates the individual cardiac events giving rise to the tachyarrhythmic rate. In particular, the illustrative device first employs an X out of Y counter, as shown at 76.

The individual cardiac events giving rise to a tachyarrhythmic rate are  
10 hereinafter defined as "malignant cardiac events" and are the X constituent in the counter. The Y constituent for the counter comprises the total number of cardiac events being evaluated (whether malignant or non-malignant). In a preferred embodiment, the cardiac rhythm management device requires eighteen (18) malignant cardiac events out of twenty-four (24) total detected events to prompt the cardiac  
15 rhythm management device to initiate a second level of evaluation, as shown by the decision at 78. Alternative X out of Y quotients may also be used with the present invention.

If the X out of Y counter requirement is not met, then the device continues to monitor the patient's cardiac rate until the X out of Y counter requirement is satisfied,  
20 if ever. Once the counter requirement is satisfied, the device evaluates the persistence of the malignant cardiac events, as shown at 80.

The persistence condition of the illustrative embodiment is a gate-keeper step. As the gate-keeper, the persistence condition is the last condition that must be satisfied prior to the illustrative device initiating the charging of its capacitors for  
25 therapy delivery, as shown at 82. It is believed that the persistence condition will reduce the number of unnecessary device charge initiations. This is particularly true for those patients who suffer from non-sustained ventricular arrhythmias. Reducing inappropriate charges increases the longevity of the device's batteries and ultimately the longevity of the device itself. This subsequently benefits the patient by reducing  
30 the frequency of device replacements.

The illustrative persistence condition evaluates a cardiac rhythm's persistence in satisfying the X out of Y counter requirement. Specifically, the persistence condition evaluates two questions relating to the X out of Y counter:

- (1) Is the X out of Y counter requirement satisfied sequentially for a defined 'x' number of times?
- (2) Does the last cardiac event in the final X out of Y counter requirement indicate a malignant cardiac event?

5 In an illustrative embodiment, the persistence condition is (at least initially) satisfied when the X out of Y counter requirement is satisfied sequentially for two (2) times. Examples illustrating the persistence condition are depicted in FIGS. 4A-4C.

FIGS. 4A-4C depict heart rhythm sections where each individual cardiac event is characterized. More specifically, the FIGS. depict a sequence 90 of cardiac events  
10 where the "M" symbol represents a malignant cardiac event and the "E" symbol represents a non-malignant cardiac event.

In FIG. 4A, nineteen (19) malignant events are shown in twenty-four (24) cardiac events. According to an 18 out of 24 counter requirement, the section of cardiac events depicted satisfies the X out of Y counter requirement. Since the  
15 counter requirement is satisfied, the device may then evaluate the persistence condition. In doing so, the device flags this X out of Y counter as the first success for evaluating the persistence condition.

FIG. 4B similarly depicts the sequence 90 of twenty-four (24) cardiac events in FIG. 4A, but additionally includes a newly sensed twenty-fifth (25) cardiac event  
20 that is malignant, forming another sequence 92B of twenty-four (24) cardiac events. With the addition of the new cardiac event, the cardiac rhythm management device again evaluates the X out of Y counter requirement. Now, the last sequence 92B of twenty-four (24) cardiac events includes twenty (20) malignant events. Thus, the X out of Y counter requirement is again satisfied and the device flags this successive X  
25 out of Y counter. The illustrative device's operational circuitry then evaluates the persistence condition. The first inquiry of the persistence condition is satisfied because two sequential X out of Y counter requirements were met. Additionally, the second inquiry of the persistence condition is satisfied because the last cardiac event in the second and final X out of Y counter requirement was a malignant event. As a  
30 result, the illustrative device's operational circuitry then initiates the charging of the device's capacitors for therapy delivery.

FIG. 4C also depicts the sequence 90 of twenty-four (24) cardiac events in FIG. 4A, but instead includes a newly sensed twenty-fifth (25) cardiac event that is normal, or at least non-malignant, forming another sequence 92C of twenty-four (24)

cardiac events. When the cardiac rhythm management device again evaluates the X out of Y counter requirement, it observes that the last sequence 92B of twenty-four (24) cardiac events include eighteen (18) malignant events. Thus, the X out of Y counter requirement is again satisfied and the device flags this successive X out of Y counter. The illustrative device's operational circuitry then evaluates the persistence condition. The first inquiry of the persistence condition is satisfied because two sequential X out of Y counter requirements were met. However, the second inquiry of the persistence condition fails. Specifically, the last cardiac event in the second and final X out of Y counter requirement was not a malignant event. Thus, the device refrains from charge initiation.

Once the gate-keeping function of the persistence condition is satisfied, the device begins to charge its capacitors. FIGS. 5 and 6 depict two alternative scenarios for charging. FIG. 5 depicts a charge initiation sequence where an illustrative cardiac rhythm management device is unable to sense during charging. More specifically, once the device initiates its charging cycle, as shown at 100, the device cannot sense, as shown during time period 102. The method resumes once the device charge is completed, as shown at 104. Since the illustrative cardiac rhythm management device cannot sense during charging, the device must wait until the capacitors are fully charged before the operational circuitry may resume sensing. Immediately following charge completion 104, however, the device reconfirms that therapy delivery is necessary as shown at 106.

In one embodiment, the reconfirmation process is deemed successful if two consecutive malignant events occur within six (6) contiguous cardiac events, with the six (6) events being the most recent events available for evaluation. If the conditions set forth in the reconfirmation process 106 are satisfied, then the capacitors are again charged to their fullest (if necessary) as shown at 108, and therapy is delivered to the patient, as shown at 110.

Alternatively, if the reconfirmation process 106 fails, the device again employs an X out of Y counter requirement, as shown at 112, and must again satisfy the persistence condition, as shown at 114. If at any time the persistence condition and the reconfirmation process are satisfied, then the capacitors are again charged to their fullest, as shown at 108, and therapy is delivered to the patient, as shown at 110. However, if the patient converts to a normal sinus rhythm after charging (or otherwise fails the X out of Y counter requirement), then the parameters set for the persistence

condition are modified, as shown at 116, and the capacitors are bled of their charge, as shown at 118.

In addition to being a gate-keeper, the persistence condition is also adaptive to the particular needs of a patient. If a patient frequently suffers from non-sustained tachyarrhythmias, the persistence conditions may be adjusted to help eliminate premature charge initiations. In one embodiment, the first inquiry is further defined to account for this adaptability:

- (1) Is the X out of Y counter requirement satisfied sequentially for  $(3*n)+2$  times, where n is an integer with limits between 0 and 5, and further wherein n starts at 0 and increases one integer with each aborted charge initiation?

The second inquiry remains the same. With this expanded definition, the persistence condition's first inquiry requires:

- two (2) sequential X out of Y counter requirements satisfied if the device has never aborted a charge initiation;
- five (5) sequential X out of Y counter requirements satisfied if the device has aborted a charge initiation once;
- eight (8) sequential X out of Y counter requirements satisfied if the device has aborted a charge initiation twice;
- eleven (11) sequential X out of Y counter requirements satisfied if the device has aborted a charge initiation three times
- fourteen (14) sequential X out of Y counter requirements satisfied if the device has aborted a charge initiation four times; and
- seventeen (17) sequential X out of Y counter requirements satisfied if the device has aborted a charge initiation five times.

In all other aspects, the illustrative persistence condition operates as described in detail above with reference to FIGS. 3 and 4A-4C.

