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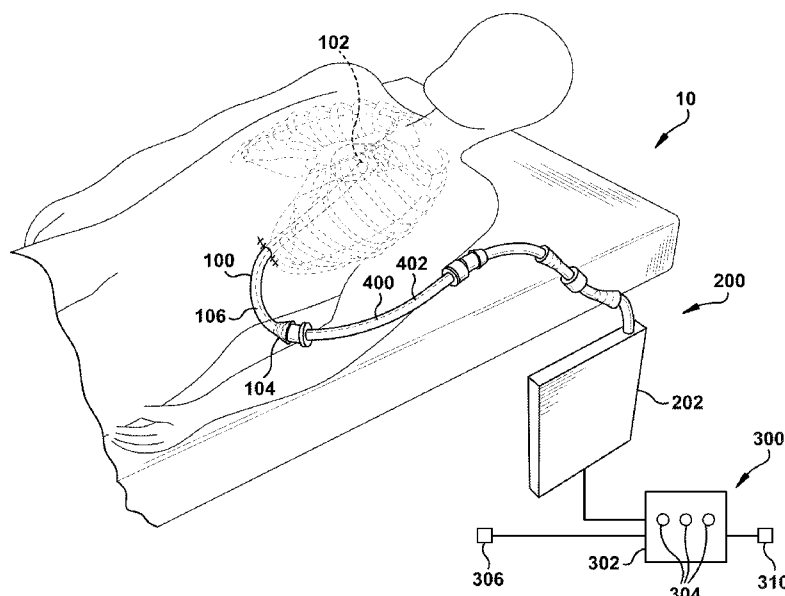


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: Apparatus and methods for clearing obstructions from a medical tube are disclosed. In an exemplary embodiment, a spool drive system is disclosed for actuating a guide wire within a medical tube. The spool drive system can be a hand held, disposable device having a spool housing with a spool therein for alternately advancing and withdrawing a guide wire through an inlet of the spool housing. A track can be spaced from and extend about a perimeter of the spool to direct the guide wire onto or off of the spool as the spool is rotated. Other embodiments and devices for actuating the guide wire, and methods therefor, also are disclosed.

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DEVICES AND METHODS RELATED TO MEDICAL TUBES

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to US provisional patent application Ser. No. 62/460,070 filed February 16, 2017, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

[001] Medical tubes can be used to deliver fluids or devices into a body and/or to drain bodily fluids, secretions, and debris from compartments and structures within the body. For example, medical tubes can be used to drain fluid from one's bladder, from the colon or other portions of the alimentary tract, or from the lungs or other organs in conjunction with various therapies. As another example, medical tubes can be used to drain blood and other fluids that typically accumulate within a body cavity, such as the mediastinal, pericardial, pleural or peritoneal spaces following surgery, infection or trauma. As yet another example, medical tubes can be used to deliver fluids to a body for nourishment within the alimentary tract or they can be used to provide access to the vasculature for removal or delivery of fluids, medications or devices. Typically, a medical tube is inserted into the patient so that its distal end is provided in or adjacent the space where it is desired to remove or deliver material while a proximal portion remains outside the patient's body, where it can be accessed and /or connected, for example, to a suction source.

[002] Fluids passing through a medical tube (particularly when exposed to blood, platelets, pus or other thick substances) can form clots or other obstructions within the medical tube, which can partially or totally obstruct the pathway within the tube. Obstruction of the medical tube can impact its effectiveness to remove or deliver the fluid and other material for which it was originally placed, eventually rendering the medical tube partially or totally non-functional. In some cases, a non-functional tube can have serious or potentially life-threatening consequences. For example, if there is a blockage in a chest tube following cardiac or pulmonary surgery, the resulting accumulation of fluid (e.g., air) around the heart and lungs without adequate drainage can cause serious adverse events such as pericardial tamponade and pneumothorax.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[003] **FIG. 1** shows a schematic perspective view of a fluid system having a medical tube implanted with a patient;

[004] **FIG. 2** shows a schematic perspective view of an example drain assembly for the fluid system;

[005] **FIG. 3** shows a schematic cross-section and a schematic perspective view of an example vacuum tube for the fluid system;

[006] **FIG. 4** shows a schematic perspective view of an example valve assembly for the fluid system;

[007] **FIG. 5** shows a partial view of the medical tube with one example clearance wire assembly for the fluid system;

[008] **FIG. 6** shows a schematic perspective view of the medical tube with a second example clearance wire assembly;

[009] **FIG. 7** shows a partial view of a third example clearance wire assembly;

[0010] **FIG. 8** shows a schematic perspective view of the medical tube with a fourth example clearance wire assembly;

[0011] **FIG. 9** shows a schematic perspective view of the medical tube with a fifth example clearance wire assembly;

[0012] **FIG. 10** shows a partial perspective view of a sixth example clearance wire assembly;

[0013] **FIG. 11A** shows a schematic side view and a schematic cross section of the medical tube with a seventh example clearance wire assembly;

[0014] **FIG. 11B** shows a side view and a front view of an example bead that is part of the seventh example clearance wire assembly;

[0015] **FIG. 11C** shows a side view, top view and front view of another example bead that is part of the seventh example clearance wire assembly;

[0016] **FIG. 11D** shows a side view, top view and front view of yet another example bead that is part of the seventh example clearance wire assembly;

[0017] **FIG. 11E** shows a clearance wire assembly with multiple beads;

[0018] **FIG. 11F** shows a side view of still yet another example bead that is part of the seventh example clearance wire assembly;

[0019] **FIG. 12A** shows a schematic perspective view of the medical tube with an eighth example clearance wire assembly that has spherical clearance members;

[0020] **FIG. 12B** shows a schematic perspective view of the eighth example clearance wire assembly with cup-shaped clearance members;

[0021] **FIG. 12C** shows a schematic perspective view of the eighth example clearance wire assembly with collapsible members;

[0022] **FIG. 13** shows a schematic perspective view of a ninth example clearance wire assembly;

[0023] **FIG. 14** shows a schematic cross section of one example drive system for a clearance-wire assembly of the fluid system;

[0024] **FIG. 15** shows another schematic cross section of the drive system shown in **FIG. 14**;

[0025] **FIG. 16** shows a schematic cross section of the drive system shown in **FIG. 14** with a lead screw driving mechanism;

[0026] **FIG. 17** shows an example linear actuator that can be used to drive the drive system shown in **FIG. 14**;

[0027] **FIG. 18** shows a schematic, partially broken-away perspective view of a second example drive system for a clearance-wire assembly of the fluid system;

[0028] **FIG. 19A** shows a schematic perspective view of a third example drive system for a clearance-wire assembly of the fluid system;

[0029] **FIG. 19B** shows an exploded view of the third example drive system;

[0030] **FIG. 19C** shows a schematic perspective view of the third example drive system with a control system and motor housing removed;

[0031] **FIG. 19D** shows a schematic perspective view of the third example drive system with the motor housing removed;

[0032] **FIG. 19E** shows a schematic, partial cross-section view of a variation of the third example drive system;

[0033] **FIG. 20** shows a schematic, partial cross-section view of another variation of the third example drive system;

[0034] **FIG. 21** is a schematic perspective view of a fourth example drive system for a clearance-wire assembly of the fluid system;

[0035] **FIG. 22A** is an exploded view of a fifth example drive system for a clearance-wire assembly of the fluid system;

[0036] **FIG. 22B** is a perspective view of the fifth example drive system;

[0037] **FIG. 23** is a schematic perspective view of a drive system with a power assembly separated from a main body of the drive system;

[0038] **FIG. 24** shows a schematic side view of a fluid system with a drive system that is configured to permit calibration of the drive system;

[0039] **FIG. 25** is a cross-section view of an example Y-coupling that can be used to couple the medical tube of the fluid system with another structure;

[0040] **FIG. 26** is a cross-section view of another example Y-coupling that can be used to couple the medical tube of the fluid system with another structure;

[0041] **FIG. 27** is a cross-section view of another example Y-coupling that can be used to couple the medical tube of the fluid system with another structure;

[0042] **FIG. 28** is a schematic, partial-cross-section view showing an example elastic member for the fluid system;

[0043] **FIG. 29** is a schematic, partial-cross-section view showing an example conical seat for the fluid system; and

[0044] **FIG. 30** is another embodiment of the described fluid system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0045] Certain terminology is used herein for convenience only and is not to be taken as a limitation on the present invention. Relative language used herein is best understood with reference to the drawings, in which like numerals are used to identify like or similar items. Further, in the drawings, certain features may be shown in schematic form.

[0046] It is to be noted that the terms “proximal” and “distal” as used herein when describing two features indicate a relative positioning that those two features will generally have along a fluid path that is tied to a patient, the distal feature being closer to the patient than the proximal feature along the fluid path. For example, for a medical tube that draws or delivers fluid to a patient, a distal end or portion of the medical tube will be closer to the patient than a proximal end or portion of the medical tube along the flow path of the fluid. As another example, in a fluid system wherein a medical tube fluidly connects a patient to a drain, the drain will be proximal to the medical tube since the drain is farther from the patient than the medical tube along the flow path of the system. Conversely, the medical tube will be distal to the drain since the medical tube is closer to the patient than the drain along the flow path of the system.

[0047] It is to be noted that the term “material” as used herein can refer to blood or other bodily fluids, medicine, food, debris, clot material (such as blood clot), air or any other fluid, solid, or semi-solid, including pus.

[0048] The term “coupled” as used herein when describing two or more features means that the features are fixedly or movably connected to each other. The features may be integral parts of the same component or the features may be

separate components that are connected, either directly or indirectly, using structure or methods such as, for example, fasteners, adhesive, over-molding, hooks, threaded couplings, snap-fit connections, welding, soldering, tying, crimping, magnetic coupling, press-fit, barbed connections, etc. The term “fluidly coupled” as used herein when describing two or more features means that the features are coupled in a manner such that fluid communication is provided between the two features, either directly or through some intermediate structure. Such intermediate structure can be, for example, hoses, tubes, hose barbs, threaded connectors, compression fittings, etc.

[0049] Examples will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings in which example embodiments are shown.

[0050] **FIG. 1** shows a schematic representation of a fluid system **10** having a medical tube **100** that includes a distal end **102** positioned within the body of a patient and a proximal end **104** positioned outside of the patient’s body. The medical tube **100** can correspond to the medical tube disclosed in U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2015/0231361, the contents of which are attached as Exhibit A and incorporated by reference herein in their entirety.

[0051] The medical tube **100** is a tubular member that defines a passageway **106**, which extends through the medical tube **100** from its distal end **102** to its proximal end **104** and provides fluid communication through the medical tube **100**. Preferably, the medical tube **100** comprises a material having elastic properties, such as, for example, silicone or some other elastic polymer, such as one of the various thermoplastics. Using an elastic material can help facilitate a fluid-tight seal between the medical tube **100** and fluid fittings such as barbs since an elastic tube will tend to contract over fluid fittings when coupled thereto. Moreover, a flexible, elastic tube **100** can reduce discomfort for the patient compared to tubes of more rigid materials such as polypropylene or polyethylene. However, if desired these and other rigid materials may be used. Moreover, a flexible, elastic tube **100** can reduce discomfort and potential injury to the patient compared to tubes of more rigid materials such as polypropylene, polyethylene, polyimide, metal, etc. However, if desired these and other rigid materials may be used. Moreover, in some examples, the medical tube **100** can comprise a composite of two or more materials such as,

for example, a thermoplastic and a metal. Preferably, the medical tube **100** is made from a clear (i.e., transparent or substantially transparent) material, so an operator can visualize any clot material or other debris therein, as well as its removal.

[0052] The medical tube **100** can be used to deliver material (e.g., medicine, nourishment, instrumentation, etc.) to the patient's body and/or remove material (e.g., blood, clots, other bodily fluids, etc.) from the patient's body through the passageway **106** of the medical tube **100**. In the present example, the medical tube **100** is inserted into and used to drain fluid from the chest cavity of the patient, and so is referred to as a chest tube. However, it is to be appreciated that the medical tube **100** in other examples may be used as, for example, a catheter, a surgical drain tube to drain fluid from other orifices (besides the chest cavity), an endotracheal tube, a feeding tube, a gastric tube, a vascular access tube, a peritoneal tube, a tube to deliver material to or from the alimentary tract, etc.

[0053] In some examples, the fluid system **10** can include a drain assembly **200** that is configured to collect material (e.g., bodily fluids, debris, clots, etc.) from the patient's body and/or within the medical tube **100**. The drain assembly **200** includes a receptacle **202** fluidly coupled to the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100** that can receive and collect the drawn material. The receptacle **202** is preferably fluidly coupled to the medical tube **100** to form a closed path of fluid communication between the medical tube **100** and the receptacle **202**. The phrase "closed path of fluid communication" as used herein when describing fluid communication between two features is meant to describe a fluid path between the two features wherein exposure to an exterior environment is restricted along the fluid path, thereby preserving a sterile field that may be present within the fluid path. For example, the fluid path between two features may be defined by a tube that is coupled at its two ends to the two features and has no openings along its length that are exposed, either directly or indirectly, to an exterior environment. In some examples, exposure to an exterior environment may be restricted along the fluid path using, for example, a valve or filter. Moreover, in some examples, the fluid path will maintain a pressure relative to an exterior environment.

[0054] The drain assembly **200** can be connected to a vacuum source to draw a vacuum on the medical tube **100**, or it can be configured to generate a vacuum

itself. This vacuum is applied to draw material out of the body cavity and/or medical tube **100** into the receptacle **202**. The vacuum generated within the medical tube **100** can help sustain the normal physiologic negative pressure within the body. Moreover, the vacuum generated can be consistent or intermittent. Furthermore, the vacuum source, e.g. the drain assembly **200**, can be operated either manually by an operator or automatically to generate the vacuum in response to one or more conditions.

[0055] Turning to **FIG. 2**, one example drain assembly **200** is illustrated having a receptacle **202** that includes an inlet **208** and an outlet **210**, the inlet **208** being fluidly coupled to the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100** to form a closed path of fluid communication between the inlet **208** and the medical tube **100**. The inlet **208** may include a check valve that permits material (e.g., blood, clotting, etc.) to drain from the medical tube **100** into the receptacle **202** while inhibiting fluids (e.g., air) and other material from leaving the receptacle **202** through the inlet **208**. Moreover, the outlet **210** may include a check valve within that permits material (e.g., air, blood, etc.) to escape the receptacle **202** through the outlet **210** while inhibiting fluids (e.g., air) and other material from entering the receptacle through the outlet **210**. The receptacle **202** is collapsible to reduce the volume within the receptacle **202** and force fluid (e.g., air, blood) out of the receptacle **202** through the outlet **210**. The receptacle **202** can then expand to increase its internal volume and thereby generate a vacuum that draws material from the medical tube **100** into the receptacle **202** through the inlet **208**.

[0056] The drain assembly **200** in **FIG. 2** further includes one or more actuators **214** operable to collapse and expand the receptacle **202**. The actuator **214** in the illustrated example is a linear actuator that can advance and retract to expand and collapse the receptacle **202**, respectively. However, the actuator **214** in other examples can include other means such as springs that are operable to collapse and expand the receptacle **202**.

[0057] In some examples, the fluid system **10** includes a control system **300** that can be configured to automatically operate one or more aspects of the fluid system **10** such as, for example, the drain assembly **200** described above and/or any of the aspects described further below. The control system **300** includes a controller

302 and a control interface **304** (e.g., button(s), switch(es), touchscreen, etc.) that can permit a user to selectively control (e.g., program, operate, etc.) the control system **300**. Moreover, the control system **300** can include one or more sensors **306** operatively connected to the controller **302** and configured to detect a particular parameter and send a signal to the controller **302** indicating the detected parameter. Each sensor **306** can be located within the medical tube **100** or some other portion of the fluid system **10**. Moreover, the parameter detected by each sensor **306** can be, for example, an orientation (e.g., inclination) of the medical tube **100**; a position of a clearance member or some other structure within the medical tube **100**; a pressure level, pH level, glucose level, protein level, or redox state of material (e.g., bodily fluid) within the medical tube **100**; a blockage within the medical tube **100**; a kink in the medical tube **100**; an amount of fibrin clot degradation byproducts, endotoxins, bacterial infection byproducts, reactive oxygen species, or hematocrit in the medical tube **100**; a temperature, heart rate and rhythm, arrhythmia, respiratory rate, inflammation level, pain level, or oxygen saturation level of the patient; an orientation of the patient in bed; an activity level of the patient; coughing of the patient; the number of steps taken per day by the patient; a type of activity being performed by the patient (e.g., stair climbing); a location of the patient; the length of time a patient has been in a particular area (e.g., the OR, the ICU, the ward, rehab, home, etc.); drainage parameters (e.g., lack of air, minimal fluid per hour, etc.); or any combination thereof. In one embodiment, the one or more sensors **306** can include a GPS tracker such that the patient's location can be tracked (e.g., within an OR, an ICU, a stepdown unit, a rehab unit, a home, an ER, etc.).

[0058] The controller **302** of the control system **300** can be in operative communication with a network system to send data collected or generated by the controller **302** via the network to, for example, a system (e.g., a clinician's phone) used to monitor and collect data concerning the patient or the fluid system **100** connected to the patient. For example, the control system **300** can send data corresponding to one or more of the parameters detected by the sensors **306**. As another example, the controller **302** can collect data from one or more of the sensors **306** and then execute an algorithm to generate an output based on the collected data that can then be sent over the network. For instance, in one example, the controller **302** can execute an algorithm that determines an expected recovery of a

patient based on one or more of the parameters detected by the sensors **306**. The expected recovery output may then be sent over the network to a monitoring system (e.g., a clinician's phone). The network can be any system wherein two or more devices are connected via wires or are connected wirelessly (e.g., via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi) such that data can be transferred from one device to another. For example, the network can be a cloud system that shares data (e.g., detected parameter(s)) between two or more devices over the internet.

[0059] In some examples, the controller **302** can be configured to activate one or more alarms **310** in response to the parameter(s) detected by the sensor(s) **306**. Each alarm **310** can be a light, sound, electronic message (e.g., text or email), or any combination thereof. For instance, in one example, the controller **302** can activate a light that is green, yellow, or red based on the expected recovery of a patient. As another example, the controller **302** can activate an alarm to indicate when a patient may need to move (e.g., walk or get up). In another example, the controller **302** can activate an alarm **310** based on a status of the system (e.g., a pressure within the medical tube **100**; a kink in the medical tube **100**; an on/off mode of one or more actuators, motors, or other devices of the system; etc.)

[0060] As shown in **FIG. 2**, the controller **302** of the control system **300** can be operatively coupled to the actuator(s) **214** of the drain assembly **200** and configured to automatically operate the actuator(s) **214** in response to one or more of the parameter(s) detected by the sensor(s) **306**. In particular, the controller **302** can be configured to automatically operate the actuators **214** to generate or terminate a vacuum within the medical tube **100** in response to the detected parameter(s). The vacuum generated can be consistent, intermittent, and/or variable in pressure.

[0061] Turning to **FIG. 3**, the drain assembly **200** in some examples can include a vacuum tube **240** that is at least partially inserted within the medical tube **100** through the latter's proximal end. A distal end **242** of the vacuum tube **240** can include an inlet **244** for receiving/drawing in material within the medical tube **100**. Meanwhile, a proximal end of the vacuum tube **240** can be fluidly coupled to a vacuum source such as, for example, the collapsible receptacle **202** shown in **FIG. 2** and described above. The vacuum tube **240** is movable within the medical tube **100** such that the inlet **244** of the vacuum tube **240** can be advanced toward the distal

end **102** of the medical tube **100** and retracted toward the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100** to adjust the position of the vacuum tube's inlet **244** along the passageway **106** of the medical tube **100**. Adjusting the position of the inlet **244** can be advantageous, particularly if fluid or other materials to be drawn by the drain assembly **200** are confined to a particular region of the medical tube **100** (e.g., at U-shaped bend in the medical tube **100**).

