

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization  
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date  
12 September 2003 (12.09.2003)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number  
WO 03/074093 A3

(51) International Patent Classification<sup>7</sup>: A61L 2/24,  
12/04, 2/07, B65B 55/02

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US03/05946

(22) International Filing Date: 27 February 2003 (27.02.2003)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:  
60/360,904 1 March 2002 (01.03.2002) US

(71) Applicant: JOHNSON & JOHNSON VISION CARE,  
INC. [US/US]; 7500 Centurian Parkway, Suite 100, Jack-  
sonville, FL 32256 (US).

(72) Inventor (for US only): JAMES, White; 1855 Arden Way,  
Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250 (US).

(74) Agents: JOHNSON, Philip et al.; JOHNSON & JOHN-  
SON, One Johnson & Johnson Plaza, New Brunswick, NJ  
08933 (US).

(81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU,  
AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU,

CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH,  
GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC,  
LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW,  
MX, MZ, NO, NZ, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SC, SD, SE,  
SG, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ,  
VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(84) Designated States (regional): ARIPO patent (GH, GM,  
KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW),  
Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM),  
European patent (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE,  
ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, SI,  
SK, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN,  
GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

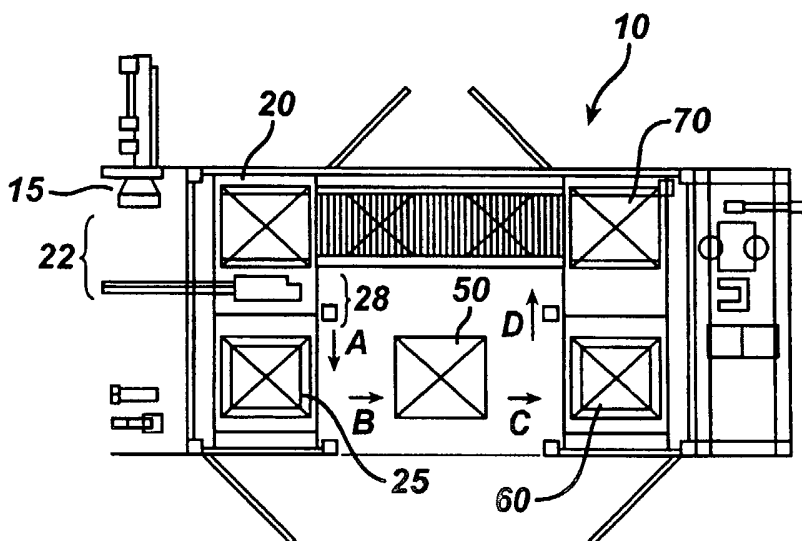
**Published:**

- with international search report
- before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments

(88) Date of publication of the international search report:  
20 November 2003

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(54) Title: IN-LINE STEAM STERILIZER



(57) Abstract: A sterilization apparatus and method for automatically transporting a plurality of ophthalmic lenses packages containing ophthalmic lenses to be sterilized through an in-line apparatus, without off-loading packages from the line, for transport through a sterilizer under optimum conditions of temperature and time for enabling increased throughput.

WO 03/074093 A3

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

EP/US 03/05946

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER  
 IPC 7 A61L2/24 A61L12/04 A61L2/07 B65B55/02

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 7 A61L B65B

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

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

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5 577 367 A (ABRAMS RICHARD W ET AL) 26 November 1996 (1996-11-26) cited in the application column 6, line 35 -column 8, line 12 column 10, line 17 - line 25 ---	1-12
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X	US 5 786 598 A (DUNN JOSEPH E ET AL) 28 July 1998 (1998-07-28) column 7, line 61 -column 8, line 67; figures 1,3-6 --- -/--	1-5,12

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

° Special categories of cited documents :

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
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- "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.
- "&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

7 July 2003

Date of mailing of the international search report

17. 09. 03

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2  
 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk  
 Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,  
 Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Katsoulas, K

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

T/US 03/05946

## C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5 618 492 A (AUTEN RICHARD D ET AL) 8 April 1997 (1997-04-08) column 3, line 14 - line 56 ---	1,3,12
X	US 5 696 686 A (PRICER KENNETH KURT ET AL) 9 December 1997 (1997-12-09) column 7, line 45 -column 8, line 46 -----	1,12

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# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.  
PCT/US 03/05946

## Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This International Search Report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1.  Claims Nos.:  
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
  
2.  Claims Nos.:  
because they relate to parts of the International Application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful International Search can be carried out, specifically:
  
3.  Claims Nos.:  
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

## Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

see additional sheet

1.  As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers all searchable claims.
2.  As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3.  As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
4.  No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this International Search Report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

1-13

Remark on Protest

The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.

No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

This International Searching Authority found multiple (groups of) inventions in this international application, as follows:

1. Claims: 1-13

Claims 1-13 define a apparatus for sterilizing ophthalmic lens packages comprising a sterilisation chamber, trasporting means, sterilization means, wherein the sterilization chamber is disposed contiguously with prior processing stations and secondary packaging stations of a manufacturing line.

2. Claim : 14

Claim 14 defines a sterilizing tray (suitable) for conveying ophthalmic lens packages through a sterilization chamber, comprising an external surrounding wall, a number of internal divider walls, each wall comprising a plurality of cavities for holding a plurality of packages, wherein the tray is suitable for supporting the weight of a plurality of trays and for enduring the sterilization cycles.

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

**T/US 03/05946**

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