FIG. 6 illustrates a portion of the charge initiation sequence where the operational circuitry can sense cardiac events while the device is charging. Cardiac events that are sensed during charging are evaluated and assessed similarly to those being sensed when the device is not charging or otherwise preparing to deliver therapy. Therefore, the cardiac rhythm management device may calculate a cardiac rate and evaluate the frequency of malignant events during the charging cycle. As

such, after the device initiates its charging, as shown at 130, the device begins monitoring the X out of Y requirement, as shown at 132. If at any time during the device's charge cycle the patient converts to a normal sinus rhythm after charging (or otherwise fails the X out of Y counter requirement), then the device stops charging, as shown at 134. Additionally, the capacitors are bled of their charge and the parameters set for the persistence condition are modified, as shown at 136, by applying the expanded definition for the first inquiry described above. The method then returns to detection and rate calculation, as shown at 138. Alternatively, if the patient remains in a tachyarrhythmic state throughout the charge cycle, then the device reconfirms that therapy delivery is necessary through the reconfirmation process, following a method similar to that shown in FIG. 5, as indicated at 140.

In the above illustrative embodiment shown in FIGS. 3-6, the term "malignant event" was defined as an event indicative of a tachyarrhythmic rate. In other embodiments, any detected cardiac event that, upon analysis, is indicative of a malignant condition (i.e. a cardiac condition requiring intervention) may be considered a malignant event. An example of a malignant event satisfying other criteria may be an event or series of events having a morphology (for example, shape, QRS width, consecutive event correlation waveform analysis, etc.) indicative of a malignant arrhythmia. Some examples of analysis for providing such determinations are shown in copending U.S. Patent Application No. 10/856,084, filed May 27, 2004 and entitled METHOD FOR DISCRIMINATING BETWEEN VENTRICULAR AND SUPRAVENTRICULAR ARRHYTHMIAS, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

In alternative embodiments, several portions of the method may be modified. For example, the X out of Y count requirement may be changed to use different parameters (instead of 18 out of 24, other ratios may be used). In yet another embodiment, rather than an X out of Y counter requirement, a group of cardiac events may be analyzed to determine a group correlation waveform score. If the correlation is sufficiently low, it may be determined that cardiac function is erratic to a degree indicating a need for therapeutic delivery. In yet another modification, the persistence conditions themselves may also change. For example, the persistence condition may require longer or shorter analytical periods, consideration of morphology, noise considerations, or the like.

An X out of Y counter requirement may be used to provide a treatment range. For example, if the X out of Y counter requirement is set to a low ratio, treatment decisions can be made relatively easily. If the X out of Y counter requirement has a high ratio, conditions needed to meet the X out of Y counter requirement become more stringed. In some embodiments, the X out of Y counter requirement may operate using ratios in the range of 70-80% to begin, with higher ratios enforced after one or more aborted charging operations.

In some embodiments, other conditions may be modified after a patient has spontaneously recovered from a non-sustained tachyarrhythmia or other malignant condition. For instance, rather than altering the persistence condition, the X of Y counter requirement may be changed. More specifically, if an illustrative method begins with an 18 out of 24 counter requirement, the X out of Y counter requirement may extend to a larger number, higher percentage, or other requirement. For example, the 18 out of 24 counter requirement may adjust to 20 out of 24 and/or 21 out of 27. This change may be further incremented with each successive non-sustained ventricular tachyarrhythmia. For example, after the first aborted charge, the 18 out of 24 counter requirement becomes 21 out of 27, which becomes 24 out of 30 on the second aborted charge and 27 out of 33 on the third aborted charge. In alternative illustrative embodiments, more than one rule for a given persistence condition may be changed at the same time.

Some embodiments may make use of a pure rate-driven shocking determination which does not make use of the X out of Y counter requirement. For example, if the cardiac rate observed to initiate the method shown in FIG. 3 (the query "tachyarrhythmic rate?") exceeds a predetermined threshold, it may be determined that therapy is appropriate. Then, at a later time (e.g., during charging of the illustrative device's energy storage system or after charging is complete) the rate may be checked again. Re-checking the conditions giving rise to a decision to deliver therapy at a later time may reveal that stimulus is no longer indicated. In response, a system may raise the threshold cardiac rate for shocking, or may extend a relevant time period in which such a threshold cardiac rate must be held to initiate charging.

FIG. 7 illustrates a dual testing approach for charging and therapy delivery decisions. The method begins by observing the patient's cardiac function, as shown at 200. The method then determines, as shown at 202, whether treatment is likely indicated. If treatment is not indicated, the method returns to observing cardiac



function as shown at 200, where the method waits until a next cardiac event is sensed for evaluation.

If treatment is likely indicated at 202, the method next verifies that treatment is needed, as shown at 204, using a different metric than that used in step 202. One method of separating out these two steps is to observe event intervals to determine whether treatment is likely indicated (step 202) and, if so, to perform further analysis (possibly combining noise and average interval analysis) to verify that the event intervals do indeed indicate malignancy. Other first and second steps (202, 204) may be performed without deviating from the scope of the invention.

Yet another example of a first and second tier for analysis is a system wherein multiple vector views are available, for example as shown in copending U.S. Patent Application No. 10/901,258, filed July 27, 2004 and entitled MULTIPLE ELECTRODE VECTORS FOR IMPLANTABLE CARDIAC TREATMENT DEVICES, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference. For example, a first sensing vector may be used for the first determination that treatment is likely indicated at 202. Additionally, a second, different sensing vector may then be used to verify that treatment is indicated at 204.

If treatment is likely indicated at 202 and a need for treatment is verified at 204, the method next includes the step of initiating the charging operation of the associated energy storage device or system (often a capacitor or group of capacitors), as shown at 206. The method next goes to a charge instruction block 208 which includes steps that are performed if the device/system is able to perform sensing and analysis operations during charging of the system's energy storage device. If sensing and analysis operations cannot be performed during charging, the method goes directly to step 214, which is explained below.

In the charge instruction block 208, the method determines whether the energy storage system is completed charging, as shown at 210. If not, the method includes observing whether treatment is still likely indicated, as shown at 212. The metric for determining whether treatment is still likely indicated in step 212 may be that of either of steps 202 or 204, or may be a yet a different metric. If treatment is still likely indicated, the method continues charging at 210 and iterates this loop until charging is complete. Once charging is complete, the method determines whether a need for treatment can be verified again, as shown at step 214. As with step 212, a metric previously used in one of steps 202, 204, or 212 may be used in step 214, or a new

metric may be chosen. If the last verification step 214 is successful, then therapy is delivered as shown at 216.

If verification step 214 fails, then the stored energy may be non-therapeutically discharged, as shown at 218, in any suitable manner. Alternatively, if  
5 desired, the capacitors may continue to hold charge for a predetermined time period to assure that re-charging is not needed. One suitable manner for discharge is to use the stored energy to perform diagnostic or maintenance type functions for the device or, if the device is used for pacing, to use the energy to provide pacing energy.

Next, a threshold is adjusted, as shown at 220. Several thresholds may be  
10 adjusted, but preferably adjustment is performed on a threshold used in at least one of the preliminary steps 202, 204 that are used to make a determination that charging should be initiated at step 206. The threshold may be made more rigorous such that a decision to initiate charging at 206 becomes more difficult. The method then returns to observing cardiac function as shown at 200.

Returning to step 212, in the charge instruction block 208, if treatment is no  
15 longer likely indicated at step 212, the method terminates charging, as shown at 222, and discharges the energy storage in any suitable manner, as shown at 224. The method then goes to step 220 and adjusts a threshold as before.

As used herein, the term metric may indicate any suitable measurement or  
20 result from an analytical procedure. Example metrics include event rates, X out of Y counter ratios, and correlation results. Further metrics include a time period in which a condition (such as a cardiac tachyarrhythmia) persists or a how often an X out of Y counter is flagged.