[0062] In order to adjust the position of the vacuum tube **240**, the drain assembly **200** can include drain tube having or in the form of a collapsible sheath **246** having a distal end **248** and a proximal end **250**. The distal end **248** of the sheath **246** can be fixed or fluidly connected to the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100** and the vacuum tube **240** can extend through the sheath **246** into the medical tube **100**. The vacuum tube **240** can be fixed relative to the proximal end **250** of the sheath **246** such that as the sheath **246** is contracted and the proximal end **250** moves toward the distal end **248** of the sheath **246**, the vacuum tube **240** and its inlet **244** will advance through the medical tube **100** toward the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100**. Conversely, as the sheath **246** expands and the proximal end **250** moves away from the distal end **248** of the sheath **246**, the vacuum tube **240** and its inlet **244** will retract and be withdrawn from the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100**.

[0063] The sheath **246** described above can be expanded and/or contracted either manually or automatically using a control system such as, for example, the control system **300** described above. In particular, the controller **302** of the control system **300** can be operatively coupled to an actuator (e.g., a linear actuator) that can be selectively operated to expand and/or contract the sheath **246** in response to the parameter(s) detected by the sensor(s) **306** of the control system **300**.

[0064] As fluid or other material resides in or is transferred through the medical tube **100**, some material (e.g., debris, clots, etc.) can accumulate within the medical tube **100**, thereby obstructing the transfer of material and/or vacuum through the medical tube **100**. The vacuum described above can sometimes be sufficient to draw this accumulated material through the medical tube **100** into the receptacle **202** unaided by additional intervention. However, in some instances it can be helpful to have additional intervention(s) that can disrupt (e.g., collect, dislodge, move, break

apart, penetrate, etc.) the accumulated material to help clear the medical tube **100** of obstruction.

[0065] For instance, turning to **FIG. 4**, the drain assembly **200** in some examples can include one or more valves **254** configured to pulsate the vacuum generated within the medical tube **100** in order to facilitate removal of material accumulated within the medical tube **100**. Each valve **254** can be located, for example, within the medical tube **100**, within the inlet **208** of the receptacle **202**, or anywhere else along the fluid path of communication between the medical tube **100** and the vacuum source (e.g. receptacle **202**). Each valve **254** can be selectively opened and closed, either manually or automatically, to open and close fluid communication between the medical tube **100** and the vacuum source to thereby pulsate the vacuum generated within the medical tube **100**. For instance, in some examples, each valve **254** can be operatively coupled to the controller **302** of the control system **300** described above, which can automatically open and close the valve **254** to pulsate vacuum in response to one or more parameters (e.g., tube blockage) detected by the sensor(s) **306** of the control system **300**. Pulsating the vacuum within the medical tube **100** can help generate turbulence within the medical tube **100**, which can disrupt material accumulated within the passageway **106** of the medical tube **100** and thereby facilitate removal of the accumulated material.

[0066] Returning to **FIG. 1**, in some examples the fluid system **10** can include a clearance wire assembly **400** that can be actuated (e.g., translated, rotated, vibrated, oscillated, etc.) within the passageway **106** of the medical tube **100** to disrupt material accumulated within the passageway **106** and help clear the medical tube **100** of obstruction. The clearance wire assembly **400** includes an elongated guide wire **402** and in some examples, can include one or more clearance members coupled to the guide wire **402** that can facilitate disruption of material accumulated within the passageway **106**. Preferably, the guide wire **402** comprises a material having sufficient flexibility such that it can negotiate bends in the medical tube **100** during translation (e.g., insertion) of the wire assembly **400** within the medical tube **100**. In addition, the guide wire **402** preferably comprises a material having sufficient stiffness or rigidity such that the guide wire **402** and any clearance members coupled thereto can disrupt (e.g., move) the accumulated material without causing the wire

402 to kink or double back on itself. For instance, the guide wire **402** can comprise nickel-titanium alloys (e.g., nitinol), stainless steel, titanium, shape memory alloys, super alloys, cobalt-chromium alloys (e.g., elgiloy®), and/or other alloys. In some examples, the guide wire **402** can comprise one or more polymers, such as PEEK, polyimide, or other polymers. The guide wire **402** can comprise combinations/composites of two or more materials such as, for example, one or more alloys and one or more polymers. Moreover, any clearance member coupled thereto can comprise similar material(s) and in some examples, can be formed by the guide wire **402** itself.

[0067] With reference now to **FIGS. 5-14**, various embodiments of the clearance wire assembly **400** will now be described.

[0068] One embodiment of the clearance wire assembly **400** is illustrated in **FIG. 5**, wherein the guide wire **402** is in the form of a planar ribbon that extends longitudinally through the passageway **106**, and is wound such that it spirals about an axis **X** of the medical tube **100**. The clearance wire assembly **400** in this embodiment may not include an additional clearance member (the clearance wire itself may act as the clearance member) and can be moved within the passageway **106** by, for example, rotating the clearance wire assembly **400** about the axis **X**, advancing the clearance wire assembly **400** toward the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100**, and/or retracting the clearance wire assembly **400** toward the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100**.

[0069] Another embodiment of the clearance wire assembly **400** is illustrated in **FIG. 6**, wherein the guide wire **402** has a circular spiral conformation when viewed along axis **X** and spirals about the axis **X** of the medical tube **100**. However, other cross-sections and configurations are possible in other examples. The clearance wire assembly **400** in this embodiment can include a hook **408** at its distal end that hooks onto the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100**. A cap (not shown for clarity) may be provided that covers the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100** and the hook **408** to allow free movement of the hook **408** about the distal end **102** without interference from body structures or tissue. The proximal end of the clearance wire assembly, meanwhile, can be coupled to the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100** or some other portion of the fluid system **10** that is proximal to the hook **408**.

The clearance wire assembly **400** can be actuated within the passageway **106** by, for example, rotating the clearance wire assembly **400** about the axis **X** continuously or intermittently, either in the same direction or in an oscillating manner. As the clearance wire assembly **400** rotates, the hook **408** will move about the perimeter of the medical tube's distal end **102** so that the distal end of the clearance wire assembly **400** does not bind and rather moves freely with the remainder of the clearance wire assembly **400**. Rotation of the wire assembly **400** in this embodiment in **FIG. 6** in the proper direction can produce an auger effect that will tend to convey accumulated debris within the passageway **106** proximally, toward the exit end of the medical tube **100**.

[0070] Another embodiment of the clearance wire assembly **400** is illustrated in **FIG. 7**, wherein the guide wire **402** has a circular cross-section and has one or more bends **412** along its length. However, other cross-sections and configurations are possible in other examples. In some examples, a distal end of the clearance wire assembly **400** will reside within the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100** and/or some other portion of the medical tube **100** and will be free to move (e.g., rotate) within the medical tube **100**. The proximal end of the clearance wire assembly **400** can then be rotated either continuously or intermittently in the same direction or in an oscillating manner. In other examples, the clearance wire assembly **400** can be fixed at its distal end to the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100** and/or some other portion of the medical tube **100**. The clearance wire assembly **400** can then be actuated by, for example, rotating the proximal end of the clearance wire assembly **400** about the longitudinal axis of the medical tube **100** (e.g., the **X** axis in **FIG. 6**) in an oscillating manner, either continuously or intermittently. Since the distal end of the wire assembly **400** is fixed, the distal end will resist movement of the wire assembly **400** and bias the wire assembly **400** toward a natural, resting position. This bias of the wire assembly **400** can help generate a whipping action as the portion of the clearance wire assembly **400** inside the passageway **106** oscillates about the axis **X** that can facilitate disruption of material accumulated within the medical tube **100**. In one embodiment, the wire has no set bends but has length that is longer than than required to connect to the fixed points at its distal and proximal ends such that the excess material partially coils the wire within the tube. When the proximal end is actuated, by rotation or other means, a whipping action results.

[0071] Another embodiment of the clearance wire assembly **400** is illustrated in **FIG. 8**, wherein the guide wire **402** has a circular cross-section and the wire assembly **400** includes a plurality of clearance members **416** coupled to or forming part of the wire **402** such that the clearance members **416** are spaced along a length of the wire **402**, preferably at a constant interval. In a preferred embodiment, each clearance member **416** is formed by bending a portion of the wire **402** into a spiral shape that preferably has a comparable or slightly smaller overall diameter than the inner diameter of the medical tube **100**. As the clearance wire assembly **400** is advanced or retracted through the medical tube **100**, each clearance member **416** can engage the inner surface of the medical tube **100** to help disrupt any material that may have accumulated on the inner surface. By having multiple clearance members **416** spaced along the wire **402**, the clearance wire assembly **400** can engage multiple portions of the medical tube's inner surface while translating through the medical tube **100**. Moreover, the wire **402** can be actuated less than the entire length of the medical tube **100** such that repeated actuation conveys material proximally through the entire length of the tube **100** via the plurality of clearance members **416**.

[0072] It is to be appreciated that the clearance members **416** of the wire assembly **400** can have alternative configurations in other examples. For instance, the clearance members **416** may be irregularly spaced along the wire **402** and/or the clearance members **416** may be separate elements that are separately coupled to the wire **402**. Moreover, the clearance members **416** may have alternative shapes and/or sizes in some examples.

[0073] Another embodiment of the clearance wire assembly **400** is illustrated in **FIG. 9**, wherein a cylindrical clearance member **422** is coupled to the guide wire **402**. In this embodiment, the medical tube **100** can include one or more apertures **110** that extend through its side wall at a portion of the medical tube **100** that is located within the patient's body. The cylindrical clearance member **422** is aligned co-axially within the medical tube **110** and preferably has an outer diameter that is comparable to or slightly smaller than the inner diameter of the medical tube **100**. In some examples, the clearance wire assembly **400** can be translated along the medical tube's axis **X** toward the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100** such that the

clearance member **422** traverses the one or more apertures **110** and performs a guillotine action that can disrupt material accumulated in or adjacent the apertures **110** and temporarily block the transfer of material through the apertures **110**. Guillotined material that has thus been separated from where it adhered to the medical tube **100** or its apertures **110** then can be suctioned out from the medical tube via its proximal end **104**. The clearance wire assembly **400** can then be translated (either toward the distal end **102** or the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100**) until the clearance member **110** is at a position that does not obstruct the apertures **110**, thereby permitting material to resume transfer through the apertures **110**.

[0074] In addition or in alternative to translating the clearance member **422**, in some examples the cylindrical clearance member **422** can be rotated about the medical tube's axis **X** while the clearance member **422** is located at the section of the medical tube **100** having the apertures **110**. In such examples, the clearance member **422** can include an aperture (e.g., slot) **423** such that as the clearance member **422** is rotated, the aperture **423** of the clearance member **400** will periodically align with the medical tube apertures **110** and permit fluid to transfer through the apertures **110**, **423**.

[0075] Another embodiment of the clearance wire assembly **400** is illustrated in **FIG. 10**, wherein the clearance member **424** is a generally circular disc coupled at the distal end **102** the guide wire **402**, though the clearance member **424** may be coupled to other portions of the wire **402** in other examples. The circular clearance member **424** is aligned co-axially within the medical tube **100** (though it may be offset in some examples) and preferably has an outer diameter comparable to or slightly smaller than the inner diameter of the medical tube **100**. Moreover, the circular clearance member **424** can have a solid or perforated center that inhibits or fully blocks the transfer of material through the circular clearance member **424**. In some examples, the center may comprise a one-way valve that will permit material transfer therethrough during translation toward the distal end **102** of the tube **100** so as not to push material back into the body.

[0076] The circular clearance member **424** can be formed by looping a portion of the guide wire **402** to form a circular frame **426** of the clearance member **424**.

Filler material **428** can then be attached (e.g., adhered or welded) to the circular frame **426** to plug the center of the clearance member **424**. In other examples, the circular clearance member **424** can be a disc that is separately formed from the guide wire **402** (e.g., via injection molding, casting, stamping, etc.) and then attached to the guide wire **402**.

[0077] It is to be appreciated that the clearance member **424** can have alternative configurations in other examples. For instance, the clearance member **424** may have a substantially smaller diameter and/or may be a separate element that is separately coupled to the wire **402**. Moreover, the clearance member **424** may have a non-circular shape in some examples such as, for example, a square shape or some other polygonal shape.

[0078] Another embodiment of the clearance wire assembly **400** is illustrated in **FIGS. 11A & 11B**, wherein a clearance member **432** in the form of a bead is coupled to the guide wire **402**. The bead **432** includes an outer surface **434** that is circular in cross-section and has a diameter that varies along the length of the bead **432**. In particular, the diameter is greatest at a center of the bead **432** and is smallest at the proximal and distal ends of the bead **432**. Preferably, the diameter of the bead **432** at its center is comparable to or slightly smaller than the inner diameter of the medical tube **100**, thereby forming an interface at the center between the bead **432** and the inside of the medical tube **100**. By varying the diameter of the bead **432** along its length, the surface area of the bead **432** that engages the medical tube's inner surface can be reduced (compared to a cylindrical member of the same length and having a constant diameter comparable to the ID of the medical tube **100**), and friction between the bead **432** and the medical tube **100** can be mitigated. However, in some examples, the bead **432** may have a constant diameter along its length. In a preferred embodiment, there is a slight gap between the bead **432** and the inner diameter of the medical tube **100** such that fluid will be conveyed in part due to surface tension effects at the interface between the bead **432** and the medical tube **100**.

[0079] The bead **432** can be coupled to the distal end of the wire **402** or some other portion of the wire **402**. Moreover, the bead **432** can be integrally formed with the wire **402** or the bead **432** can be separately formed and then attached to the wire

402. In the illustrated example, the bead **432** includes a through-hole **436** that is aligned (e.g., parallel) with the medical tube's axis **X** and the bead **432** is coupled to the wire **402** such that a portion of the wire **402** passes through the through-hole **436**. The bead **432** can be coupled by molding the bead **432** directly onto the wire **402** or by molding the bead **432** separately from the wire **402** and then inserting the wire **402** through the through-hole **436**.

[0080] In some examples, the bead **432** can include a through-hole **438** that is aligned (e.g., coaxial) with the medical tube's axis **X** and permits material (e.g., blood or other bodily fluids) to transfer through the bead **432** as the wire assembly **400** is translated through the medical tube **100** or at rest. This can mitigate resistance applied to the bead **432** during translation. This can also serve to allow free flow of material through the bead **432** when it is at rest in any portion of the medical tube **100**. It can also serve to equalize pressure on the distal and proximal sides of the bead **432**, especially when it is translating. Although fluid may be free to flow through the hole **438**, the body of the bead **432** surrounding the hole **438** can still provide a clearance function as the bead **432** is actuated through the medical tube **100**. In some examples, a one-way valve can be provided within the hole **438** that will open during advancement of the bead **432** and close during retraction of the bead **432** through the medical tube **100**.

[0081] In some embodiments the bead **432** may have a relatively large through-hole **432** relative to its outer diameter such that the bead **432** becomes a thin walled configuration, as shown in **FIG. 11C**.

[0082] In other examples, the bead **432** may be substantially solid so as not to permit the transfer of material through the bead **432**. In such examples, the bead **432** may still include the through-hole **436** discussed above for coupling the bead **432** to the wire **402**. Preferably, the through-hole **436** is fit to the wire **402** such that fluid communication through the hole **436** is substantially inhibited by the presence of the wire **402** within the hole **436**.

[0083] In some examples, the bead **432** may have a skirt **438** extending from the body of the main body of the bead **432**, as shown in **FIG. 11D**. The skirt **438** may be made from a flexible material such as an elastomer or a wire mesh. The

skirt 438 can engage the inner diameter of the medical tube 100 to produce a squeegee effect that moves fluid and debris along the tube 100 with the bead 432. In other embodiments the skirt 438 may be attached to other clearance members or directly to the guide wire 402.

[0084] In some embodiments, one or more beads **432** may be coupled to the wire **402**, as shown in FIG. 11E. Moreover, one or more beads **432** may be coupled in combination with other clearance member configurations. In one embodiment the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100** and any perforations in the medical tube **100** are sized such that the bead **432** cannot escape the medical tube **100** through the distal end **102** or perforations. In particular, the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100** can be tapered to a smaller diameter or can include a tip that is sufficiently smaller than the bead **432** to prevent it from leaving the distal end **102** of the tube **100**. Another example bead 432 is illustrated in FIG. 11F.

[0085] Another embodiment of the clearance wire assembly **400** is illustrated in FIG. 12A, wherein the clearance wire assembly **400** is in the form of a conveyor loop that extends through the passageway **106** of the medical tube **100** and can move or circulate in a conveyor motion. In this embodiment, the clearance wire assembly **400** includes a conveyor belt **440** (e.g., the guide wire **402**) and one or more pulleys **442** located within the medical tube **100** or some other portion of the fluid system **10** about which the belt **440** can be wound in order to yield its circuitous, never-ending travel path. The belt **440** may be a wire or monofilament. Moreover, the belt **440** can be ribbon-shaped such that the belt **440** has a rectangular cross-section. Alternatively, the belt **440** can be wire-shaped such that the belt **440** has a circular cross-section. The wire assembly **400** can be moved such that the belt **440** conveys continuously or intermittently about the pulleys **442**. Moreover, wire assembly **400** can be moved such that the belt **440** conveys at all times in the same direction (e.g., clockwise) or in alternating directions (e.g., clockwise and then counter-clockwise).

[0086] The conveyor-type wire assembly **400** in FIG. 12A can include one or more clearance members **444** coupled to the belt **440** that can be conveyed along the aforementioned circuitous path through the passageway **106** as the belt **440** rounds the pulleys **442** along its circuitous path. The clearance members 444 may

be spaced approximately one inch apart from each other, though other distances are possible in other examples. Moreover, the clearance members **444** can be spherical or may comprise other shapes such as, for example, flat discs, hemi-spheres, or cups. For instance, the clearance members **444** shown in **FIG. 12A** comprise spherical beads that are connected to the belt **440**. In another example, as shown in **FIG. 12B**, the clearance members **444** may comprise cups, wherein each cup **444** is arranged such that its opening is directed toward the cup's direction of travel.

[0087] Another conveyor-type embodiment of the clearance wire assembly **400** is illustrated in **FIG. 13**, wherein the wire assembly **400** similarly comprises a belt **440** and clearance members **444** as described above. In this embodiment, the medical tube **100** has two proximal portions **114** that will reside outside of the patient's body and a distal portion **116** that will reside in the patient's body. The distal portion **116** will connect the two proximal portions **114** to form part of a continuous loop **118** that runs through the patient. Moreover, the distal portion **116** can include one or more apertures **120** for material to transfer between the medical tube **100** and the patient's body. The medical tube **100** may penetrate the patient's body in two separate locations so that the distal portion **116** can reside within the patient's body. Alternatively, the same incision site may be used for both ends of the tube **100**.

[0088] The belt **440** of the clearance wire assembly **400** in **FIG. 13** can be conveyed continuously or intermittently about the continuous loop **118**, either in the same direction or in alternating directions.

[0089] As is apparent from the description above, the clearance wire assembly **400** can have a variety of different configurations, any of which can be actuable (e.g., movable) through the medical tube **100** to facilitate disruption of material accumulated within the medical tube **100**. With reference now to **FIGS. 14-22**, various drive systems will now be described that can facilitate movement of the clearance wire assembly **400** in the manners discussed above.

[0090] As shown in **FIGS. 14 & 15**, the fluid system **10** in some embodiments can include a magnetic drive system **500** that is operable to actuate the clearance wire assembly **400**. One form of actuation that can be provided by the magnetic drive system **500** is translation of the clearance wire assembly **400** back and forth

through the medical tube **100** along the axis **X** of the medical tube **100**. Another form of actuation that can be provided by the magnetic drive system **500** is rotation of the clearance wire assembly **400** within the medical tube **100** about the axis **X**. The magnetic drive system **500** can correspond to the clearance device disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 7,951,243, the contents of which are attached as Exhibit B and incorporated by reference herein in their entirety.

[0091] The magnetic drive system **500** includes a guide tube **510** having a distal end **512** that is fluidly coupled to the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100** and a proximal end **514** that is fluidly coupled to a suction source such as, for example, the receptacle **202** of the drain assembly **200** shown in **FIG. 2**. The guide tube **510** defines a guide-tube passageway **516** and an outer circumference **518**.

[0092] The drive system **500** further includes a magnetic guide **530** having one or more first magnetic elements **532** that are fixedly coupled to the guide wire **402** of the clearance wire assembly **400**. The first magnetic elements **532** can be permanent magnets such as, for example, neodymium magnets (N5-N52). Alternatively, the first magnetic elements **532** may be metal elements having magnetic properties, which are not necessarily permanent magnets. As used herein, a metal element has magnetic properties if it is capable of being attracted by a permanent magnet via magnetic forces.

[0093] The drive system **500** further includes a shuttle member **540** disposed over, and preferably in contact with, the outer circumference **518** of the guide tube **510**. The shuttle member **540** has a through bore preferably having a diameter substantially corresponding to the outer circumference **518**, such that the shuttle member **540** can slidably and smoothly translate along the length of the guide tube **510** with the guide tube **510** received through its bore. The shuttle member **540** includes one or more second magnetic elements **542** embedded or enclosed within a shuttle housing **544**. Optionally, the second magnetic element(s) **542** can form all or part of the housing **544**. Alternatively, the shuttle member **540** may consist only of the second magnetic element(s) **542**. In the illustrated embodiment, the second magnetic elements **542** are provided in the form of rings wherein the guide tube **510** passes through openings at the center of each said ring. As with the first magnetic elements **532** discussed above, the second magnetic elements can be permanent

magnets or metal elements having magnetic properties that are not necessarily permanent magnets. The magnets may be coated or plated using nickel, gold, epoxy, PTFE, parylene or other metals, alloys, polymer or combination thereof. The coating may serve as a barrier layer to prevent degradation of the magnet material, prevent leaching of metals from the magnet, provide a biocompatible and/or thromboresistant surface and/or provide a low friction surface for sliding on the guide tube.

[0094] The first and second magnetic elements **532**, **542** of the magnetic guide **530** and shuttle member **540** are aligned magnetically with respect to each other to produce a magnetic force between the first and second magnetic elements **532**, **542** that acts through the wall of the guide tube **510** to magnetically couple the shuttle member **540** to the magnetic guide **530**. Consequently, sliding or translating the shuttle member **540** along the length of the guide tube **510** induces a corresponding translational movement of the magnetic guide **530** magnetically coupled thereto, and of the guide wire **402** that is fixedly coupled to the magnetic guide **530**. Thus, the shuttle member **540** can be translated along the guide tube **510** to move the guide wire **402** of the clearance wire assembly **400** through the medical tube **100**. Furthermore rotation of the shuttle member **540** tube may provide rotation of the clearance wire assembly **400**.

[0095] Preferably, the first and second magnetic elements **532** and **542** have axially-aligned North-South polarity relative to the longitudinal axis of the guide tube **510**, though the magnetic elements **532** and **542** can have radially-aligned North-South polarity in some examples. It has been found that magnets having axially-aligned polarity can provide suitable attractive force between the magnetic elements **532** and **542** to retain the magnetic guide **530** and shuttle member **540** in tandem while translating the shuttle member **540** along the tube **510** length, without unduly increasing friction as they translate along the tube **510**.

[0096] In some examples, the drive system **500** also includes distal and proximal retaining members **526a**, **526b** fixedly coupled to the guide wire **402** on opposite sides of the magnetic guide **530**. The retaining members **526a**, **526b** are preferably dimensioned so that they cannot pass through the distal and proximal ends **512**, **514** of the guide tube **510**, respectively, thereby retaining the magnetic

guide **530** and the associated region of the guide wire **402** inside the guide tube **510**. Thus, the distal and proximal retaining members **526a**, **526b** can provide limits to the distance translatable by the guide wire **402** through the medical tube **100**. Moreover, in some examples, the drive system **500** can include one or more shuttle stops **550** coupled to the outer circumference **518** of the guide tube **510** that can prevent translation of the shuttle member **540** beyond the shuttle stops **550** and thereby inhibit further translation of the guide wire **402** through the medical tube **100**.

[0097] The shuttle member **540** of the drive system **500** can be translated along the guide tube **510** either directly by hand or with a separate drive mechanism. For instance, as shown in **FIG. 16** the drive system **500** can include a lead screw **562** and a motor **564** that is operable to rotate the lead screw **562**. In this example, the shuttle member **540** can include a coupling portion **566** with a threaded bore extending at least partially therethrough that threadably receives lead screw **562**. As the motor **564** is operated to rotate the lead screw **562**, the shuttle member **540** will translate along the lead screw **562** and consequently translate along the guide tube **510** of the drive system **500**, thereby moving the guide wire **402** of the clearance wire assembly **400**. The direction of translation will depend upon the direction of rotation for the lead screw **562**. Preferably, the motor **564** is operable to rotate the lead screw **562** in both clockwise and counter-clockwise directions such that the motor **564** is operable to move the guide wire **402** of the clearance wire assembly **400** both forwards and backwards. The lead screw could be a standard threaded rod and can have thread designs commonly used for lead screws such as an acme thread.

[0098] In some examples, one or more electromagnetic linear actuators can be coupled to the shuttle member **540** to translate the shuttle member **540** in a linear motion along the guide tube **510**. Such actuators are generally known in the art, and may be coupled to the shuttle member **540** as illustrated in **FIG. 17**. In this example, the drive system **500** includes a carriage **566** having a nest **568** into which the shuttle member **540** is received. The nest **568** may receive the shuttle member **540** using a number of mechanical fits such as, for example, a releasable snap fit, a slip fit, an interference fit, or a compression fit. Alternatively, the carriage **566** may have one or more posts that each mate into a corresponding female fitting on the shuttle

member **540**, or vice versa. Other means for mechanically securing the shuttle member **540** to the carriage **566** may be used such as, for example, straps, zip ties, clamps, or an enclosure that at least partially encloses the shuttle member **540**. Alternatively, the carriage **566** may have a magnetic element such as permanent magnet(s) or an electromagnet that directly couples to the magnetic guide **530**, thereby eliminating the need for the shuttle member **540**. The carriage **566** can be coupled to (e.g., be part of) a linear actuator and can be actuated by the linear actuator to result in translation of the clearance wire assembly **400** inside the guide tube **510** and therefore the clearance member(s) inside the medical tube **100**. For example, the carriage **566** may be coupled to an actuator **570** having a lead screw **572** or a ball that is rotated by a motor to actuate the carriage **566**. The motor could be a DC or AC motor. It could be a stepper motor or servo motor. The carriage **566** may also be coupled to a belt drive actuator wherein the carriage **566** is mounted on a belt that is under tension and driven by a motor. The carriage **566** may have bearing(s) that ride along a rail(s). Such a system could employ encoders and / or limit switches (such as proximity switch, reed and/or hall effect sensors) with the appropriate control systems to actuate the carriage **566** between two or more positions resulting in clearance member actuation within the medical tube **100**.

[0099] Still in other examples, the carriage **566** can be coupled to one or more pneumatic actuators to actuate the carriage **566** and shuttle member **540** in a linear motion along the guide tube **510**.

[00100] Still in other examples, the drive system **500** can include a worm drive mechanism wherein a spur gear is rotated by a motor. The spur gear can threadably engage a lead screw that is fixed relative to the shuttle member **540** such that rotation of the spur gear will cause the lead screw to translate across the spur gear and consequently cause the shuttle member **540** to translate in a linear motion along the guide tube **510**.

[00101] The magnetic drive system **500** can comprise a variety of different drive mechanisms that can be operable to translate the shuttle member **540** along the guide tube **510** and consequently translate the guide wire **402** of the clearance wire assembly **400** through the medical tube **100**. Moreover, any of the drive mechanisms discussed above can be operatively connected to a control

system such as, for example, the control system **300** described above, to automatically control the drive mechanism. In particular, the controller **302** of the control system **300** can be operatively coupled to the actuator/motor of the drive mechanism and can be configured to selectively operate the actuator/motor according to a particular program and/or in response to the parameter(s) detected by the sensor(s) **306** of the control system **300**.

[00102] Turning to **FIG. 18**, the fluid system **10** in some embodiments can include an induction motor drive system **600** that is operable to rotate the clearance wire assembly **400** within the medical tube **100**. The induction motor drive system **600** includes a rotor **630** disposed within a tube portion **632** which, in the present example, corresponds to a portion of the medical tube **100**. In other examples, the tube portion **632** may correspond to a guide tube or some other tube that is fluidly coupled to the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100**. The rotor **630** is fixedly coupled to the guide wire **402** of the clearance wire assembly **400** such that rotation of the rotor **630** will cause the portion(s) of the guide wire **402** fixedly coupled thereto to rotate with the rotor **630**. In the illustrated example, the rotor **630** is fixedly coupled to a proximal end of the guide wire **402**, though the rotor **630** can be fixedly coupled to more distal portions of guide wire **402** in other examples. The rotor **630** can either be a wound type or a squirrel-cage type rotor.

[00103] The induction motor drive system **600** further includes a shuttle member **640** disposed over the outer circumference of the tube portion **632** wherein the rotor **630** is located. The shuttle member **640** includes a stator **642** embedded or enclosed within a shuttle housing **644** that is preferably slightly spaced from the tube portion **632** such that an air gap will be present between the stator **642** and the rotor **630**. In some examples, the shuttle member **640** may consist only of the stator **642**.

[00104] The stator **642** of the shuttle member **640** is aligned with the rotor **630** within the tube portion **632** such that when AC current passes through windings of the stator **642**, a rotating magnetic field will be generated that causes the rotor **630** within the tube portion **632** to rotate, which in turn will cause the portion(s) of the guide wire **402** fixedly coupled thereto to rotate. The speed of rotation can be adjusted by adjusting the frequency of the AC current supplied the stator **642**.

[00105] The stator **642** of the induction motor drive system **600** can be operatively connected to a power source (e.g., controller) that is configured to selectively supply AC current to the stator **642**. For instance, the stator **642** can be operatively connected to the controller **302** of the control system **300** described above, which can selectively supply AC current to the stator **642** to selectively operate the induction motor drive system **600** and rotate the clearance wire assembly **400** in any of the manners described above. In particular, the controller **302** can be configured to selectively operate the induction motor drive system **600** according to a particular program and/or in response to the parameter(s) detected by the sensor(s) **306** of the control system **300**.

[00106] In some examples, the induction motor drive system **600** can be configured similar to the magnetic drive system **500** such that the shuttle member **640** of the induction motor drive system **600** can be translated along the tube portion **632** to translate the guide wire **402** within the medical tube **100**. In such examples, the shuttle member **640** of the induction motor drive system **600** can likewise be driven manually or by any of the driving mechanisms described above in connection with the magnetic drive system **500**.

[00107] Turning to **FIGS. 19A-E**, the fluid system **10** in some embodiments can include a spool drive system **700** that is operable to translate the clearance wire assembly **400** within the medical tube **100**. The spool drive system **700** in some examples can correspond to the clearance device disclosed in U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2015/0231313, the contents of which are attached as Exhibit C and incorporated by reference herein in their entirety. In one example, as shown in **FIGS. 19A-D**, the spool drive system **700** comprises a spool housing 702 having an inlet 704 that can be coupled to the proximal end 104 of the medical tube **100**. The spool housing 702 comprises a first portion 706 and a second portion 708 that can be coupled together (e.g., via fasteners, welds, adhesive, etc.) to form an enclosure. Within the spool housing 702 resides a spool **710** that is rotatable about an axis. Moreover, the spool housing 702 defines a track 712 that is spaced from the spool **710** and extends at least partially about the perimeter of the spool **710**, following a substantially similar line of curvature as the spool **710**.

[00108] The guide wire 402 of the clearance wire assembly 400 can be fed through the inlet 704 of the spool housing 702 and coupled (e.g. via set screw, adhesive, press fit, etc.) to the spool 710 such that rotation of the spool 710 about the spool's axis causes the guide wire 402 to wind or unwind about the spool 710 and move between an advanced state and a retracted state. In some embodiments, the distal end of the guide wire 402 may be positioned within the medical tube 100. If the spool 710 is rotated in one direction, the guide wire 402 will wind about the spool 710, causing the guide wire 402 (and any clearance member coupled thereto) to translate away from the distal end 102 of the medical tube 100 (i.e., retract). Conversely, if the spool 710 is rotated in the opposite direction, the guide wire 402 will unwind about the spool 710, causing the guide wire 402 (and any clearance member coupled thereto) to translate toward the distal end 102 of the medical tube 100 (i.e., advance). Thus, rotation of the spool 710 can control the translation (actuation) of the wire assembly 400 within the medical tube 100.

[00109] As the spool 710 is rotated, the track 712 of the spool housing 702 will help direct the guide wire 402 onto or off of the spool 710. Moreover, the track 712 can help maintain the guide wire 402 in a wound state and prevent the guide wire 402 from unwinding due to stiffness of the guide wire 402. However, friction from the track 712 can provide resistance to the guide wire 402 that in some examples, can substantially impede winding or unwinding of the guide wire 402 onto or off of the spool 710. Thus, the track 712 can comprise one or more aspects that can help reduce the friction applied by the track 712 to the guide wire 402.

[00110] For instance, in the illustrated example, the track 712 comprises a grooved surface 714 that extends at least partially about the perimeter of the spool 710 and includes grooves 716 that are circumferentially spaced about the spool 710. The grooves 716 of the track 712 will reduce the surface area of the track 712 that engages the guide wire 402 (as compared to a track 712 with a non-grooved surface), thereby reducing the amount of friction applied by the track 712 to the guide wire 402.

[00111] In another example, the surface 712 will include ridges (as opposed to grooves) that are circumferentially spaced about the spool 710. The ridges of the track 712 will contact the guide wire 712 (as opposed to the entire track

surface), thereby reducing the surface area of the track 712 that engages the guide wire 402 and the amount of friction applied by the track 712 to the guide wire 402.

[00112] In some examples, the track 712 can comprise wheels 720 circumferentially spaced about the spool 710 that will rotatably engage the guide wire 402, as shown in **FIG. 19E**. Rotatable engagement of the wheels 720 can provide less resistance than other examples wherein the guide wire 402 engages a rigid surface. In such examples, the wheels 720 can be biased towards the spool 710 with springs or other biasing structure to help maintain engagement of the wheels 720 with the guide wire 402.

[00113] Also in some examples, the one or more components of the track 712 may comprise a low friction material or be coated with a low friction material such as, for example, hydrophilic coatings, hydrogels, parylene, PTFE, FEP, low friction polymer, or low friction silicone. For instance, the grooved surface 714 and/or the wheels 720 described above may comprise or be coated with such a low friction material. Or the track may have a liner composed of such material, for example, a thin ribbon of stainless steel sheet metal (or flat wire) may be coated with PTFE and installed (coupled) with the housing to form the track surface that interfaces with the wire. The ribbon may be held in place by various means such as adhesive, clips or it may be made from spring temper steel and held in place by spring tension against the housing. It may be held in place by other means as well

[00114] In one configuration the track 712 is composed of ball bearings contained within an inner and outer race. In this embodiment the wire engages with the ball bearings allowing for low friction movement of the wire.

[00115] In some examples, the spool drive system 700 can include a motor 722 that is operable to rotate the spool 710 within the spool housing 702 and cause translation of the wire assembly 440 within the medical tube 100. As shown in **FIG. 19D**, the motor 722 can be arranged outside of the spool housing 702 and can be rotatably coupled to the spool 710 within the spool housing 702 via a transmission mechanism 724. In the illustrated embodiment, the transmission mechanism 724 comprises a first bevel gear 726 fixed to a shaft 728 of the motor 722 and a second bevel gear 730 fixed to a shaft 732 of the spool 710 that threadably engages the first

bevel gear 726. However, the transmission mechanism 724 may comprise other types and/or combinations of gears and shafts in other examples to rotatably couple the motor 722 to the spool 710. Indeed, in some examples, the transmission mechanism 724 may simply consist of a shaft that is common to both the motor 722 and spool 710.

[00116] A portion of the transmission mechanism 724 (e.g., the shaft 732 of the spool 710) will penetrate through an aperture 736 (shown in **FIG. 19B**) in the spool housing 702. In some examples, a seal can be provided that can permit the transmission mechanism 724 to penetrate through the aperture 736 while inhibiting fluids and other materials from transferring through the aperture 736. Thus, a sterile field within the spool housing 702 can be preserved with respect to the environment outside of the spool housing 702. In addition or alternatively, the spool drive system 700 can comprise a motor housing 740 (shown in **FIGS. 19A-B**) that can be coupled to the spool housing 702 (e.g., via fasteners) to enclose the motor 722 and transmission mechanism 724. The motor housing 740 can be sealed against the spool housing 702 to provide a sterile environment around the motor 722 and transmission mechanism 724 that is sealed from an environment exterior to the motor housing 740.

[00117] In some examples, the motor 722 can be battery powered. Furthermore, the motor 722 can be operatively connected to the controller 302 of the control system 300 described above, which can selectively operate the motor 722 to translate the clearance wire assembly 400 in any of the manners described above. In particular, the controller 302 can be configured to selectively operate the motor 722 according to a particular program and/or in response to the parameter(s) detected by the sensor(s) 306 of the control system 300. Moreover, the control system 300 and controller 302 may reside at least partially within the motor housing 740, as shown in **FIG. 19B**.

[00118] The spool housing 702 will likely be separated from the blood path by a seal that allows a vacuum to be maintained in the fluid path. The spool housing 702 may need to be sterile, having a seal that maintains sterility from the motor housing. The seal may also maintain a pressure as a safety (backup) against losing pressure. The seals can take various forms such as rubber seals or welds.

Where a rotating shaft or translating wire traverses a seal, it will need to be an appropriate type of seal. In an alternate embodiment the motor housing 740 may be removably coupled to the spool housing 702, so that it can be reused and the spool housing 702 disposed of.

[00119] Turning to **FIG. 20**, in a variation of the spool drive assembly 700 described above, the spool 710 is replaced with a roller 750 and the track 712 is replaced with coiled tube 752. In this example, the spool drive assembly 700 has an inlet tube 754 with a cutout region 756 and the roller 750 is disposed within the cutout region 756 and is rotatable relative to the spool housing 702. The guide wire **402** of the clearance wire assembly **400** can be fed through the inlet **704** of the spool housing **702** such that a portion of the guide wire **402** will reside between (and preferably engage) the outer circumference of the roller **750** and an inner surface of the inlet tube **754**. The roller **750** can then be rotated in one direction (e.g., counter-clockwise) to pull the guide wire **402** proximally (i.e., away from the patient) through the space between the roller **750** and the inner surface of the inlet tube **754**, thereby causing the guide wire **402** to retract through the medical tube **100**. Alternatively, the roller **750** can be rotated in an opposite direction (e.g., clockwise) to push the guide wire **402** distally (i.e., toward the patient) through the space between the roller **750** and the inner surface of the inlet tube **754**, thereby causing the guide wire **402** to advance through the medical tube **100**. The roller 750 can be rotated similar to the spool 710 using the motor 722 and control system 300 described above.

[00120] The coiled tube **752** will receive the guide wire **402** as it is pulled proximally by the roller **750** into the spool housing **702**. The coiled tube 752 may be manufactured from a low friction material. Various polymers may be used such as PTFE, FEP, or other low friction polymer. However, it is to be appreciated that the tube **752** can have other configurations in other examples such as, for example, a straight configuration. Moreover, in some embodiments the coiled tube 752 may be integral with the spool housing 702.