A threshold may be rendered more rigorous in response to an aborted charge  
25 initiation. Thus, at least ostensibly, subsequent tachyarrhythmic events must be more sustainable to cross an adjusted threshold for initiating the device's charging cycle. Examples of adjustable thresholds include metrics such as event rate, X out of Y counter ratios, number of time intervals during which a malignant condition is detected, and the number of X out of Y counter flags set.

FIG. 8 is a functional block diagram for an implantable cardiac rhythm  
30 management device. The device circuitry 300 includes a battery 302 that provides power for operational circuitry 304 and a charger 306. The operational circuitry 304 may be configured to perform number of functions including the methods discussed above as well as steps further described below. The operational circuitry controls the

charger 306 and, when appropriate, causes the charger 306 to charge an energy storage circuit 308. Any appropriate energy storage circuit 308 may be used including, for example, a capacitor or block of capacitors.

The operational circuitry 304 may receive an output from the energy storage circuit 308 indicating the amount of energy stored or available therein. The operational circuitry is also coupled to a coupling circuit 310. The coupling circuit 310 provides coupling to at least a first electrode 312 (shown as a small or button electrode) and a second electrode 314 (shown as a coil electrode. Additional electrodes may be coupled to the device circuitry 300. One or both of electrodes 312, 314 may be provided on a housing for the device circuitry 300. The coupling circuit 310 may include a number of switches and or other devices for providing appropriate electrical coupling between the electrodes 312, 314 and the device circuitry 300, for example, coupling the electrodes 312, 314 to the operational circuitry 304 for the purpose of sensing patient cardiac function, or coupling the energy storage circuit 308 to the patient for various purposes including delivery of electrical cardiac stimulus.

When therapy delivery is appropriate for the purpose of cardioversion or defibrillation, the operational circuitry 304 will direct the charger 306 to charge the energy storage circuit 308. Once the energy storage circuit 308 is charged to a desired level, the operational circuitry 304 causes the coupling circuit 310 to couple the energy storage circuit 308 to the electrodes 312, 314, delivering therapy to the patient.

The operational circuitry used in the implantable medical devices of the present invention may be configured to include such controllers, microcontrollers, logic devices, memory, and the like, as selected, needed, or desired for performing the steps for which each is configured. The operational circuitry may include a controller and controller readable media, the controller readable media including a controller readable instruction set for performing any of the methods discussed herein.

An illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of determining that cardiac stimulus is indicated at a first time, initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system, determining whether the cardiac stimulus is no longer indicated at a second time after the first time but prior to delivery of the indicated cardiac stimulus, and if the cardiac stimulus is no

longer indicated, changing a threshold used to determine whether cardiac stimulus is indicated. The operational circuitry may also be configured such that the second time occurs prior to completion of the charging operation. The operational circuitry may be further configured such that the second time occurs after completion of the charging operation. The operational circuitry may also be configured such that the determining step is performed repeatedly during the charging operation. Further, the operational circuitry may be configured such that, if the cardiac stimulus continues to be indicated during the charging operation, the determining step is performed at least once after the charging operation is completed. The operational circuitry may also be configured such that if the determining step fails, the operational circuitry is configured to cause cardiac stimulus to be delivered by discharging the energy storage system via the electrodes.

Another illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient. The operational circuitry may be configured to perform the steps of capturing a predetermined number of selected cardiac events using the electrodes, determining whether a threshold proportion of the predetermined number of selected cardiac events are abnormal as part of determining whether treatment is indicated, and if treatment is indicated, initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system, and determining whether cardiac rhythm has returned to normal and, if so, increasing the threshold proportion.

In a further embodiment, the operational circuitry may be configured such that the threshold proportion is initially in the range of 70-80%. The operational circuitry may also be configured such that the step of increasing the threshold proportion includes increasing the predetermined number. The operational circuitry may be configured to determine that treatment is indicated if at least the threshold proportion of the predetermined number of selected events are abnormal, and at least the threshold proportion of the predetermined number of selected events is abnormal for at least a threshold number of events out of a preselected number of events. Further, the operational circuitry may be configured such that, if the threshold proportion is increased, the operational circuitry also increases the threshold number and the preselected number.

Yet another illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry  
5 configured to perform the steps of capturing a predetermined number of selected cardiac events using the electrodes, observing whether a likely malignant cardiac condition exists for at least one of the selected cardiac events, determining whether the likely malignant cardiac condition persists for at least a threshold duration or  
10 threshold number of cardiac events, and, if so, initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system, and determining whether cardiac condition has terminated prior to delivery of cardiac stimulus and, if so, extending the threshold duration or increasing the threshold number.

Another illustrative embodiment includes a implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering  
15 cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of observing electrical activity in a patient's thorax to discern cardiac function, using the discerned cardiac function to establish a metric related to the patient's cardiac function, determining whether treatment is indicated by  
20 comparing the metric to a threshold, preparing to deliver treatment by initiating a charging sequence for the energy storage system, observing whether treatment continues to be indicated, and, if treatment continues to be indicated, discharging energy from the energy storage system to the patient; or if treatment is no longer indicated, changing the threshold.

25 In a further embodiment, the operational circuitry may be configured such that the metric is related to a proportion of cardiac events that are abnormal within a set of cardiac events. The operational circuitry may be configured such that the metric is related to a duration of time or a number of sensed cardiac events in which a malignant cardiac condition is detected.

30 Another illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of observing cardiac function using the electrodes by

capturing signals from the electrodes while implanted and analyzing the captured signals, determining whether electrical cardiac stimulus is likely indicated using a first metric; if so, verifying that electrical cardiac stimulus is indicated using a second metric; if so, initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system; after  
5 initiating the charging operation, at least once checking that one of the first metric or the second metric continues to indicate electrical cardiac stimulus and, if not, modifying a threshold used for comparison with either: the first metric in the determining step, or the second metric in the verifying step, to cause the threshold to become more rigorous.

10 In a further embodiment, the operational circuitry may be configured such that the checking step is performed at least once during the charging operation. The operational circuitry may also be configured such that the checking step is performed at least once after the charging operation is completed.

Yet another illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm  
15 management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of observing a first threshold to determine whether the patient likely needs cardiac stimulus; and, if so, observing a second threshold to  
20 determine whether the cardiac stimulus is currently indicated; and, if so, initiating a charging sequence for the energy storage system; if not, again performing to the step of observing the first threshold. If the charging sequence is initiated, the operational circuitry may be configured for performing the following steps if the charging sequence is completed: observing a third threshold to determine whether cardiac  
25 stimulus is currently indicated, and, if so, delivering cardiac stimulus to the patient using the electrodes, if not, observing the first threshold to determine whether the patient likely needs cardiac stimulus. If the patient still likely needs cardiac stimulus, the operational circuitry may be configured for returning to the step of observing the third threshold, or if the patient no longer likely needs cardiac stimulus, adjusting at  
30 least one of the first threshold and the second threshold.

In yet a further embodiment, the operational circuitry is further configured to perform the step of observing whether the first threshold remains crossed during a time period between initiation and completion of the charging sequence and, if so,

continuing the charging sequence until completion; or, if not, stopping the charging sequence and changing at least one of the first threshold and the second threshold.

Another illustrative embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, an energy storage system, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of: A) determining whether an abnormal event threshold is crossed, the abnormal event threshold being crossed if a specified number of abnormal events occur within a selected number of most recent detected cardiac events, and, if so, determining whether the abnormal event threshold has been exceeded for a threshold number of most recent events and observing whether a most recent events is abnormal, and, if so, initiating a charge sequence for the energy storage system; and once the charge sequence is complete, B) determining whether a most recent event is abnormal and, if so, delivering therapeutic energy to the patient; and if not, determining whether the abnormal event threshold remains exceeded when measured from a most recent event, and, if so, waiting for a next cardiac event and again performing step B), or if not, raising the threshold number of most recent events and returning to step A).