[00121] Turning to **FIG. 21**, the fluid system **10** in some embodiments can include a conveyor drive system **800** that is operable to convey, for example, the conveyor-type wire assembly 400 discussed above in connection with **FIGS. 12A-C**. The conveyor drive system 800 includes a conveyor tube 802 having a distal end

804 that is coupled to the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100** and a proximal end **806** that is fluidly coupled to a suction source such as, for example, the receptacle **202** of the drain assembly **200** shown in **FIG. 2**. A pulley 442 at a proximal end of the wire assembly 400 resides within the conveyor tube 802 and is arranged such that a rotational axis of the pulley 442 intersects with and is perpendicular to the central axis of the conveyor tube 802.

[00122] The conveyor drive system 800 includes a motor **812** arranged outside of the conveyor tube 802 that is rotatably coupled to the pulley 442 within the conveyor tube 802 via a transmission mechanism **814**. In the illustrated embodiment, the transmission mechanism **814** comprises a first bevel gear **816** fixed to a shaft **818** of the motor **812** and a second bevel gear 820 fixed to a shaft 822 of the pulley 442 that threadably engages the first bevel gear **816**. However, the transmission mechanism **814** may comprise other types and/or combinations of gears and shafts in other examples to rotatably couple the motor **812** to the pulley 442. Indeed, in some examples, the transmission mechanism **814** may simply consist of a shaft that is common to both the motor **812** and pulley 442.

[00123] A portion of the transmission mechanism **814** (e.g., the shaft 822 of the pulley 442) will penetrate through an aperture 826 in the conveyor tube 802. In some examples, a seal can be provided that can permit the transmission mechanism **814** to penetrate through the aperture 826 while inhibiting fluids and other materials from transferring through the aperture 826. Thus, a sterile field within the conveyor tube 802 can be preserved with respect to the environment outside of the conveyor tube 802. In addition or alternatively, the drive system 800 can comprise a housing 830 that will enclose the motor **812** and transmission mechanism **814**. The housing 830 can have a sealed inlet 834 and sealed outlet 836 that the conveyor tube 802 can extend through such that the portion of the conveyor tube 802 penetrated by the transmission mechanism **814** is also enclosed within the housing 830. Thus, the housing 830 can provide a sterile environment around the motor **812**, transmission mechanism **814**, and conveyor tube 802 that is sealed from an environment exterior to the housing 830.

[00124] The motor **812** of the drive system 800 can be operated to rotate the pulley 442 within the conveyor tube 802, which in turn will result in conveyance of

the wire assembly 440 about the pulley 442. In some examples, the pulley 422 can comprise teeth about its perimeter that will engage the belt 440 and/or clearance members 444 of the wire assembly 400 as the pulley 422 is rotated to facilitate conveyance of the wire assembly 400. In other examples, the pulley 422 may simply comprise a smooth circumferential surface and the wire assembly 400 will be tensioned about the circumferential surface such that rotation of the pulley 422 will convey the wire assembly 400 via friction between the wire assembly 400 and the circumferential surface.

[00125] The motor 812 can be operated such that the belt **440** of the wire assembly 400 conveys continuously or intermittently about the pulleys **442**. Moreover, the motor 812 can be operated such that the belt **440** conveys at all times in the same direction (e.g., clockwise) or in alternating directions (e.g., clockwise and then counter-clockwise). In some examples, the motor 812 can be operatively connected to the controller **302** of the control system **300** described above, which can selectively operate the motor 812 to convey the clearance wire assembly **400** in any of the manners described above. In particular, the controller **302** can be configured to selectively operate the motor 812 according to a particular program and/or in response to the parameter(s) detected by the sensor(s) **306** of the control system **300**.

[00126] In some examples, the conveyor drive system 800 will include one or more brushes 838 located within the conveyor tube 802 that will engage the clearance members 444 and/or the belt 440 of the clearance wire assembly 400 as the belt 440 is conveyed about the pulley 442. This can help clean the clearance wire assembly 400 and dislodge any material that may be collected on the clearance wire assembly 400. The brushes 838 may be heparin coated

[00127] Another example conveyor drive system 800 is illustrated in **FIGS. 22A & 22B**, which is operable to convey, for example, the conveyor-type wire assembly 400 discussed above in connection with **FIG. 13**. The conveyor drive system 800 includes a housing 852 having two ports 854 that are each fluidly coupled to one of the two proximal portions **114** of the medical tube **100**. The housing 852 can further include a third port 856 that is fluidly coupled to a suction source such as, for example, the receptacle **202** of the drain assembly **200** shown in

FIG. 2. Arranged within the housing 852, the drive system 800 can further include a sprocket 858 that is rotatable. Moreover, the housing 852 can define a track 862 that extends partially (e.g., halfway) about the perimeter of sprocket 858 and is coaxial with the sprocket 858.

[00128] The housing 852 and the medical tube 100 together will form the continuous loop 118 that the belt 440 of the wire assembly 400 is conveyed about. More specifically, the belt 440 will extend through the medical tube 100, into the housing 852 through both ports 854, and wrap around the sprocket 858 along the track 862.

[00129] The conveyor drive system 800 includes a motor 866 (shown in **FIG. 22B**) arranged outside of the housing 852 that is rotatably coupled to the sprocket 858 within the housing 852 via a transmission mechanism 868. In the illustrated embodiment, the transmission mechanism 868 comprises a shaft that is common to both the motor 866 and the sprocket 858. However, the transmission mechanism 868 may comprise additional gears and/or shafts in other examples to rotatably couple the motor 866 to the sprocket 858.

[00130] A portion of the transmission mechanism 868 will penetrate through an aperture 870 in the housing 852. Preferably, a seal can be provided that can permit the transmission mechanism 868 to penetrate through the aperture 870 while inhibiting fluids and other materials from transferring through the aperture 870. Thus, a sterile field within the housing 852 can be preserved with respect to the environment outside of the housing 852.

[00131] The motor 866 of the drive system 800 can be operated to rotate the sprocket 858 within the housing 852, which in turn will result in conveyance of the wire assembly 400 about the sprocket 858. In the present example, the sprocket 858 comprises spindles 872 that will engage the clearance members 444 of the wire assembly 400 as the sprocket 858 is rotated to facilitate conveyance of the wire assembly 400. In other examples, the sprocket 858 can comprise teeth about its perimeter that will engage the belt 440 and/or clearance members 444 of the wire assembly 400 as the sprocket 858 is rotated to facilitate conveyance of the wire assembly 400. Still in other examples, the sprocket 858 may simply comprise a

smooth circumferential surface and the wire assembly 400 will be tensioned about the circumferential surface such that rotation of the sprocket 858 will convey the wire assembly 400 via friction between the wire assembly 400 and the circumferential surface.

[00132] The motor 866 can be operated such that the wire assembly 400 conveys continuously or intermittently about the sprocket 858. Moreover, the motor 866 can be operated such that the belt **440** conveys at all times in the same direction (e.g., clockwise) or in alternating directions (e.g., clockwise and then counter-clockwise). In some examples, the motor 866 can be operatively connected to the controller **302** of the control system **300** described above, which can selectively operate the motor 866 to convey the clearance wire assembly **400** in any of the manners described above. In particular, the controller **302** can be configured to selectively operate the motor 866 according to a particular program and/or in response to the parameter(s) detected by the sensor(s) **306** of the control system **300**.

[00133] The various drive systems **500, 600, 700, 800** discussed above can each be utilized to move the clearance wire assembly **400** within the medical tube **100** according to one or more of the manners described above. In particular, the drive systems **500, 600, 700, 800** can each be utilized to translate, rotate, and/or convey the clearance wire assembly **400** within the medical tube **100**. Moreover, the drive systems **500, 600, 700, 800** can be operatively coupled to a controller such as, for example, the controller **302** of the control system **300** described above, in order to automatically control movement of the clearance wire assembly **400** within the medical tube **100**. Preferably, the drive systems **500, 600, 700, 800** can be configured (e.g., sized and shaped) to be hand held and in some examples, disposable. If a drive system is motorized, the motor can be powered with rechargeable batteries. Moreover, in some examples, the motor can be powered by a power assembly that is separate from a main body of the drive system and connected to the main body via wiring, as shown in **FIG. 23**. By separating the power assembly, the power assembly can be replaced/recharged without having to disassemble the main body of the drive system.

[00134] For embodiments wherein the fluid system **10** has a drive system (e.g., one of drive systems **500**, **600**, **700**, **800**) configured to translate or convey the clearance wire assembly **400** along the passageway **106** of the medical tube **100**, the drive system can be configured to permit calibration of the distance translated/conveyed by the clearance wire assembly **400**. For instance, **FIG. 24** shows an example spool drive system **700** configured to translate the clearance wire assembly **400** along the passageway **106** of the medical tube **100**. The spool drive system **700** can be operated to advance the clearance wire assembly **400** toward the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100** until the clearance wire assembly **400** reaches a position desired to be a fully-advanced position. For example, the spool drive system **700** can be operated to advance the clearance wire assembly **400** toward the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100** until the distal end of the clearance wire assembly **400** reaches the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100**. The position of the clearance wire assembly **400** can be detected using various means such as by counting steps of a stepper motor, hall sensors, optical encoder, etc. A button, switch, touchscreen, or some other structure can then be engaged (e.g., pressed) by a user to send a signal to a controller (e.g., controller **302**) indicating that clearance wire assembly **400** is in the fully-advanced position. The controller can then store this position in memory to calibrate the fully-advanced position for the drive system **700**.

[00135] Similarly, the spool drive system **700** can be operated to retract the clearance wire assembly **400** toward the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100** until the clearance wire assembly **400** reaches a position desired to be a fully-retracted position. For example, the spool drive system **700** can be operated to retract the clearance wire assembly **400** toward the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100** until the distal end of the clearance wire assembly **400** is proximal to a set of apertures **110** in a distal portion the medical tube **100**. The position of the clearance wire assembly **400** can be detected using various means such as by counting steps of a stepper motor, hall sensors, optical encoder, etc. A button, switch, touchscreen, or some other structure can then be engaged (e.g., pressed) by a user to send a signal to a controller (e.g., controller **302**) indicating that clearance wire assembly **400** is in the fully-retracted position. The controller can then store this position in memory to calibrate the fully-retracted position for the drive system **700**.

[00136] Once the fully-advanced position and fully-retracted position have been calibrated, the controller can operate the drive system **700** such that the clearance wire assembly **400** translates within the medical tube **100** between the fully-advanced position and fully-retracted position.

[00137] It is to be appreciated that any of the drive systems **500**, **600**, **800** discussed above can also be similarly calibrated as the drive system **700** shown in **FIG. 24**. Furthermore, in some examples, the drive systems **500**, **600**, **700**, **800** can be configured to automatically calibrate without the need for a user to indicate when the clearance wire assembly **400** has reached the fully-advanced position and/or fully-retracted position. For instance, in some examples each drive system **500**, **600**, **700**, **800** can include one or more sensors (e.g., sensor(s) **306**) that can detect when its associated clearance wire assembly **400** has reached the fully-advanced position and/or fully-retracted position and send a signal to its associated controller indicating the wire assembly's position such that the controller can store the position in memory and calibrate the drive system.

[00138] Turning now to **FIG. 25**, a Y-coupling **900** will be described that can be used to couple the medical tube **100** to various structures such as, for example, the drive systems **500**, **600**, **700**, **800** discussed above. The Y-coupling **900** includes a first tube portion **902a** having an end **904a** that can be fluidly coupled to the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100**. The Y-coupling **900** further includes a second tube portion **902b** having an end **904b** that can be fluidly coupled to a suction source such as, for example, the receptacle **202** of the drain assembly **200** shown in **FIG. 2**. Moreover, the Y-coupling **900** further includes a third tube portion **902c** having an end **904c** that can be coupled to another structure such as, for example, an inlet or port of one of the drive systems **500**, **600**, **700**, **800** discussed above. For instance, **FIG. 19A** shows the Y-coupling **900** wherein the end **904c** is coupled to the spool drive system **700** discussed above.

[00139] The Y-coupling **900** defines a passageway **910** that provides fluid communication between the end **904a** of the first tube portion **902a** and the end **904b** and of the second tube portion **902**. Thus, the passageway **910** can provide a path for material to be sucked out of the medical tube **100** and discharged to the suction source.

[00140] The Y-coupling 900 further includes an aperture 912 that extends through the third tube portion 902c and opens into the passageway 910. The aperture 912 is sized to permit the guide wire 402 of the clearance wire assembly 400 to pass through the aperture 912. Thus, when the medical tube 100 is connected to the Y-coupling 900, the guide wire 402 can extend from within the medical tube 100, through the Y-coupling 900, and into whatever structure is coupled to the end 904c of the Y-coupling 900.

[00141] In some examples, at least a portion of the aperture 912 (e.g., portion 912a) has a diameter that is just slightly larger than the diameter of the guide wire 402. This will permit the guide wire 402 to pass through the aperture 912 but inhibit fluids (e.g., bodily fluids) and other materials from passing through the aperture 912. By inhibiting fluids and other materials from passing through the aperture 912, a vacuum within the passageway 910 (and the medical tube 100 in fluid communication with the passageway 910) can be preserved and isolated from whatever pressurized environment may be in communication with the end 904c of the third tube portion 902c. Moreover, fluids (e.g., bodily fluids) and other materials passing through the passageway 910 can be inhibited from passing through the aperture 912 into whatever structure is coupled to the end 904c of the third tube portion 902c.

[00142] In addition or alternatively, in some examples one or more cylindrical bushings 914 can be provided within the aperture 912 that the guide wire 402 can pass through. Each bushing 914 can comprise, for example, Delrin, ceramic, stainless steel, PEEK, PTFE, closed cell urethane foam, packed fibers, and/or other materials.

[00143] In addition or alternatively, in some examples one or more cylindrical wipers can be provided within the aperture 912 to inhibit fluids (e.g., bodily fluids) and other materials from passing through the aperture 912. For example, a cylindrical wiper 916 may be provided within the aperture 912 that the guide wire 402 can pass through. The wiper 916 preferably comprises a porous material that can absorb any fluid that may attempt to pass through the wiper 916 with the guide wire 402. For example, the wiper 916 may comprise a foam, such as an open cell or closed cell polyurethane foam, polyethylene foam, hydrophilic foam, hydrogel,

polyester weave, etc. In other examples, the wiper 916 may comprise a thin membrane of silicone rubber.

[00144] In addition or alternatively, in some examples one or more cylindrical lubricators 918 can be provided within the aperture 912 that will lubricate the guide wire 402 as it passes through the lubricator(s) 918. Each lubricator can comprise, for example, medical grade silicone oil, heparin solution, PTFE lubricant, mineral oil, petroleum jelly, etc.

[00145] In addition or alternatively, in some examples one or more valves 920 can be provided within the aperture 912 that can be actuated to selectively open and close fluid communication through aperture 912.

[00146] In the illustrated example, the Y-coupling 900 includes the combination of the smaller diameter portion 912a, the bushing 914, the wiper 916, the lubricator 918, and the valve 20 described above. In such examples, these four elements are preferably arranged such that the smaller diameter portion 912a is distal to the bushing 914, the bushing 914 is distal to the wiper 916, the wiper 916 is distal to the lubricator 918, and the lubricator 918 is distal to the valve 920, though other arrangements and/or combinations of these elements are possible in other examples.

[00147] In addition a seal may be used at the junction of the fluid path 910 and the channel 912 to restrict or eliminate fluid and debris from entering the channel. The seal may be an elastomer gasket such as a domed slit valve or flat seal that allows passage of the guide wire and in some configurations the clearance member.

[00148] Turning to FIG. 26, in some examples the Y-coupling 900 comprises bristles 920 within the aperture 912 that will mechanically remove material (e.g., clot) from the guide wire 402 as it translates through the aperture 912. The removal of material occurs at the turn off to the vacuum source to encourage such material to be removed toward the drainage canister. A valve may be provided to separate the bristles 920 from the fluid path to prevent blood clot from collecting on the bristles 920.

[00149] Another example Y-coupling 900 is illustrated in FIG. 27 that has an aperture 912 that is closely fitting to the guide wire 402, which serves to scrape large blood clot and debris off of the wire, it has a bushing 914 that may be a rigid material (for e.g. delrin, polycarbonate, etc) or an elastomeric material such as silicone rubber that provides a seal to separate the fluid path, which may be under vacuum and the spool compartment, which may be at atmospheric pressure, it also serves to wipe additional blood and other fluid from the wire to reduce potential them to be brought into the spool compartment. The y-junction may also have a wiper 916, which may be made from open cell polyurethane foam, hydrophilic foam or other hydrophilic material such as a hydrogel, or other media, that is preferably porous. Moreover, the passageway 910 comprises two linear channels that intersect (as opposed to the curved channel as shown in FIGS. 25 and 26)

[00150] Turning now to **FIG. 28**, an elastomeric return feature will now be described that can facilitate translation of the clearance wire assembly **400** through the medical tube **100**. More specifically, the medical tube **100** in some examples can include an elastic member **120** extending within the passageway **106** that is fixedly coupled at its distal end **122** to a portion (e.g., the distal end **102**) of the medical tube **100**. The elastic member **120** can be further fixedly coupled at its proximal end **124** to a portion (e.g., guide wire **402**) of the clearance wire assembly **400**. The elastic member **120** can be configured such that as the clearance wire assembly **400** retracts through the medical tube **100** toward its proximal end **104**, the elastic member **120** will be stretched by the clearance wire assembly **400**. In this stretched state, the elastic member **120** will bias (e.g., pull) the clearance wire assembly **400** toward the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100**. This bias from the elastic member **120** can help maintain the guide wire **402** of the clearance wire assembly **400** in a straight configuration within the medical tube **100**, particularly during later advancement of the clearance wire assembly **400** toward the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100**.

[00151] Turning now to **FIG. 29**, the medical tube **100** in some examples can include a conical seat **123** that can facilitate disruption of material that may accumulate on a clearance member of the clearance wire assembly **400**. The conical seat **128** extends radially inward and in a proximal direction from the distal end **102**

of the medical tube **100**, within the passageway **106**. In this embodiment, the clearance wire assembly **400** includes a clearance member in the form of a loop **450**. During or after use, the clearance wire assembly **400** can be advanced toward the distal end **102** of the medical tube **100** until the conical seat **128** projects through the clearance-member loop **450**, thereby disrupting any material that may be accumulated within the loop **450**.

[00152] As discussed above, the clearance wire assembly **400** can be moved within the medical tube **100** to facilitate the disruption of material accumulated within the medical tube **100**. Preferably, an interior surface of the medical tube **100** will be coated with a layer of material that can reduce the frictional properties of the medical tube's, thereby reducing any resistance that the medical tube **100** may apply to movement of the clearance wire assembly **400** within the medical tube **100**. Example materials that the inner surface of the medical tube **100** may be coated with are hydrophilic coatings, hydrogels, PVP, parylene C, parylene N, PTFE, Pebax and low friction silicone. However, in some examples, it may be desirable for portions of the medical tube's inner surface to not be coated with a friction-reducing layer.

[00153] For instance, as discussed above, the medical tube **100** in some examples can be fluidly coupled to various structure such as, for example, the drain assembly **200** described above and/or the drive systems **500**, **600**, **700**, **800** described above. To fluidly couple the medical tube **100**, fittings such as, for example, hose barbs may be utilized, which can be inserted within an end of the medical tube **100**. The end of the medical tube **100** can then contract to provide a fluid tight seal between the fitting and the medical tube **100**. However, if a friction-reducing agent is applied to the medical tube's inner surface where the medical tube **100** engages the fitting, a tight fluid seal may not be realized and the fitting could possibly disengage from the medical tube **100**.