In another embodiment, the operational circuitry may be further configured to perform the step of determining whether the abnormal event threshold continues to be crossed while the charge sequence is being performed. The operational circuitry may also be further configured to perform the step of observing a cardiac rate for a patient, and determining whether the cardiac rate exceeds a predetermined rate threshold before performing step A).

Yet another embodiment includes an implantable cardiac rhythm management device comprising an energy storage system configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, an energy storage system, operational circuitry, and at least first and second electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of capturing a number of cardiac events, determining whether a first cardiac event, along with a set of previously captured cardiac events, indicates a malignant cardiac condition and, if so, flagging the first cardiac event, observing whether a threshold number of cardiac events within a set of cardiac events have been flagged, if so, initiating a charging sequence for charging the energy storage system in preparation for delivery of electrical cardiac stimulus, after

the charging sequence is initiated, at least once observing whether treatment of the patient continues to be indicated due to a malignant cardiac condition, if treatment is no longer indicated, modifying the size of the threshold number and/or the set of cardiac events.

5            Numerous characteristics and advantages of the invention covered by this document have been set forth in the foregoing description. It will be understood, however, that this disclosure is, in many aspects, only illustrative. Changes may be made in details, particularly in matters of shape, size and arrangement of parts without exceeding the scope of the invention. The invention's scope is defined, of course, in  
10 the language in which the claims are expressed.



## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) comprising an energy storage system (308) configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry (304), and at least first and second electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314) for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of:

determining that cardiac stimulus is indicated at a first time;

initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system (308);

determining whether the cardiac stimulus is no longer indicated at a second time after the first time, but prior to delivery of the indicated cardiac stimulus; and

if the cardiac stimulus is no longer indicated, changing a threshold used to determine whether cardiac stimulus is indicated.

2. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 1, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that the second time occurs prior to completion of the charging operation.

3. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 1, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that the second time occurs after completion of the charging operation.

4. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 1, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that the determining step is performed repeatedly during the charging operation.

5. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 4, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that, if the cardiac stimulus continues to be indicated during the charging operation, the determining step is performed at least once after the charging operation is completed.

6. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 1, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that if the determining step fails, the operational circuitry (12,32,300) causes cardiac stimulus to be delivered by discharging the energy storage system (308) via the electrodes (16, 18,20,22,36,38,312,314).

7. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of any of claims 1-6 wherein:

the threshold used to determine that stimulus is indicated is a threshold proportion;

the operational circuitry (304) is configured to observe a set of cardiac events and categorize the cardiac events as either malignant or not malignant; and

the operational circuitry (304) is configured to determine that stimulus is indicated by calculating a proportion of the malignant cardiac events to the total number of cardiac events in the set of cardiac events and comparing the calculated proportion to the threshold proportion, and stimulus is indicated if the calculated proportion is greater than the threshold proportion.

8. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 7 wherein, if the threshold is changed, the threshold is raised.

9. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of any of claims 1-6 wherein:

the operational circuitry (304) is configured to identify malignant and not-malignant cardiac events in a set of cardiac events;

the threshold defines a number; and

stimulus is indicated when the number of malignant events in the set of cardiac events exceeds the threshold.

10. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 9 wherein, if the threshold is changed, the threshold is raised.

11. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of any of claims 1-6 wherein the threshold is a threshold used to define detected cardiac events as either malignant or not-malignant.

12. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of any of claims 1-6 wherein the threshold is compared to a correlation score for a set of cardiac events to determine whether the set of cardiac events indicates treatment.

13. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 12 wherein, if the threshold is changed, the threshold is raised.

14. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of any of claims 1-6 wherein the threshold is compared to a cardiac event rate calculated for a set of cardiac events to determine whether the event rate indicates treatment.

15. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 14 wherein, if the threshold is changed, the threshold is raised.

16. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of any of claims 1-6 wherein the threshold is used to define the size of a set of cardiac events used to determine whether treatment is indicated wherein, if the threshold is changed, the threshold is raised.

17. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of any of claims 1-6 wherein, if the threshold is changed, the threshold is rendered more rigorous to reduce the likelihood of incorrect determinations that treatment is indicated.

18. An implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) comprising an energy storage system (308) configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry (304), and at least first and second electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314) for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry configured to perform the steps of:

capturing a predetermined number of selected cardiac events using the electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314);

determining whether a threshold proportion of the predetermined number of selected cardiac events are abnormal as part of determining whether treatment is indicated; and

if treatment is indicated:

initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system (308); and

determining whether cardiac rhythm has returned to normal before delivering stimulus and, if so, increasing the threshold proportion.

19. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 18, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that the threshold proportion is initially in the range of 70-80%.

20. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of either of claims 18 or 19, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that the step of increasing the threshold proportion includes increasing the predetermined number.

21. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of any of claims 18-20, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured to determine that treatment is indicated if:

at least the threshold proportion of the predetermined number of selected events are abnormal; and

at least the threshold proportion of the predetermined number of selected events is abnormal for at least a threshold number of events out of a preselected number of events.

22. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 21, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that, if the threshold proportion is increased, the operational circuitry (304) also increases the threshold number and the preselected number.

23. An implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) comprising an energy storage system (308) configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry (304), and at least first and second electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314) for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry (304) configured to perform the steps of:

capturing a predetermined number of selected cardiac events using the electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314);

observing whether a likely malignant cardiac condition exists for at least one of the selected cardiac events;

determining whether the likely malignant cardiac condition persists for at least a threshold duration or threshold number of cardiac events, and, if so:

initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system (308); and

determining whether cardiac condition has terminated prior to delivery of cardiac stimulus and, if so, extending the threshold duration or increasing the threshold number.

24. An implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) comprising an energy storage system (308) configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry (304), and at least first and second electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314) for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry (304) configured to perform the steps of:

observing electrical activity in a patient's thorax to discern cardiac function;

using the discerned cardiac function to establish a metric related to the patient's cardiac function;

determining whether treatment is indicated by comparing the metric to a threshold;

preparing to deliver treatment by initiating a charging sequence for the energy storage system (308);

observing whether treatment continues to be indicated, and:

if treatment continues to be indicated, discharging energy from the energy storage system to the patient; or

if treatment is no longer indicated, changing the threshold.

25. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 24, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that the metric is related to a proportion of cardiac events that are abnormal within a set of cardiac events.

26. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 24, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that the metric is related to a duration of time or a number of sensed cardiac events in which a malignant cardiac condition is detected.

27. An implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) comprising an energy storage system (308) configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry (304), and at least first and second electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314) for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry (304) configured to perform the steps of:

- observing cardiac function using the electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314) by capturing signals from the electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314) while implanted and analyzing the captured signals;

- determining whether electrical cardiac stimulus is likely indicated using a first metric;

- if so, verifying that electrical cardiac stimulus is indicated using a second metric;

- if so, initiating a charging operation for the energy storage system (308);

- after initiating the charging operation, at least once checking that one of the first metric or the second metric continues to indicate electrical cardiac stimulus and, if not, modifying a threshold used for comparison with either:

- the first metric in the determining step; or

- the second metric in the verifying step;

- to cause the threshold to become more rigorous.

28. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 27, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that the checking step is performed at least once during the charging operation.

29. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of either of claims 27 or 28, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is configured such that the checking step is performed at least once after the charging operation is completed.

30. An implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) comprising an energy storage system (308) configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry (304), and at least first and second electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314) for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry (304) configured to perform the steps of:

observing a first threshold to determine whether the patient likely needs cardiac stimulus; and:

if so, observing a second threshold to determine whether the cardiac stimulus is currently indicated; and:

if so, initiating a charging sequence for the energy storage system (308);

if not, again performing to the step of observing the first threshold;

if the charging sequence is initiated, performing the following steps if the charging sequence is completed:

observing a third threshold to determine whether cardiac stimulus is currently indicated; and:

if so, delivering cardiac stimulus to the patient using the electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38, 312,314);

if not, observing the first threshold to determine whether the patient likely needs cardiac stimulus;

if the patient still likely needs cardiac stimulus, returning to the step of observing the third threshold;

if the patient no longer likely needs cardiac stimulus, adjusting at least one of the first threshold and the second threshold.

31. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 30, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is further configured to perform the step of observing whether the first threshold remains crossed during a time period between initiation and completion of the charging sequence and:

if so, continuing the charging sequence until completion; or,

if not, stopping the charging sequence and changing at least one of the first threshold and the second threshold.

32. An implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) comprising an energy storage system (308) configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry (304), and at least first and second electrodes (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314) for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry (304) configured to perform the steps of:

A) determining whether an abnormal event threshold is crossed, the abnormal event threshold being crossed if a specified number of abnormal events occur within a selected number of most recent detected cardiac events, and, if so:

determining whether the abnormal event threshold has been exceeded for a threshold number of most recent events and observing whether a most recent event is abnormal, and, if so, initiating a charge sequence for the energy storage system (308); and

once the charge sequence is complete:

B) determining whether a most recent event is abnormal and, if so, delivering therapeutic energy to the patient; and if not, determining whether the abnormal event threshold remains exceeded when measured from a most recent event; and:

if so, waiting for a next cardiac event and again performing step B); or

if not, raising the threshold number of most recent events and returning to step

A).

33. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 32, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is further configured to perform the step of determining whether the abnormal event threshold continues to be crossed while the charge sequence is being performed.

34. The implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) of claim 32, wherein the operational circuitry (304) is further configured to perform the step of observing a cardiac rate for a patient, and determining whether the cardiac rate exceeds a predetermined rate threshold before performing step A.



35. An implantable cardiac rhythm management device (12,32,300) comprising an energy storage system (308) configured for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, operational circuitry (304), and at least first and second (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314) electrodes for delivering cardiac stimulus to a patient, the operational circuitry (304) configured to perform the steps of:

capturing a number of cardiac events;

determining whether a first cardiac event, along with a set of previously captured cardiac events, indicates a malignant cardiac condition and, if so, flagging the first cardiac event;

observing whether a threshold number of cardiac events within a set of cardiac events have been flagged;

if so, initiating a charging sequence for charging the energy storage system (308) in preparation for delivery of electrical cardiac stimulus;

after the charging sequence is initiated, at least once observing whether treatment of the patient continues to be indicated due to a malignant cardiac condition;

if treatment is no longer indicated, modifying the size of the threshold number and/or the set of cardiac events.

36. An implantable medical device (12,32,300) comprising means for detecting cardiac events (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314,304), means for delivering cardiac stimulus (16,18,20,22,36,38,312,314), and control circuitry (304) configured to:

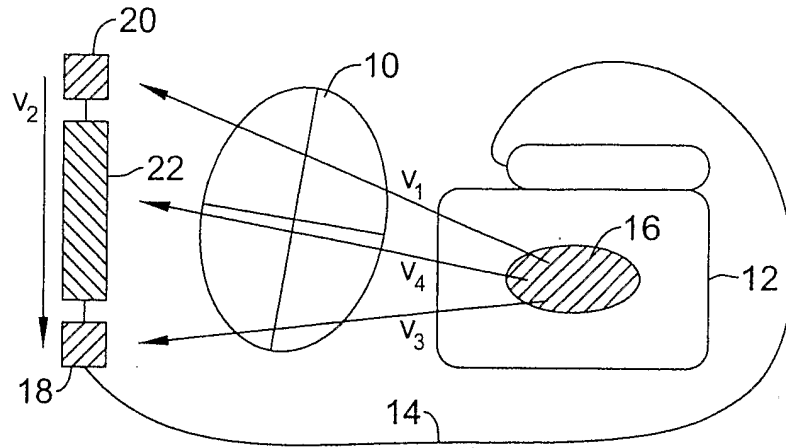
determine whether cardiac stimulus is indicated;

if so, cause the means for delivering cardiac stimulus (302,306,308) to prepare to deliver cardiac stimulus starting at a first time;

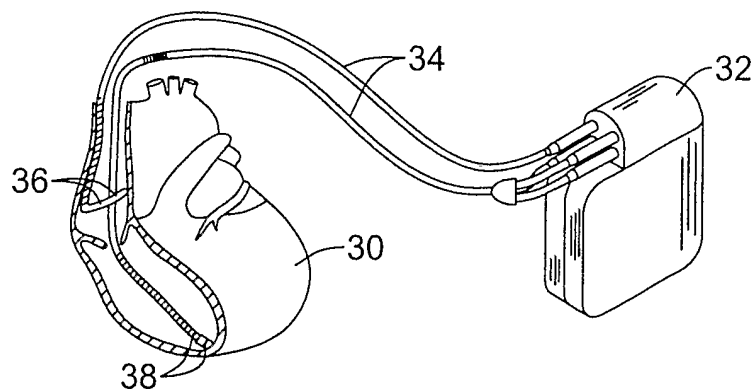
determine whether the cardiac stimulus is no longer indicated at a second time after the first time, but prior to delivery of the indicated cardiac stimulus; and

if the cardiac stimulus is no longer indicated, change a threshold used to determine whether cardiac stimulus is indicated.