[00154] Accordingly, one aspect of the subject disclosure is directed to a method of applying a friction-reducing agent to the inner surface of the medical tube **100** wherein portion(s) (e.g., one or both ends or a portion in between) of the medical tube's inner surface are masked prior to application of the agent. The inner surface portion(s) can be masked using, for example, masking material that is applied to the

surface portion with adhesive. Alternatively, a cylindrical plug may be inserted within the medical tube **100** that has an outer cylindrical wall having a diameter that substantially matches the diameter of the inner surface, and a length corresponding to the length of the tube's ID where it is desired not to apply a coating. In one example the plug is expandable and may be made from an elastomeric material such as a rubber. In another example the plug may have o-rings that engage and seal against the ID of the tube. In one example the plug is a tube that is open at its center for the passage of gas or fluid, thereby allowing coating to enter from both sides of the tube. Such a plug can block inner-surface portions engaged by the plug from exposure to the agent. Once the desired inner surface portion(s) have been masked, the friction-reducing agent (e.g., parylene) may be applied to the inner surface of the medical tube **100** to coat the remaining portions of the inner surface that are not masked. After the agent is applied (and in some examples, cured or dried), the masking device(s) (e.g. plug(s)) can be removed from the medical tube **100**.

[00155] The method described above can produce a medical tube **100** having an interior surface that is partially coated with a friction-reducing agent such that one or more portions (e.g., one or both ends) of the medical tube's inner surface are not coated with the agent.

[00156] It should be appreciated that the method described above could be similarly applied to an exterior surface of the medical tube **100** to partially coat the exterior surface with a friction-reducing agent, particularly such that one or more portions (e.g., one or both ends) of the medical tube's exterior surface are not coated with the agent. For example, the outer surface portion(s) can be masked using, for example, masking material that is applied to the surface portion with adhesive. Alternatively, a cylindrical ring may be slid over the medical tube **100** that has an inner cylindrical wall having a diameter that substantially matches the diameter of the outer surface, and a length corresponding to the length of the tube's OD where it is desired not to apply a coating. In one example the ring is expandable and may be made from an elastomeric material such as a rubber. In another example the ring may have o-rings that engage and seal against the OD of the tube. Such a ring can block outer-surface portions engaged by the ring from exposure to the agent. Once

the desired outer surface portion(s) have been masked, the friction-reducing agent (e.g., parylene) may be applied to the outer surface of the medical tube **100** to coat the remaining portions of the outer surface that are not masked. After the agent is applied (and in some examples, cured or dried), the masking device(s) (e.g. ring(s)) can be removed from the medical tube **100**.

[00157] The fluid system **10** described above can be useful for delivering materials to the patient's body and/or removing materials from the patient's body through the described medical tube **100**. In some aspects, the fluid system **10** can be configured to deliver therapeutic agents through the medical tube **100** to the patient. For instance, the fluid system **10** can comprise a delivery system that is fluidly coupled to the proximal end **104** of the medical tube **100** and is configured to deliver therapeutic agents through the medical tube **100** to the patient such as, for example, fluid (e.g., saline) controlled at a certain temperature (for example, body temperature), anti-inflammatory agents, anti-arrhythmic agents, infection medications, cardiovascular drugs, infectious disease control drugs, anti or pro inflammatory drugs, cancer treatment drugs, drugs to promote pleurodesis, pain relieving drugs, or any combination thereof. The delivery system can be operatively connected to a controller (e.g., controller **302**) of a control system (e.g., control system **300**), which can automatically operate the delivery system according to a particular program and/or in response to the parameter(s) detected by one or more sensors (e.g., sensors **306**) of the control system. In one embodiment, the exact volume of the fluid inserted is tracked and subtracted from the total volume drained so that the volume of drainage is known, and it is known if all the fluid is later removed. With reference to FIG. 30, in one embodiment, a body space tube has one or more additional lumens in addition to a primary lumen. The additional lumen is for the administration of fluid outside of the body space tube to facilitate treating the space around the tube with the fluid. In one embodiment, the fluid is contained in a fluid reservoir that is part of tube clearance drive mechanism, or fluid collection canister. In one embodiment the fluid is controlled by a pump. In one embodiment, the fluid is administered by pressure applied to the reservoir, controlled by a fluid restricted or restrictive valve to maintain a steady volume of delivery to the body space outside the body space tube. In one embodiment, the lumen of the supplemental tube is the exact length of the body space drainage tube. In another embodiment, the tube can

extend outside of the primary tube in one more directions to deliver fluid remote from the body space tube. In one embodiment, this fluid is temperature controlled, to be above body temperature, the same as body temperature, or below body temperature. In one embodiment, the fluid rate is controlled on a cc per minute basis. In one embodiment, the fluid administration is monitored and displayed digitally. In one embodiment, the fluid administration volume is monitored and subtracted from the total drainage so the exact amount of drainage recorded is divided into fluid delivery and fluid drained volumes. In one embodiment, total blood loss is estimated by a formula that includes total drainage minus administered fluid. In one embodiment, alarms are provided if the parameters of fluid delivered fail to evacuate, to prevent unrecognized retained administered fluid. In one embodiment the fluid removed is analyzed for properties such as pH, hematocrit, redox state, temperature (see our other list) to monitor the recovery of the body space with time from bleeding, infection, inflammation or other physical properties. In one embodiment, this is combined with medical tube clearance apparatus (all of our prior IP) to prevent the administration of fluid to the space that is not adequately drained due to body space drain tube occlusion from clot or other obstructing material. In one embodiment, the fluid is saline, or other physiologically balanced fluid replacement formulas. In one embodiment, the fluid is a chemical to induce pleurodesis (ie talc, tetracycline, doxycycline or other formulas meant to induce a sclerosis). In one embodiment the fluid is an antibiotic, antifungal, or other agent to treat an infection. In one embodiment, the agent is an anti-cancer agent to treat a neoplasm. In one embodiment, the fluid is an antiinflammatory agent, antiarrhythmic agent, antifibrinolytic agent, profibrinolytic agents or any combination thereof. In one embodiment, the supplemental lumen can be advanced or retracted. In one embodiment, this can be done over a guide wire to prevent or minimize the potential for injury of internal structures.

[00158] Although the invention has been described with respect to certain embodiments, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited by the embodiments herein disclosed, which are exemplary and not limiting in nature, but is to include all modifications and adaptations thereto as would occur to the person having ordinary skill in the art upon reviewing the present disclosure, and as fall within the spirit and the scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A spool drive system for actuating a guide wire, said system comprising a spool housing having an inlet adapted to establish fluid communication between a medical tube and said the spool housing, a spool resident within said spool housing, said spool being rotatable about an axis thereof to wind and unwind said guide wire on said spool, thereby withdrawing or advancing, respectively, said guide wire through said inlet, and a track spaced from and extending at least partially about a perimeter of said spool following a curvature thereof within said spool housing, said track being adapted to direct said guide wire onto or off of said spool about the perimeter thereof as the spool is rotated.

2. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track being adapted to help maintain the guide wire in a wound state on said spool, preventing unwinding thereof that otherwise may result from stiffness of the guide wire.

3. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track comprising a grooved surface extending at least partially about the perimeter of the spool, said grooved surface comprising a plurality of circumferentially spaced grooves opposing a perimeter surface of the spool.

4. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track comprising a surface having a plurality of circumferentially spaced ridges opposing a perimeter surface of the spool.

5. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track comprising a plurality of circumferentially spaced wheels opposing a perimeter surface of the spool, said wheels being effective to rotatably engage the guide wire as it is wound or unwound on the spool.

6. The spool drive system of claim 5, said wheels being biased radially toward the perimeter surface of said spool in order to effectively engage said guide wire upon rotation of the spool.

7. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track comprising a plurality of ball bearings confined along a circular path opposing the perimeter surface of said spool.

8. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track comprising a low friction material or coating to provide a low-friction, sliding interface between said guide wire and features of said track upon rotation of said spool.

9. The spool drive system of claim 1, further comprising a motor housing attached to said spool housing, a motor disposed within said motor housing, said motor being rotatably coupled to shaft of said spool that extends through an aperture between said spool housing and said motor housing, said motor being thereby effective to rotate said spool.

10. The spool drive system of claim 9, further comprising a battery within said motor housing for supplying electrical energy to said motor.

11. The spool drive system of claim 10, further comprising a controller within said motor housing and operatively connected to said motor, said controller being configured to operate said motor in order to actuate said guide wire by rotating said spool.

12. The spool drive system of claim 11, said controller being configured to selectively operate said motor according to a particular program and/or in response to sensed parameters that are communicated to said controller.

13. The spool drive system of claim 1, said spool housing and said motor housing being integrated together into a single hand held assembly.

14. The spool drive system of claim 13, further comprising a battery sealed within said motor housing for supplying electrical energy to said motor, wherein said hand held assembly is configured to be disposable.

15. The spool drive system of claim 14, said hand held assembly being sterile.

16. The spool drive system of claim 13, further comprising a controller within said hand held assembly and operatively connected to said motor, said controller being configured to operate said motor in order to actuate said guide wire by rotating said spool.

17. The spool drive system of claim 16, said controller being configured to selectively operate said motor according to a particular program and/or in response to sensed parameters that are communicated to said controller.

18. The spool drive system of claim 16, said controller being operatively connected to and forming a part of a control system that includes one or more sensors configured to detect one or more parameters and to send a signal to the controller indicating the detected parameter(s).

19. The spool drive system of claim 18, said one or more sensors being configured to detect one or more of the following conditions of or within the medical tube: an orientation of the medical tube; a position of a clearance member within the medical tube; a pressure level, pH level, glucose level, protein level, or redox state of material within the medical tube; a blockage within the medical tube; a kink in the medical tube; an amount of fibrin clot degradation byproducts, endotoxins, bacterial infection byproducts, reactive oxygen species, or hematocrit in the medical tube.

20. The spool drive system of claim 18, said one or more sensors being configured to detect one or more of the following conditions of a patient who is being treated with the medical tube: temperature, heart rate and rhythm, arrhythmia, respiratory rate, inflammation level, pain level, or oxygen saturation level; orientation of the patient; activity level of the patient; coughing of the patient; a number of steps taken per day by the patient; a type of activity being performed by the patient; location of the patient; or length of time the patient has been in a particular location.

21. The spool drive system of claim 1, further comprising a Y-coupling having a first tube portion configured to be fluidly coupled to the medical tube, a second tube portion configured to be fluidly coupled to a suction source, and a third tube portion coupled to or comprising said inlet, wherein advancement and withdrawal of said guide wire extending from said inlet through said first tube portion.

22. The spool drive system of claim 21, said Y-coupling comprising a cylindrical bushing in said third tube portion through which the guide wire will pass as it is advanced and withdrawn in order to wipe material from said guide wire so that said material does not enter the spool housing.

23. The spool drive system of claim 22, said cylindrical bushing comprising a porous material that can absorb fluid.

24. The spool drive system of claim 22, said third tube portion comprising a small-diameter, said bushing being located proximal to said small-diameter portion in said third tube portion, a wiper being disposed proximal to said bushing in said third tube portion, and a lubricator being disposed proximal to said wiper in said third tube portion, wherein said guide wire passes through each of said small-diameter portion, said bushing, said wiper and said lubricator within said third tube portion on being advanced and withdrawn therethrough.

25. The spool drive system of claim 22, said Y-coupling further comprising bristles effective to abrade and remove material from the guide wire as it translates through the third tube portion..

26. The spool drive system of claim 13, further comprising a Y-coupling having a first tube portion configured to be fluidly coupled to the medical tube, a second tube portion configured to be fluidly coupled to a suction source, and a third tube portion coupled to or comprising said inlet, wherein advancement and withdrawal of said guide wire extending from said inlet through said first tube portion.

27. A method for actuating a guide wire in a medical tube, comprising connecting a portable, hand held spool drive to the medical tube to provide fluid communication between said tube and an inlet of a spool housing of the spool drive, and operating the spool drive to advance or withdraw said guide wire through said inlet and through said medical tube.

AMENDED CLAIMS

received by the International Bureau on 22 June 2018 (22.06.2018)

1. A spool drive system for actuating a guide wire, said system comprising a spool housing having an inlet adapted to establish fluid communication between a medical tube and said the spool housing, a spool resident within said spool housing, said spool being rotatable about an axis thereof to wind and unwind said guide wire on said spool, thereby withdrawing or advancing, respectively, said guide wire through said inlet, a track spaced from and extending at least partially about a perimeter of said spool following a curvature thereof within said spool housing, said track being adapted to direct said guide wire onto or off of said spool about the perimeter thereof as the spool is rotated, and a motor housing having a motor disposed therein and operable to advance or withdraw said guide wire from or into said spool housing through said inlet, said spool housing and said motor housing being integrated together into a single hand held assembly.
2. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track being adapted to help maintain the guide wire in a wound state on said spool, preventing unwinding thereof that otherwise may result from stiffness of the guide wire.
3. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track comprising a grooved surface extending at least partially about the perimeter of the spool, said grooved surface comprising a plurality of circumferentially spaced grooves opposing a perimeter surface of the spool.
4. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track comprising a surface having a plurality of circumferentially spaced ridges opposing a perimeter surface of the spool.
5. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track comprising a plurality of circumferentially spaced wheels opposing a perimeter surface of the spool, said wheels being effective to rotatably engage the guide wire as it is wound or unwound on the spool.
6. The spool drive system of claim 5, said wheels being biased radially toward the perimeter surface of said spool in order to effectively engage said guide wire upon rotation of the spool.

7. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track comprising a plurality of ball bearings confined along a circular path opposing the perimeter surface of said spool.
8. The spool drive system of claim 1, said track comprising a low friction material or coating to provide a low-friction, sliding interface between said guide wire and features of said track upon rotation of said spool.
9. The spool drive system of claim 1, said motor being rotatably coupled to a shaft of said spool that extends through an aperture between said spool housing and said motor housing, said motor being thereby effective to rotate said spool.
10. The spool drive system of claim 9, further comprising a battery within said motor housing for supplying electrical energy to said motor.
11. The spool drive system of claim 10, further comprising a controller within said motor housing and operatively connected to said motor, said controller being configured to operate said motor in order to actuate said guide wire by rotating said spool.
12. The spool drive system of claim 11, said controller being configured to selectively operate said motor according to a particular program and/or in response to sensed parameters that are communicated to said controller.
13. (Canceled).
14. The spool drive system of claim 1, further comprising a battery sealed within said hand held assembly for supplying electrical energy to said motor, wherein said hand held assembly is configured to be disposable.
15. The spool drive system of claim 14, said hand held assembly being sterile.

16. The spool drive system of claim 1, further comprising a controller within said hand held assembly and operatively connected to said motor, said controller being configured to operate said motor in order to actuate said guide.
17. The spool drive system of claim 16, said controller being configured to selectively operate said motor according to a particular program and/or in response to sensed parameters that are communicated to said controller.
18. The spool drive system of claim 16, said controller being operatively connected to and forming a part of a control system that includes one or more sensors configured to detect one or more parameters and to send a signal to the controller indicating the detected parameter(s).
19. The spool drive system of claim 18, said one or more sensors being configured to detect one or more of the following conditions of or within the medical tube: an orientation of the medical tube; a position of a clearance member within the medical tube; a pressure level, pH level, glucose level, protein level, or redox state of material within the medical tube; a blockage within the medical tube; a kink in the medical tube; an amount of fibrin clot degradation byproducts, endotoxins, bacterial infection byproducts, reactive oxygen species, or hematocrit in the medical tube.
20. The spool drive system of claim 18, said one or more sensors being configured to detect one or more of the following conditions of a patient who is being treated with the medical tube: temperature, heart rate and rhythm, arrhythmia, respiratory rate, inflammation level, pain level, or oxygen saturation level; orientation of the patient; activity level of the patient; coughing of the patient; a number of steps taken per day by the patient; a type of activity being performed by the patient; location of the patient; or length of time the patient has been in a particular location.
21. The spool drive system of claim 1, further comprising a Y-coupling having a first tube portion configured to be fluidly coupled to the medical tube, a second tube portion configured to be fluidly coupled to a suction source, and a third tube portion coupled to or comprising said inlet, wherein advancement and withdrawal of said guide wire extending from said inlet correspondingly advances and withdraws said guide wire through said first tube portion.

22. The spool drive system of claim 21, said Y-coupling comprising a cylindrical bushing in said third tube portion through which the guide wire will pass as it is advanced and withdrawn in order to wipe material from said guide wire so that said material does not enter the spool housing.

23. The spool drive system of claim 22, said cylindrical bushing comprising a porous material that can absorb fluid.

24. The spool drive system of claim 22, said third tube portion comprising a small-diameter, said bushing being located proximal to said small-diameter portion in said third tube portion, a wiper being disposed proximal to said bushing in said third tube portion, and a lubricator being disposed proximal to said wiper in said third tube portion, wherein said guide wire passes through each of said small-diameter portion, said bushing, said wiper and said lubricator within said third tube portion on being advanced and withdrawn therethrough.

25. The spool drive system of claim 22, said Y-coupling further comprising bristles effective to abrade and remove material from the guide wire as it translates through the third tube portion..

26. The spool drive system of claim 1, further comprising a Y-coupling having a first tube portion configured to be fluidly coupled to the medical tube, a second tube portion configured to be fluidly coupled to a suction source, and a third tube portion coupled to or comprising said inlet, wherein advancement and withdrawal of said guide wire extending from said inlet correspondingly advances and withdraws said guide wire through said first tube portion.

27. A method for actuating a guide wire in a medical tube, comprising connecting a portable, hand held spool drive to the medical tube to provide fluid communication between said tube and an inlet of a spool housing of the spool drive, and operating the spool drive to advance or withdraw said guide wire through said inlet and through said medical tube.