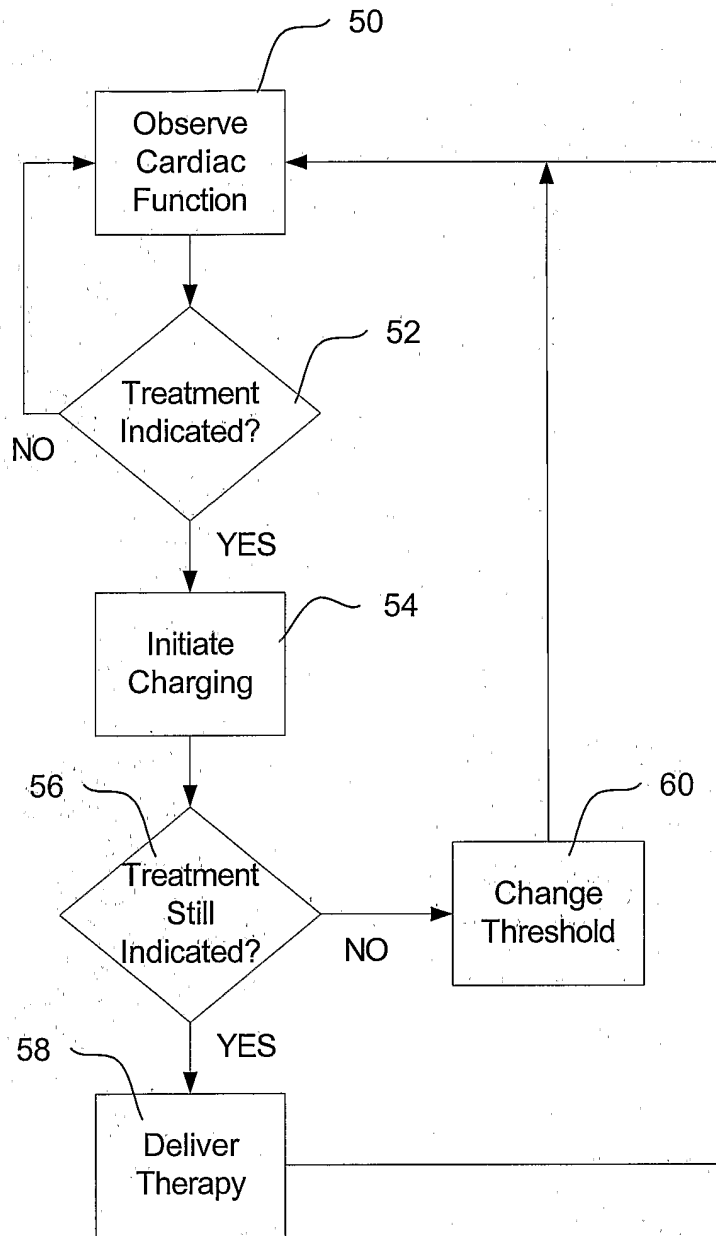
1/8



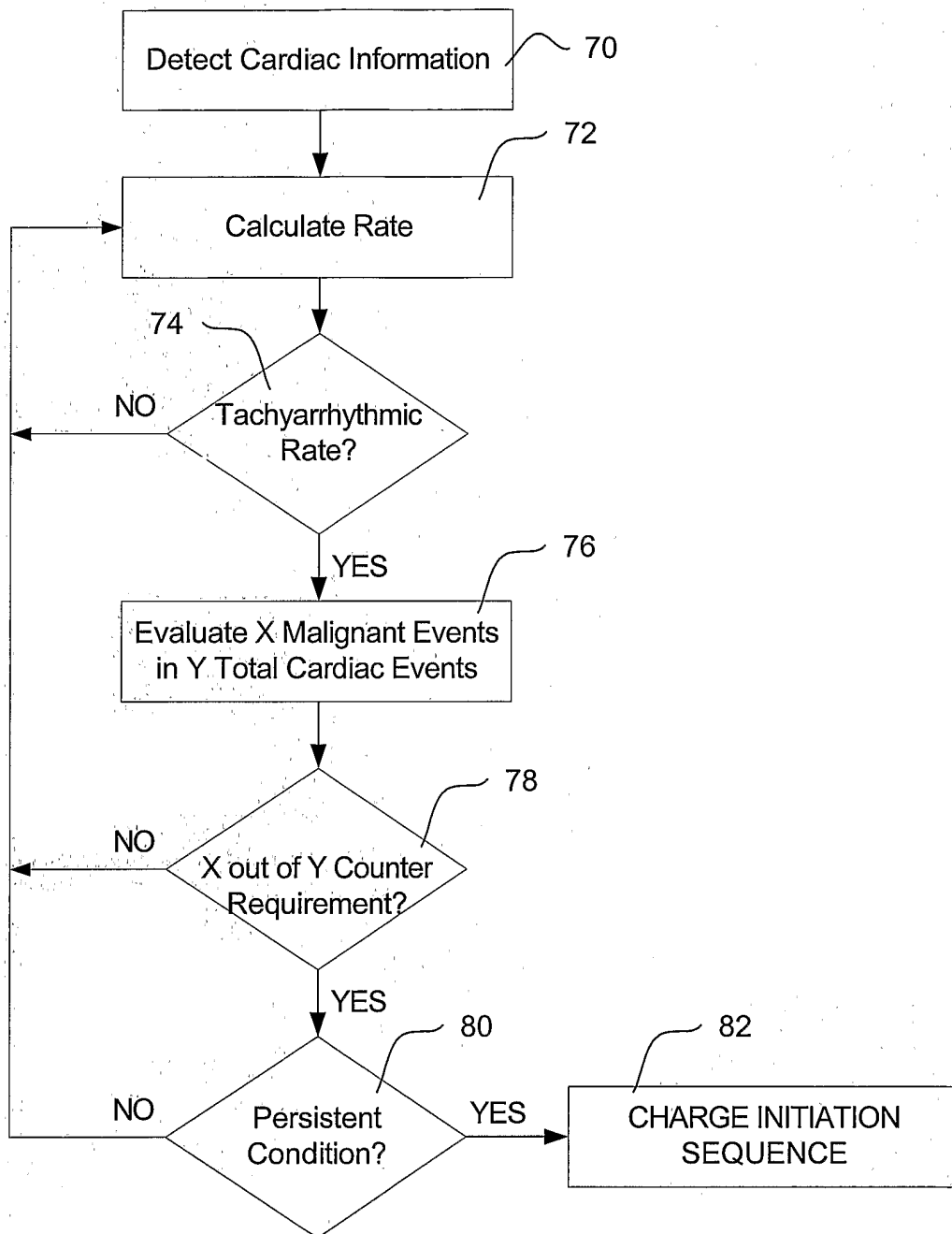
*Fig. 1A*



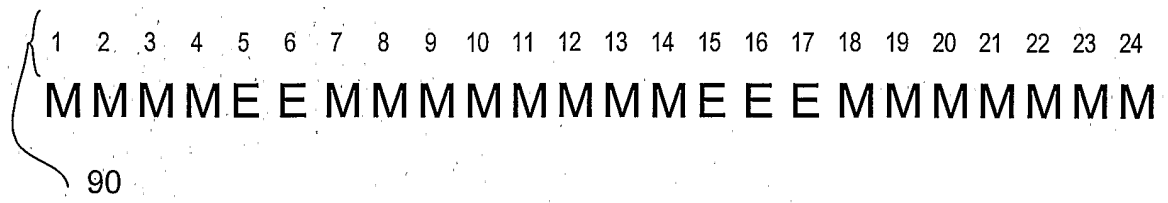
*Fig. 1B*



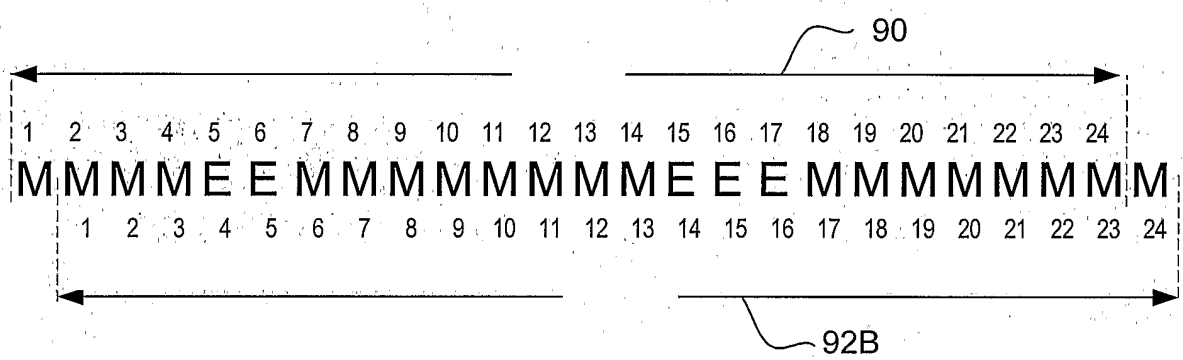