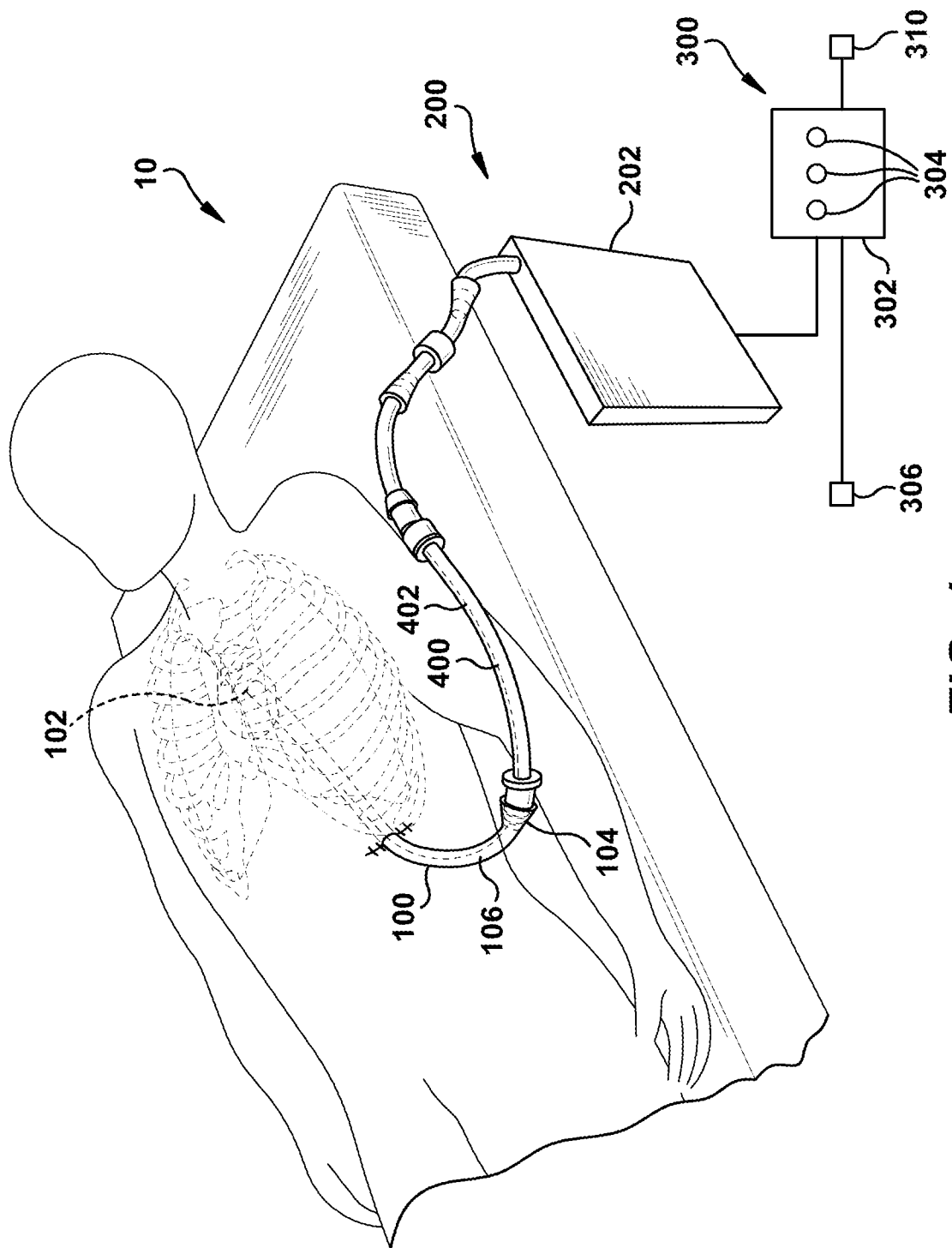


FIG. 1

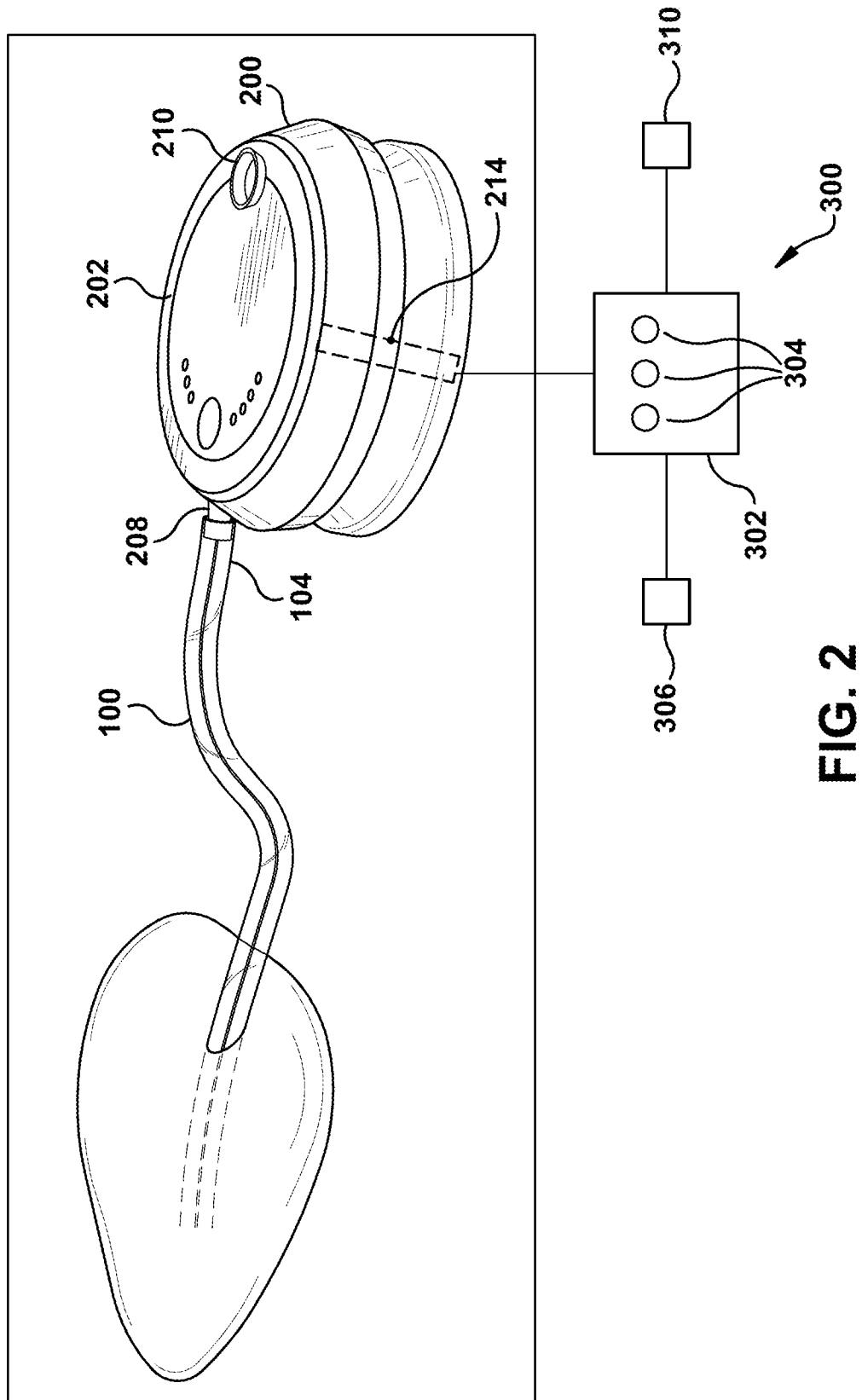
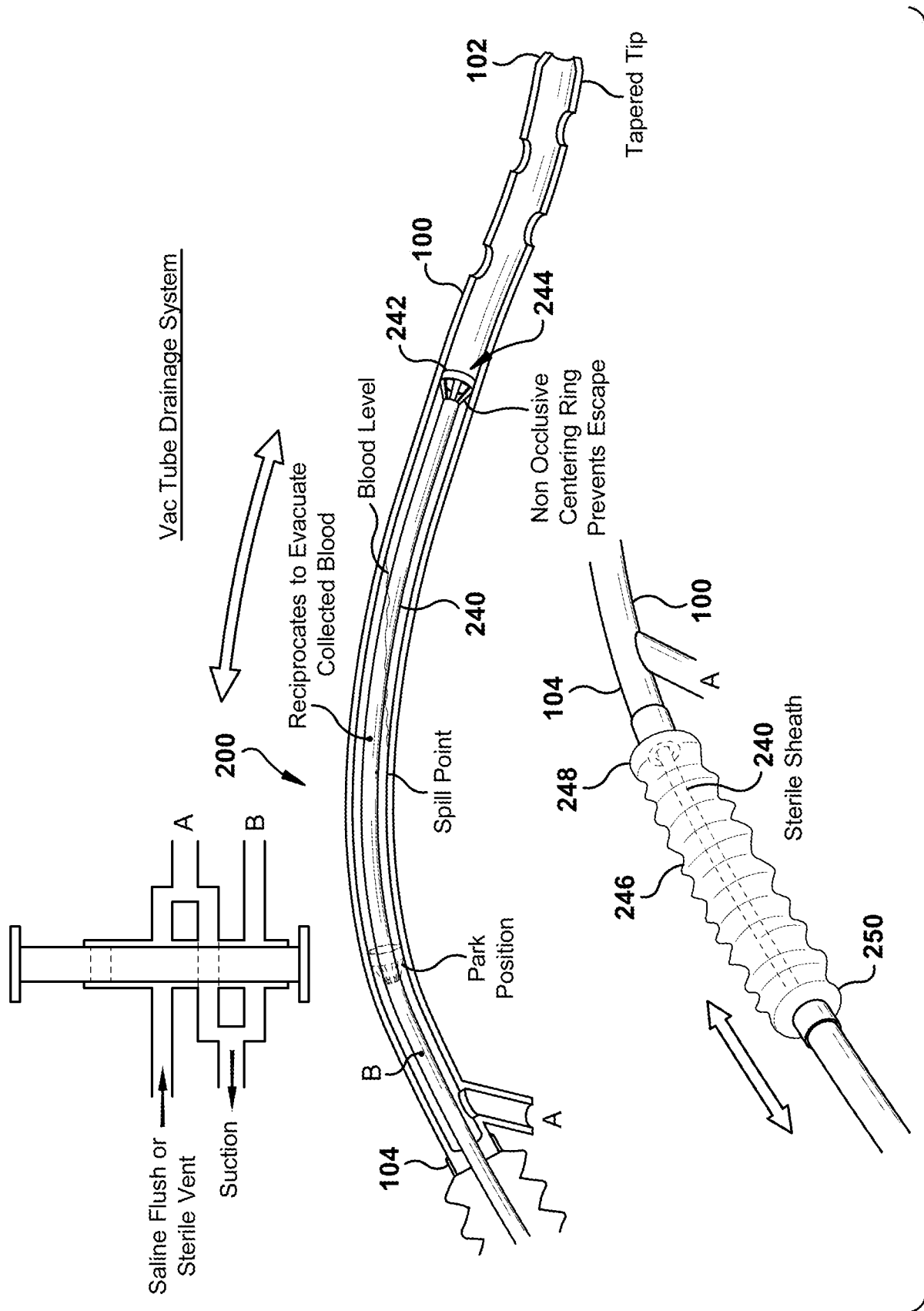


FIG. 2



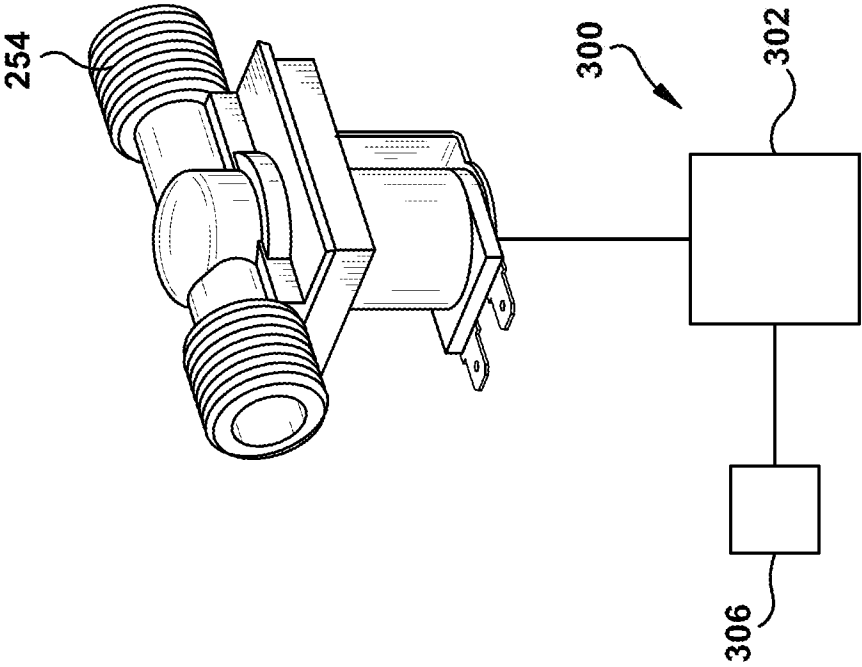


FIG. 4

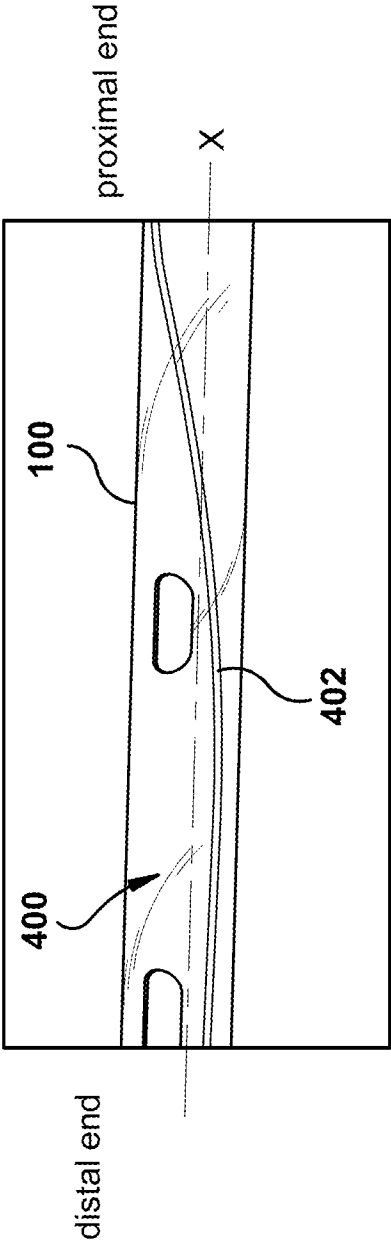


FIG. 5

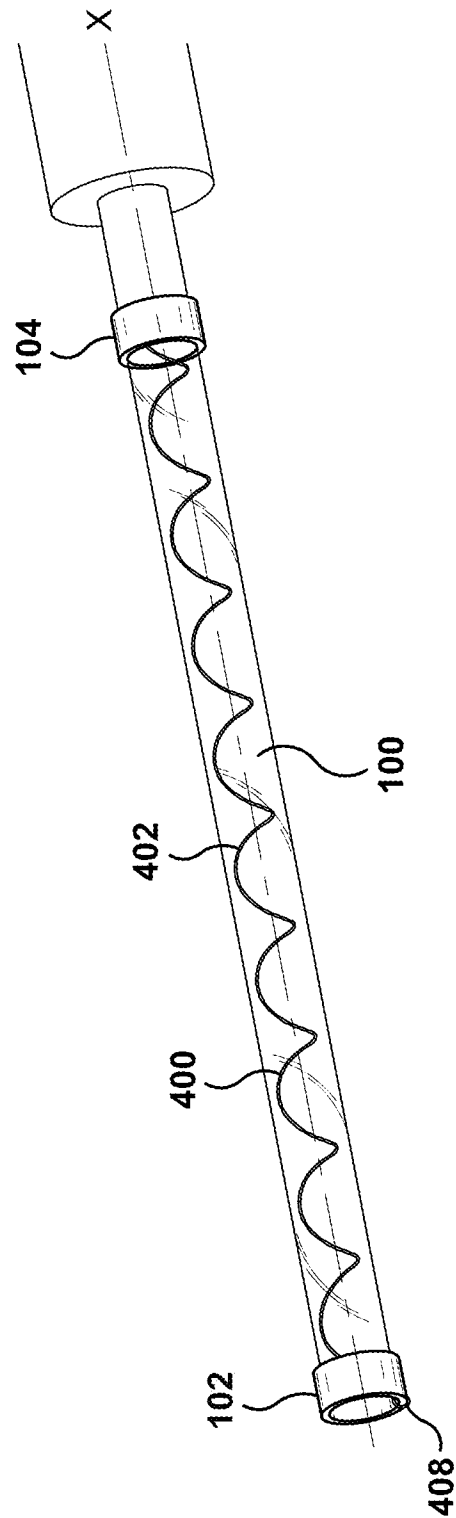


FIG. 6

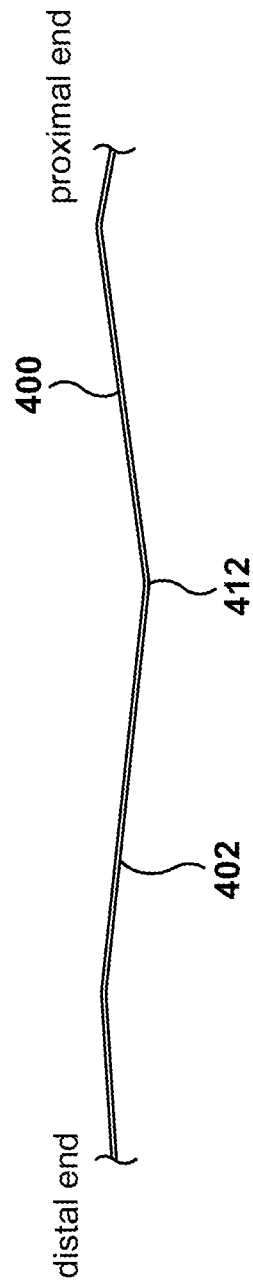


FIG. 7

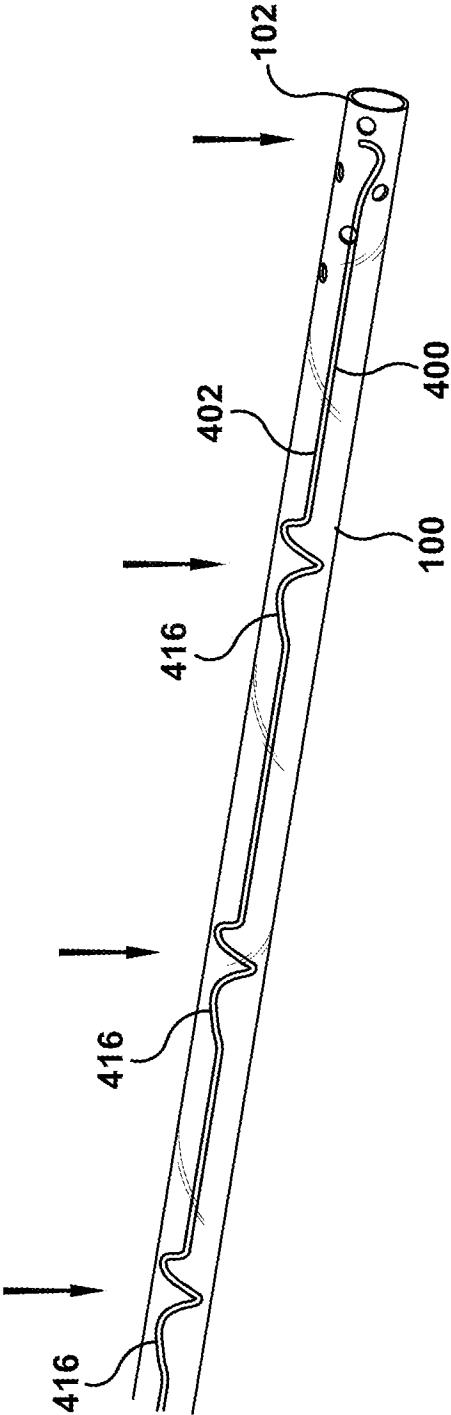


FIG. 8

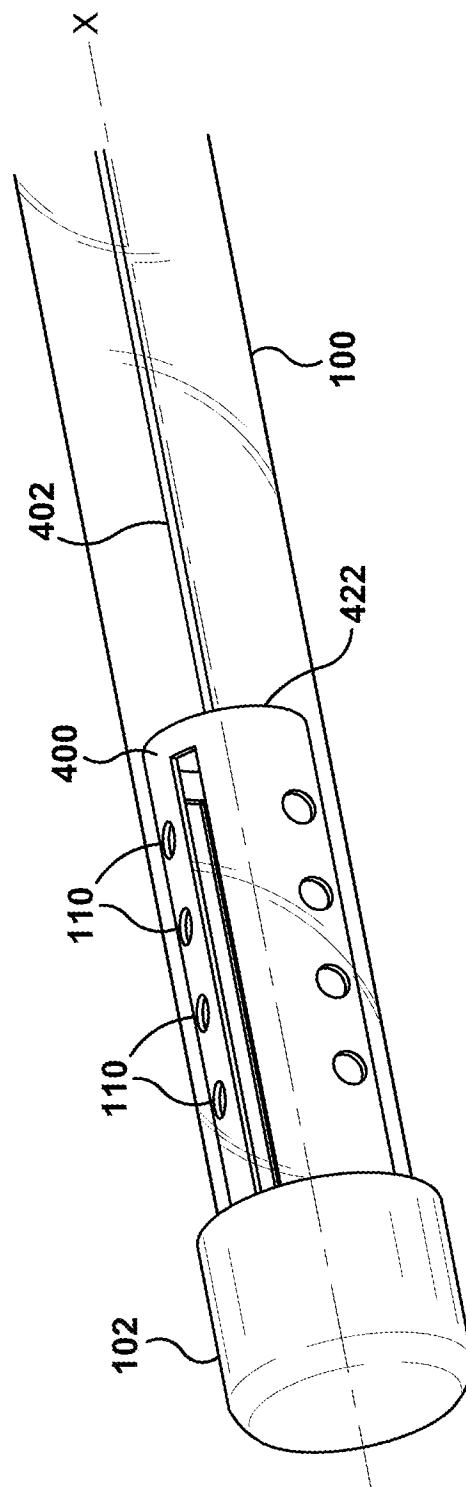


FIG. 9

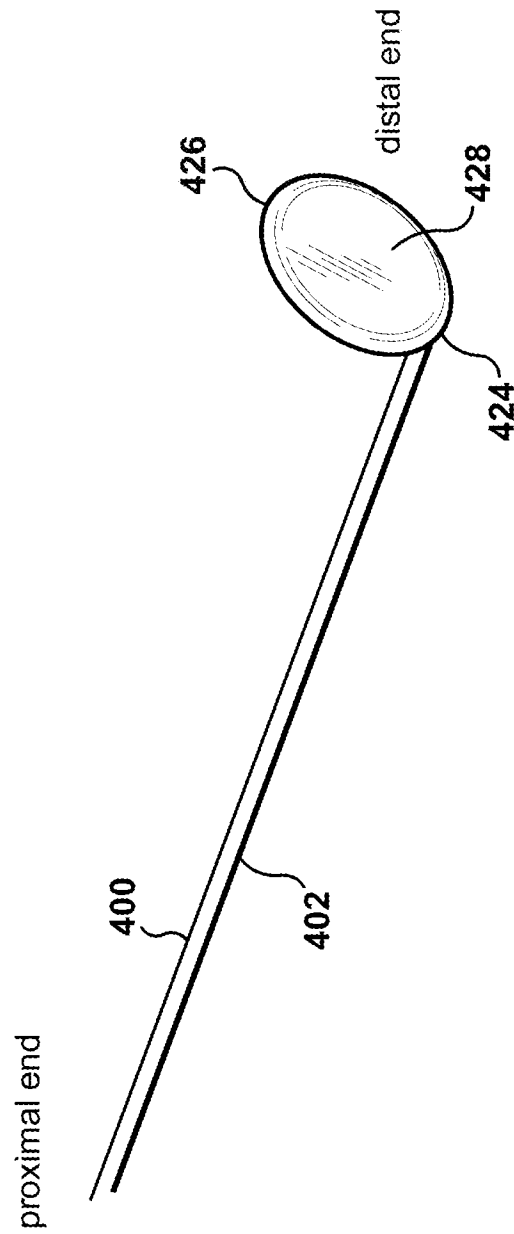


FIG. 10

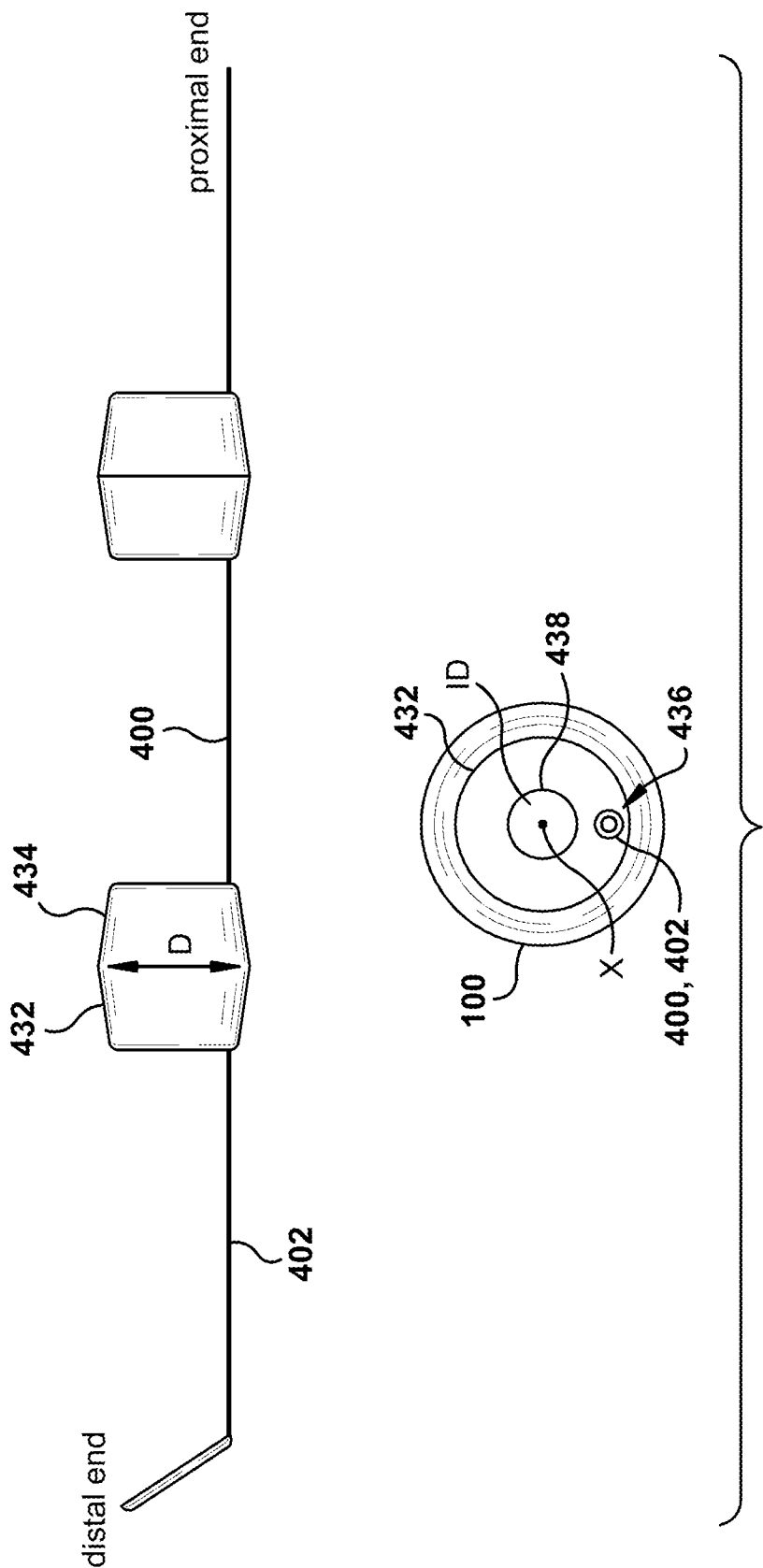


FIG. 11A

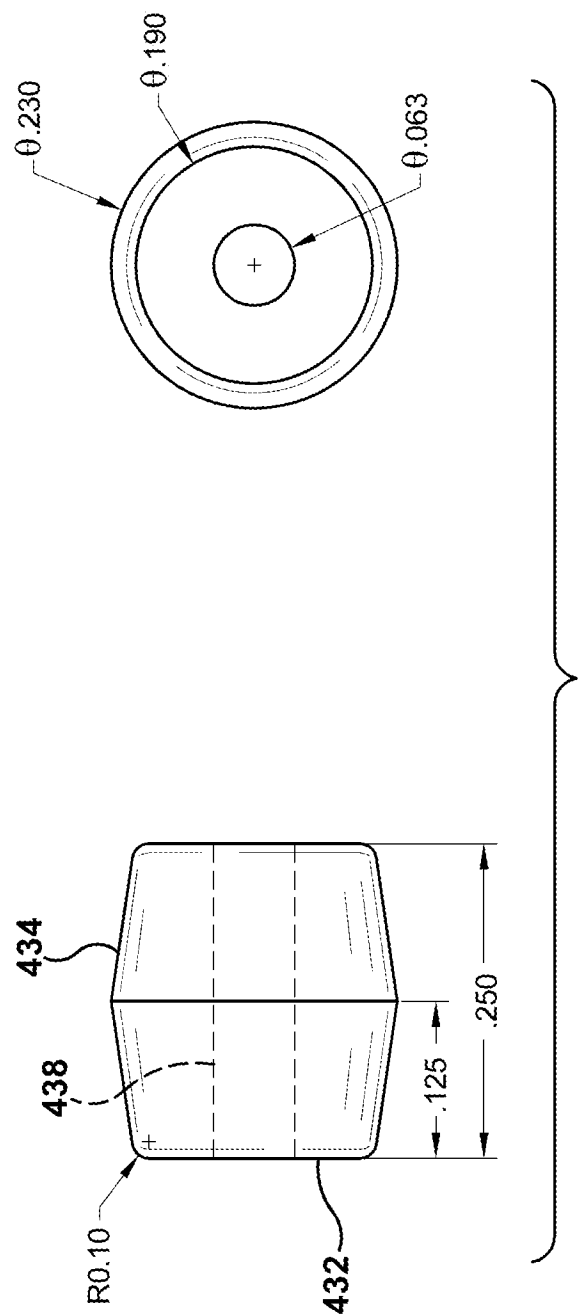
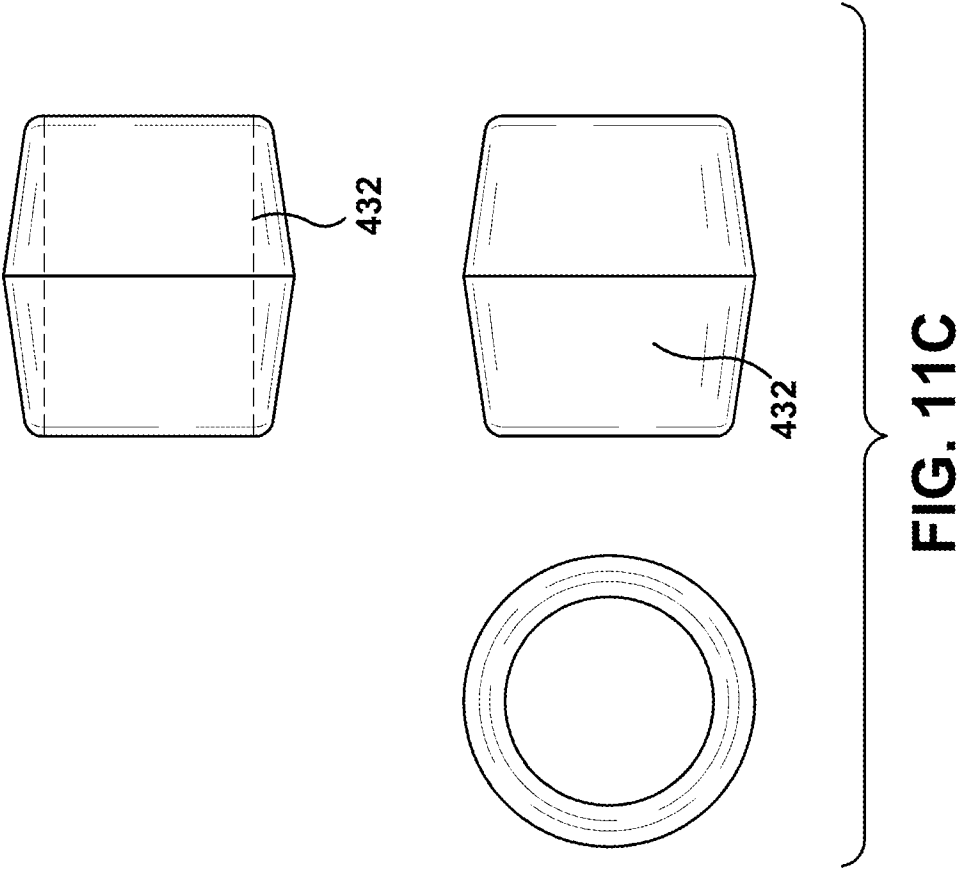