**FIG. 2**



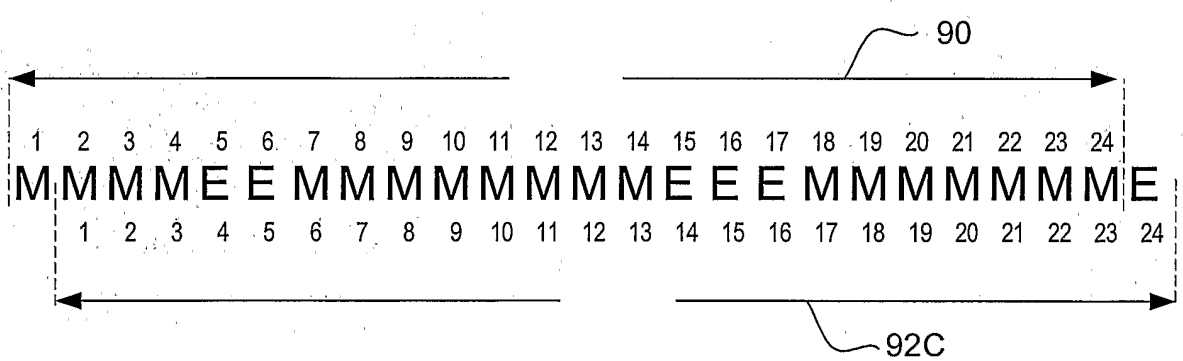
**FIG. 3**



*FIG. 4A*



*FIG. 4B*



*FIG. 4C*

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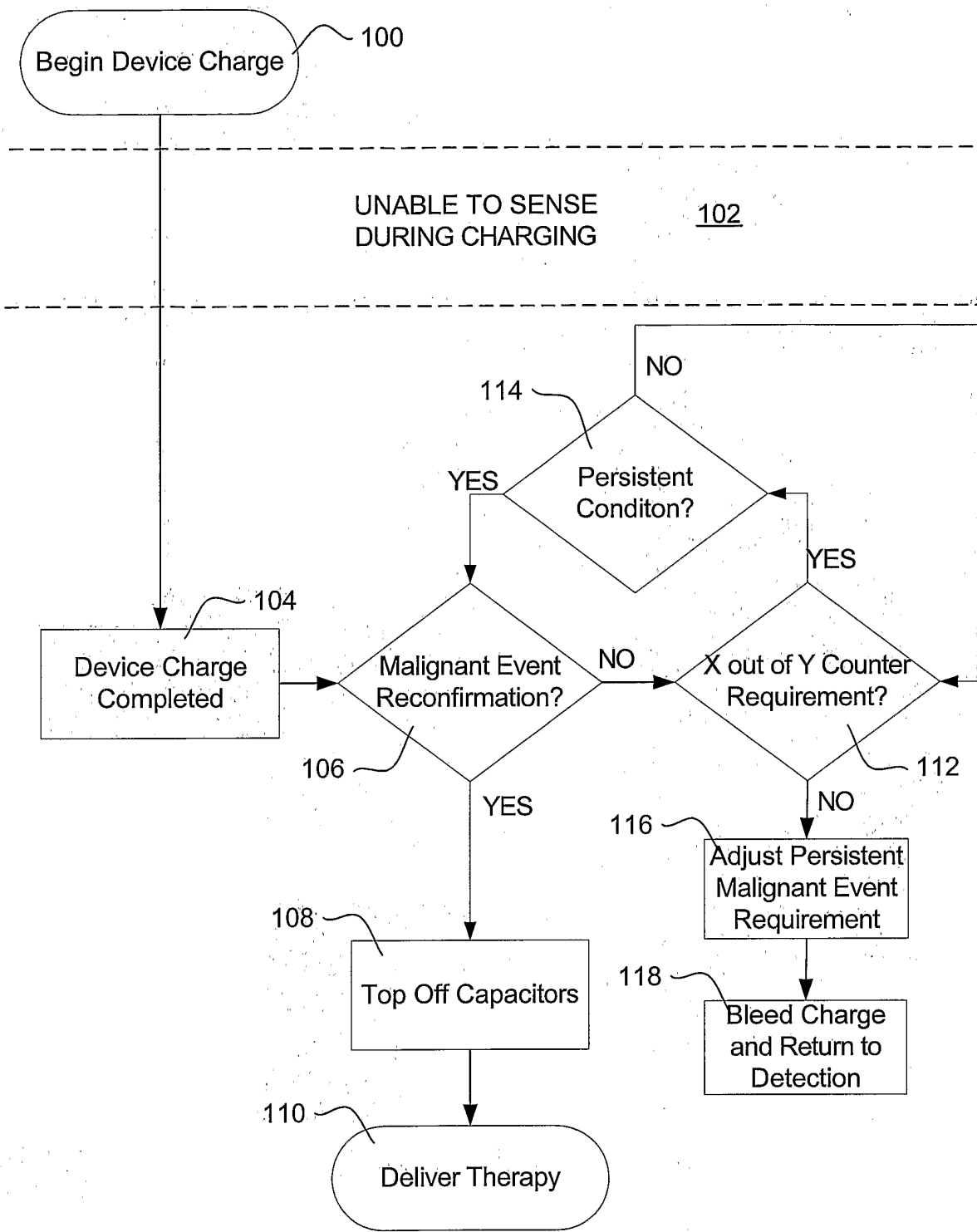
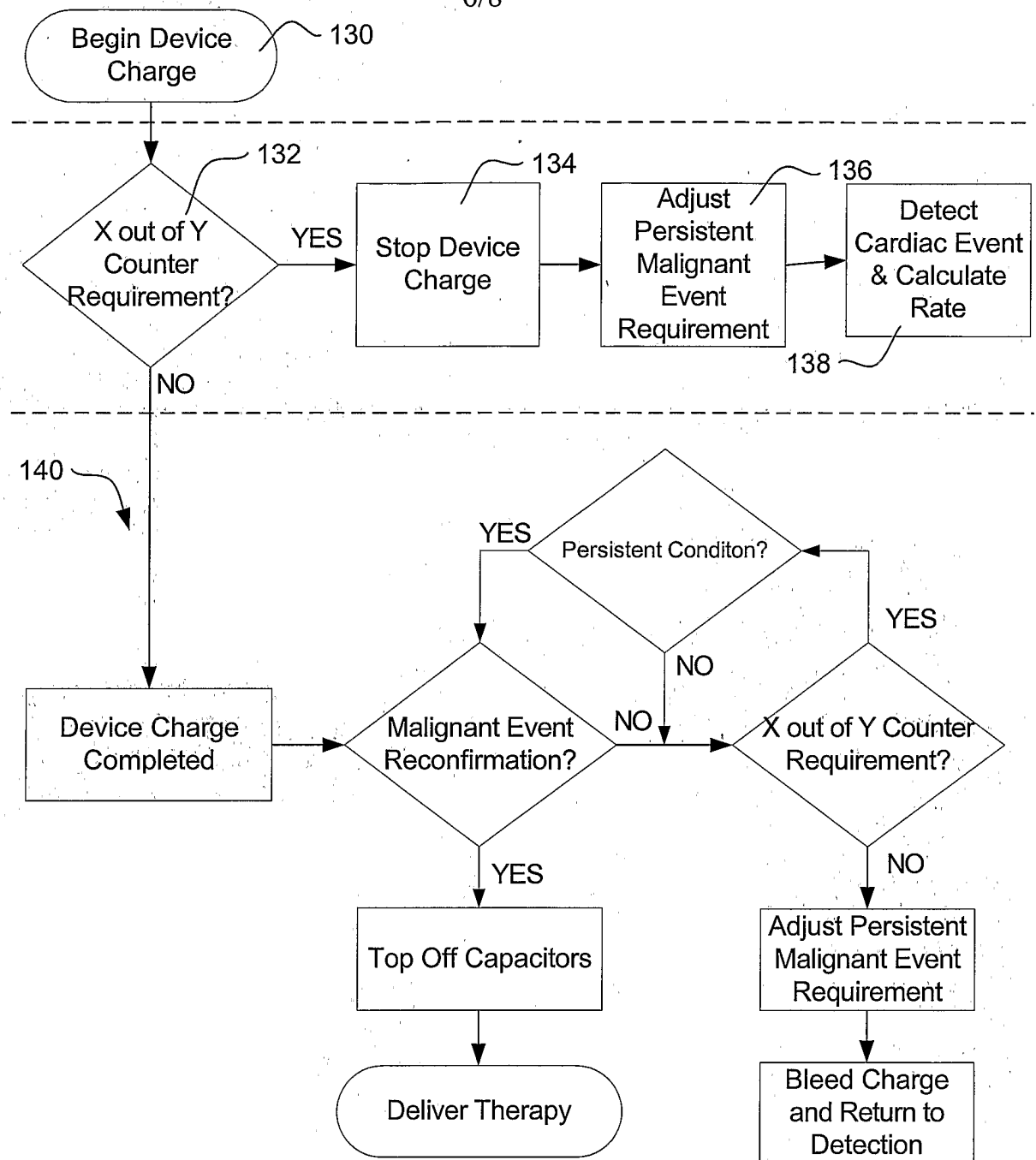


FIG. 5

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**FIG. 6**

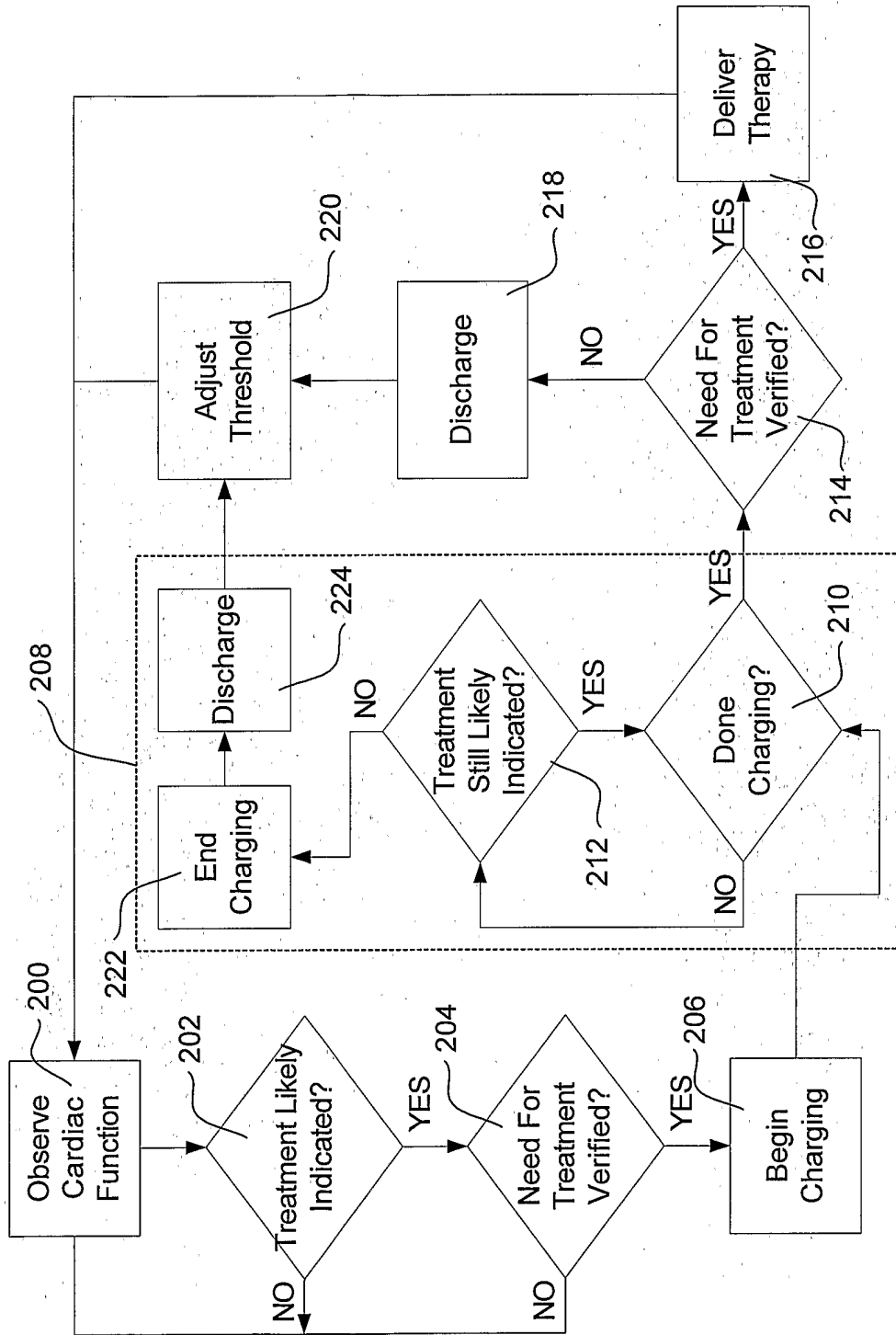
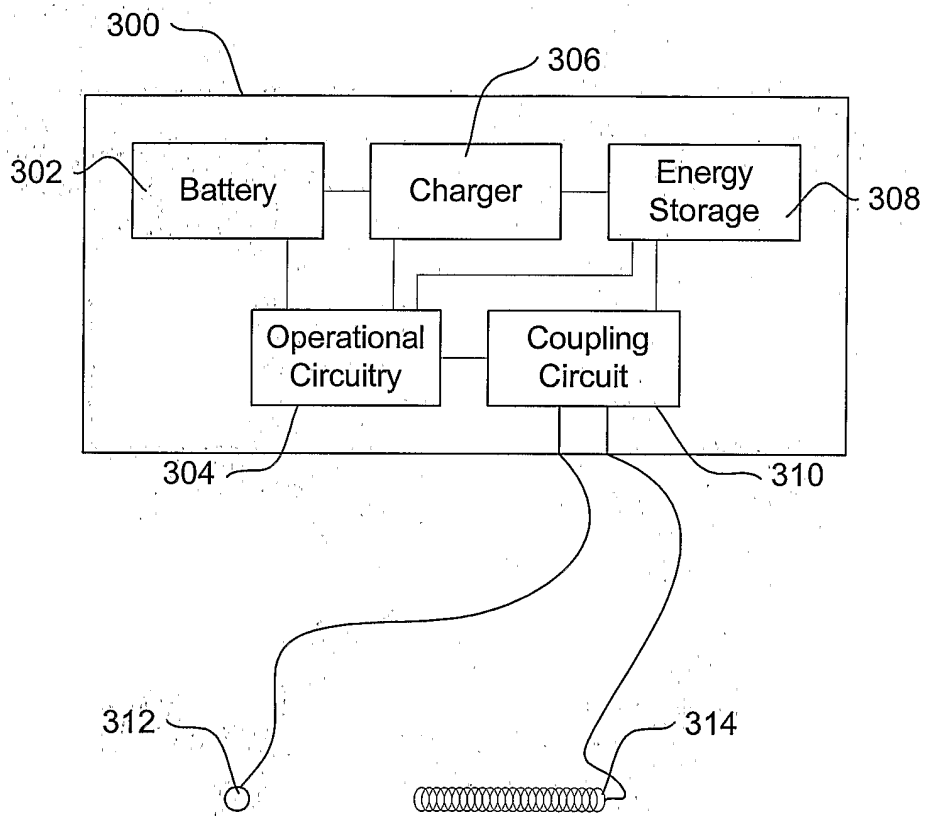


FIG. 7





**FIG. 8**