FIG. 11B



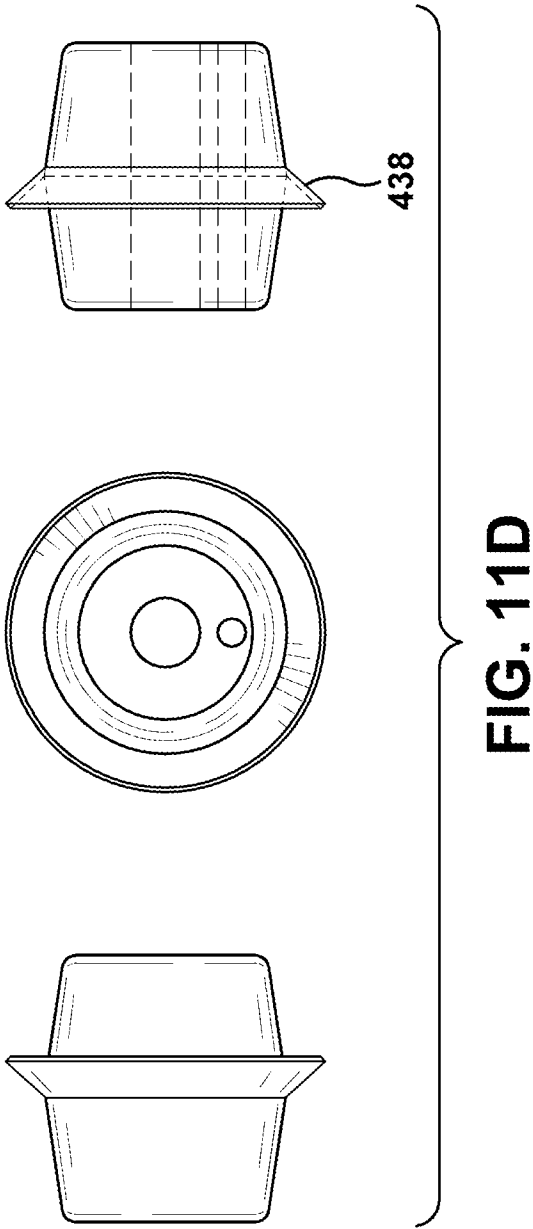




FIG. 11E

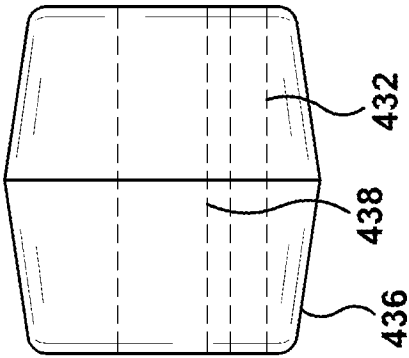


FIG. 11F

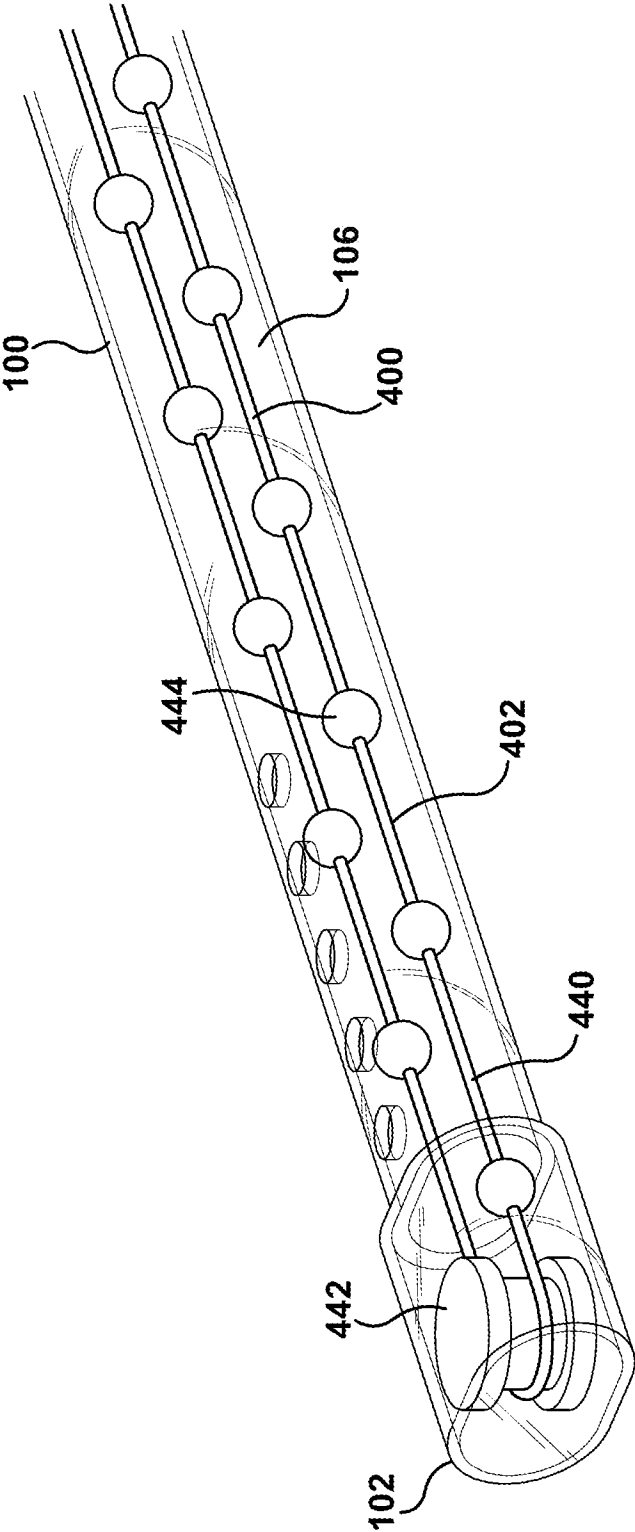


FIG. 12A

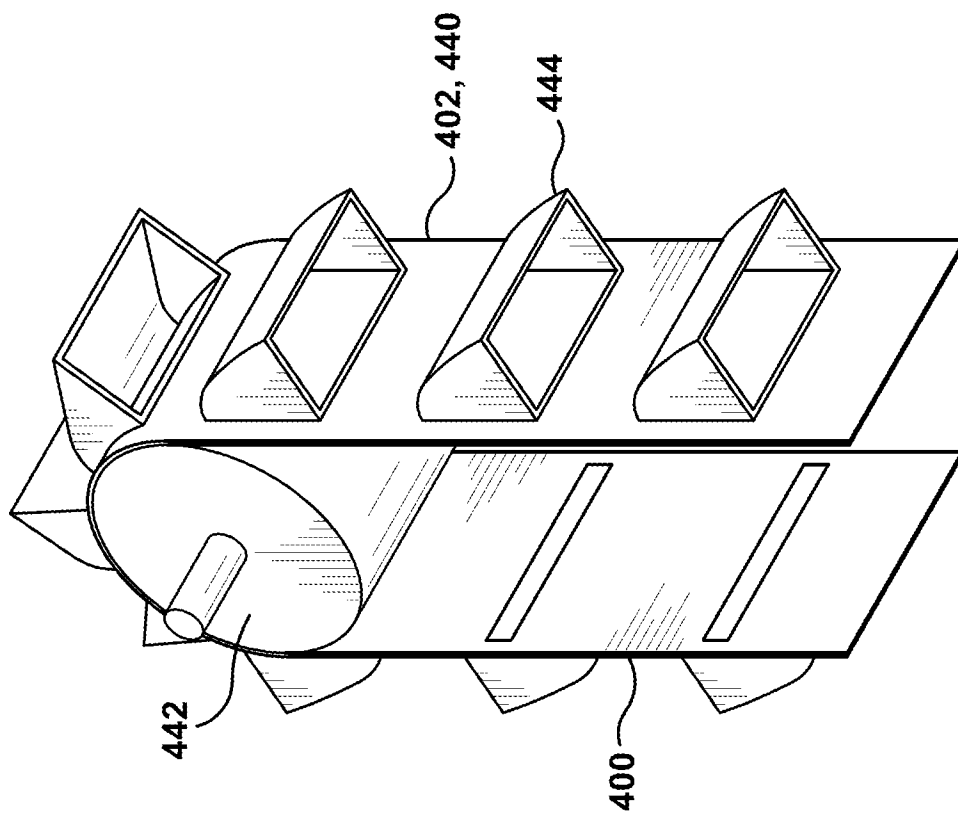


FIG. 12B

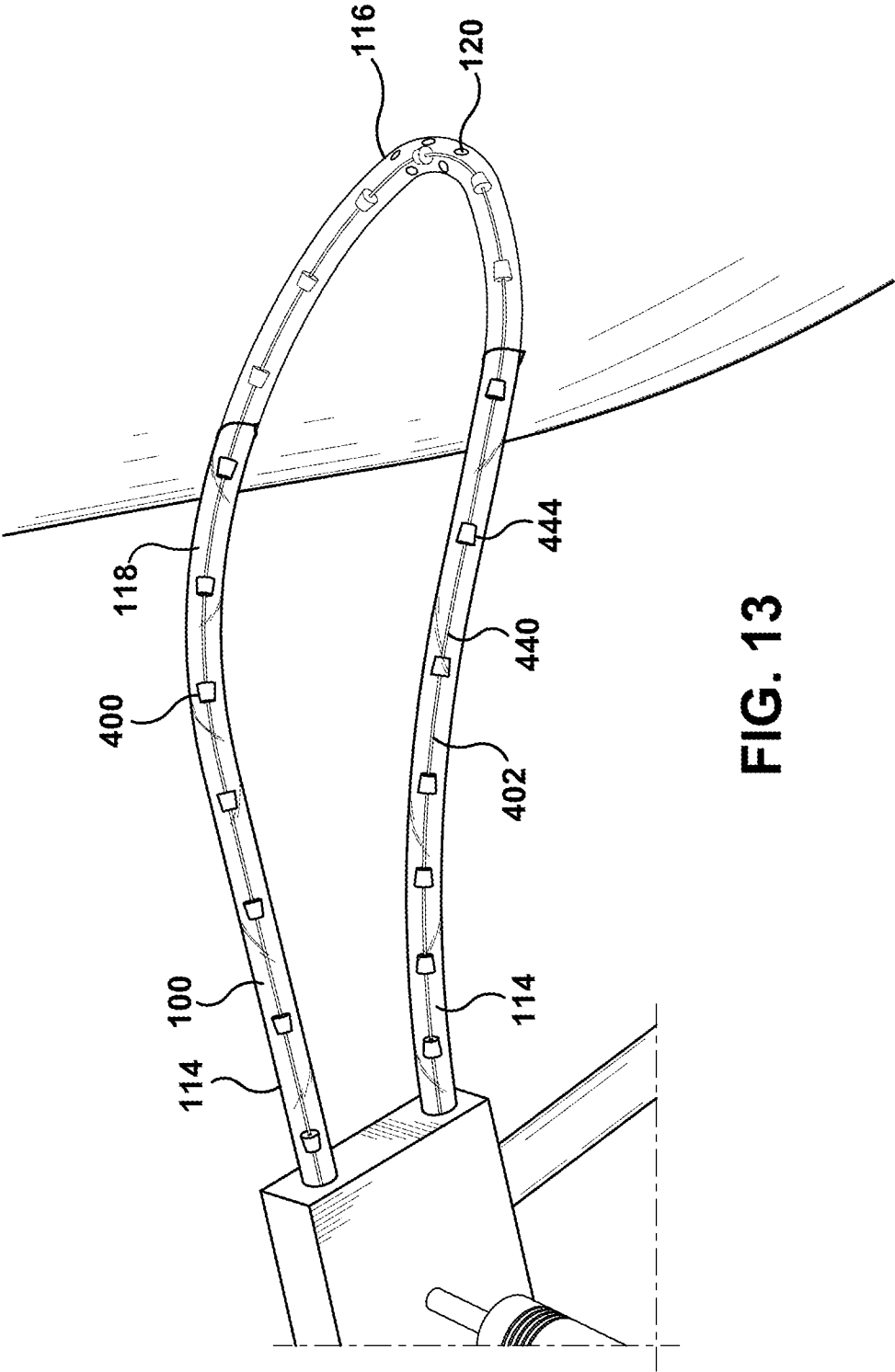
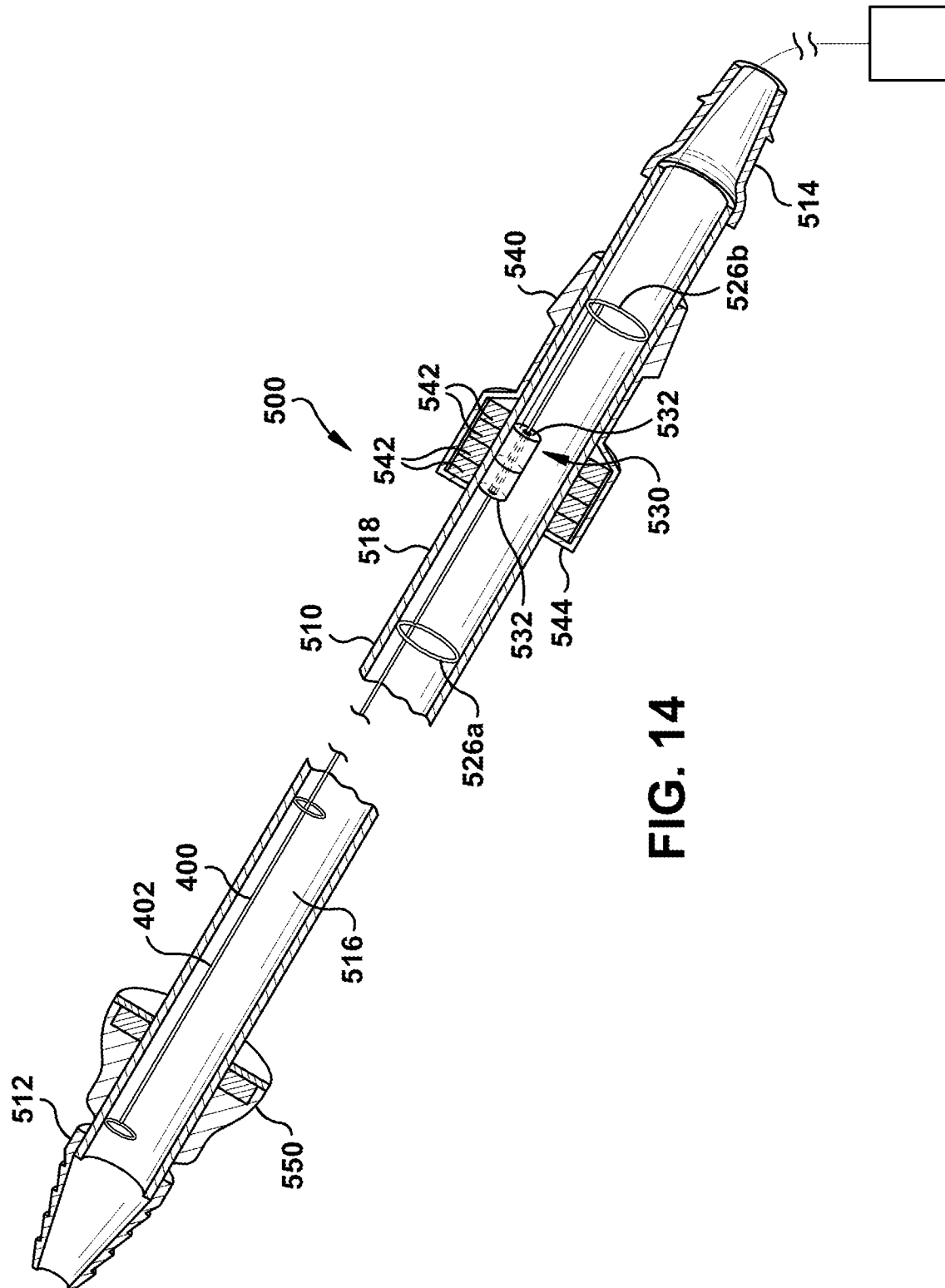


FIG. 13



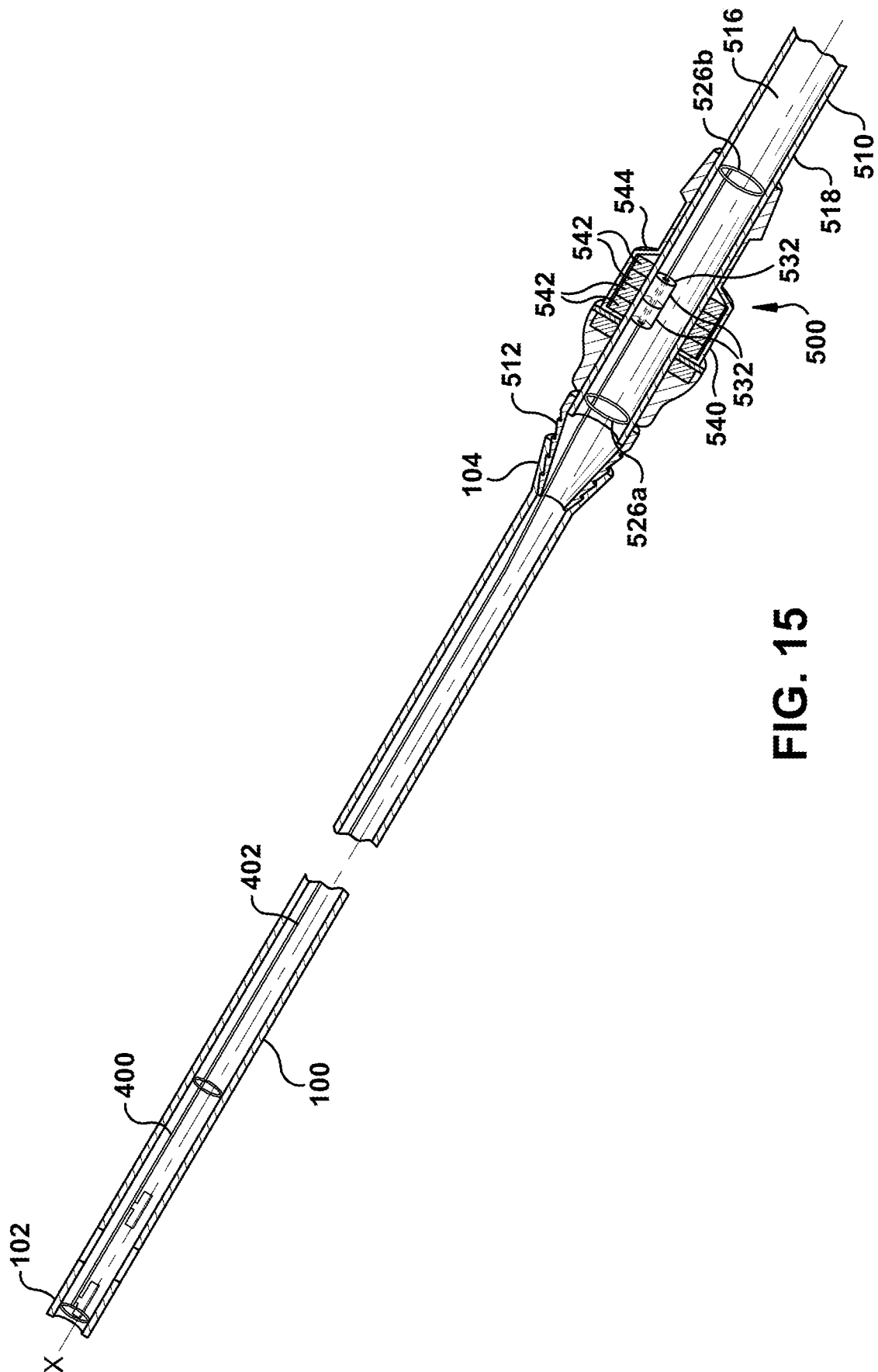


FIG. 15

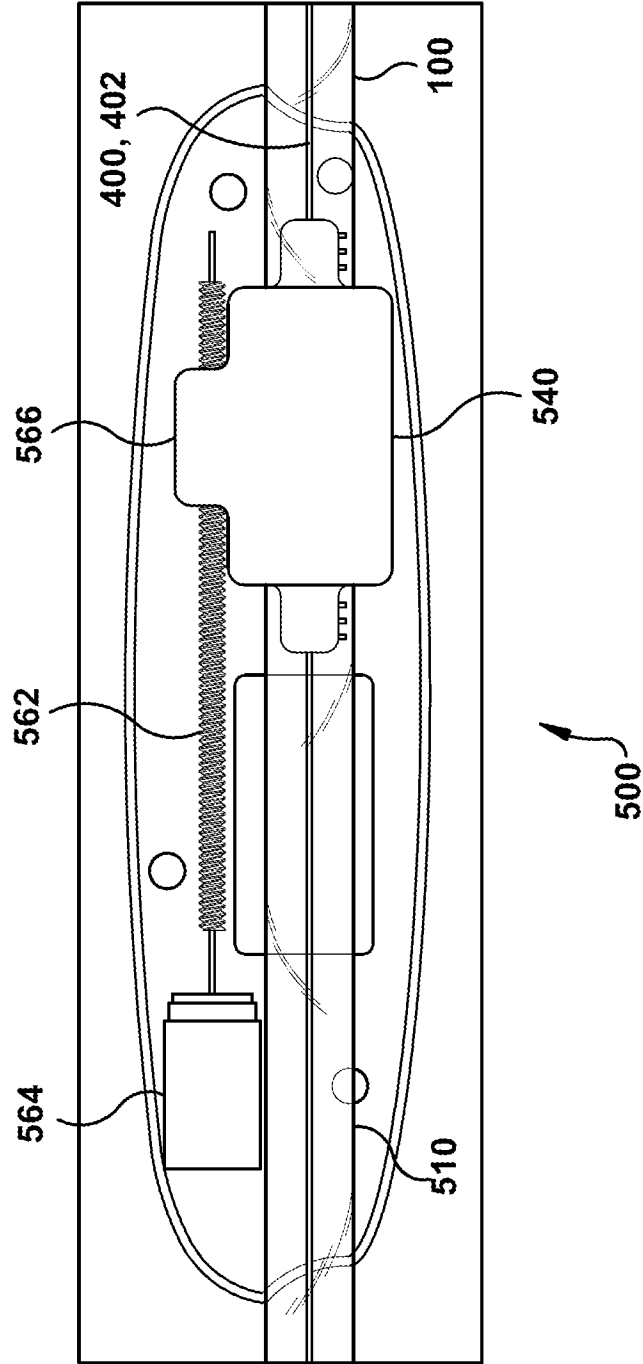


FIG. 16

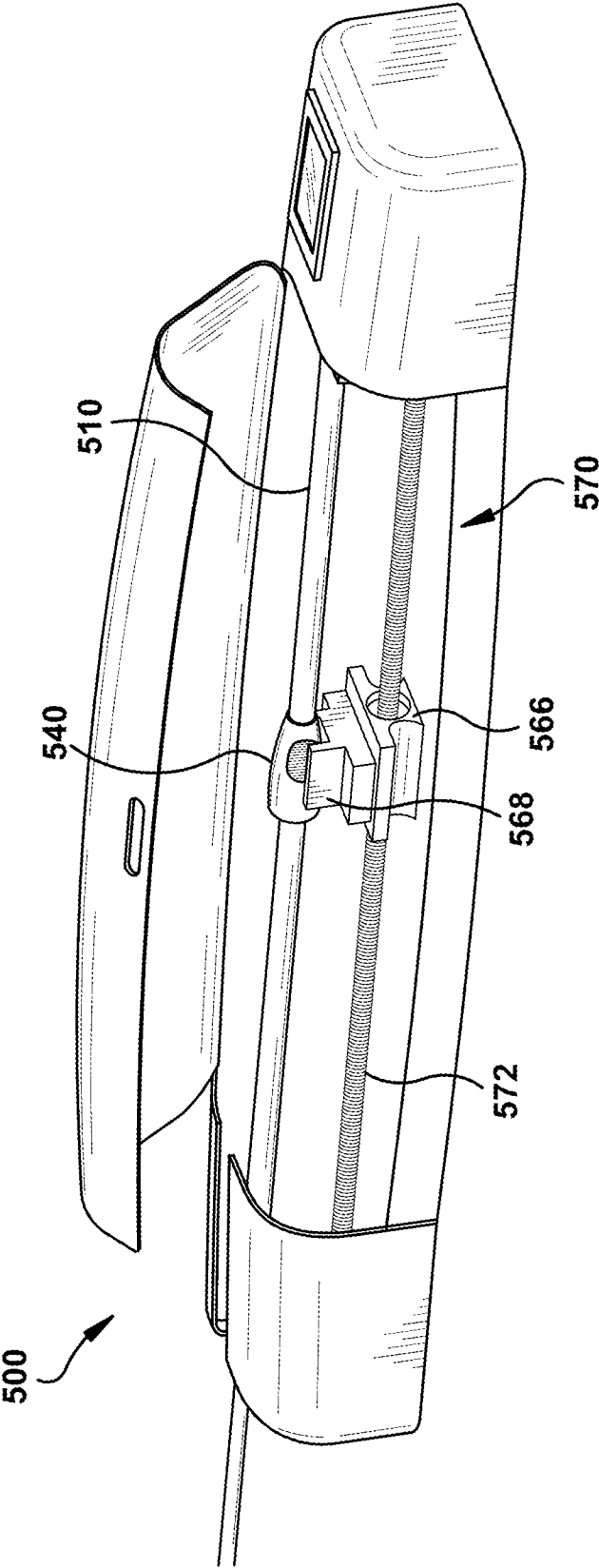


FIG. 17

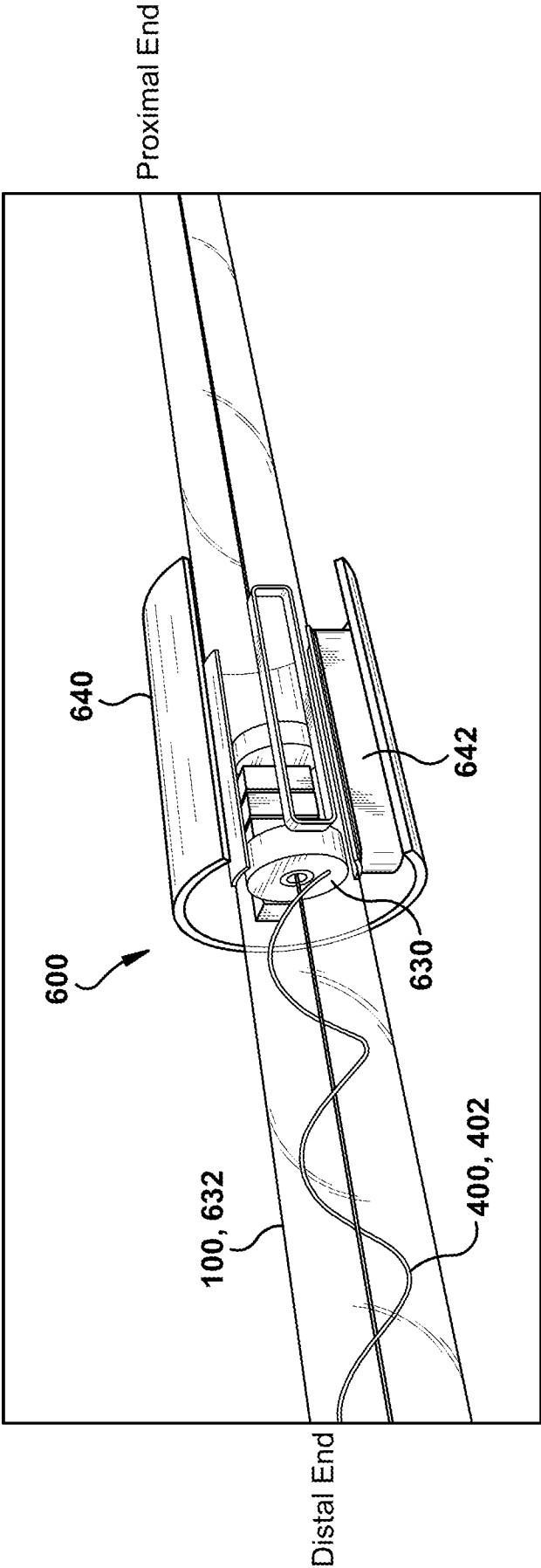


FIG. 18

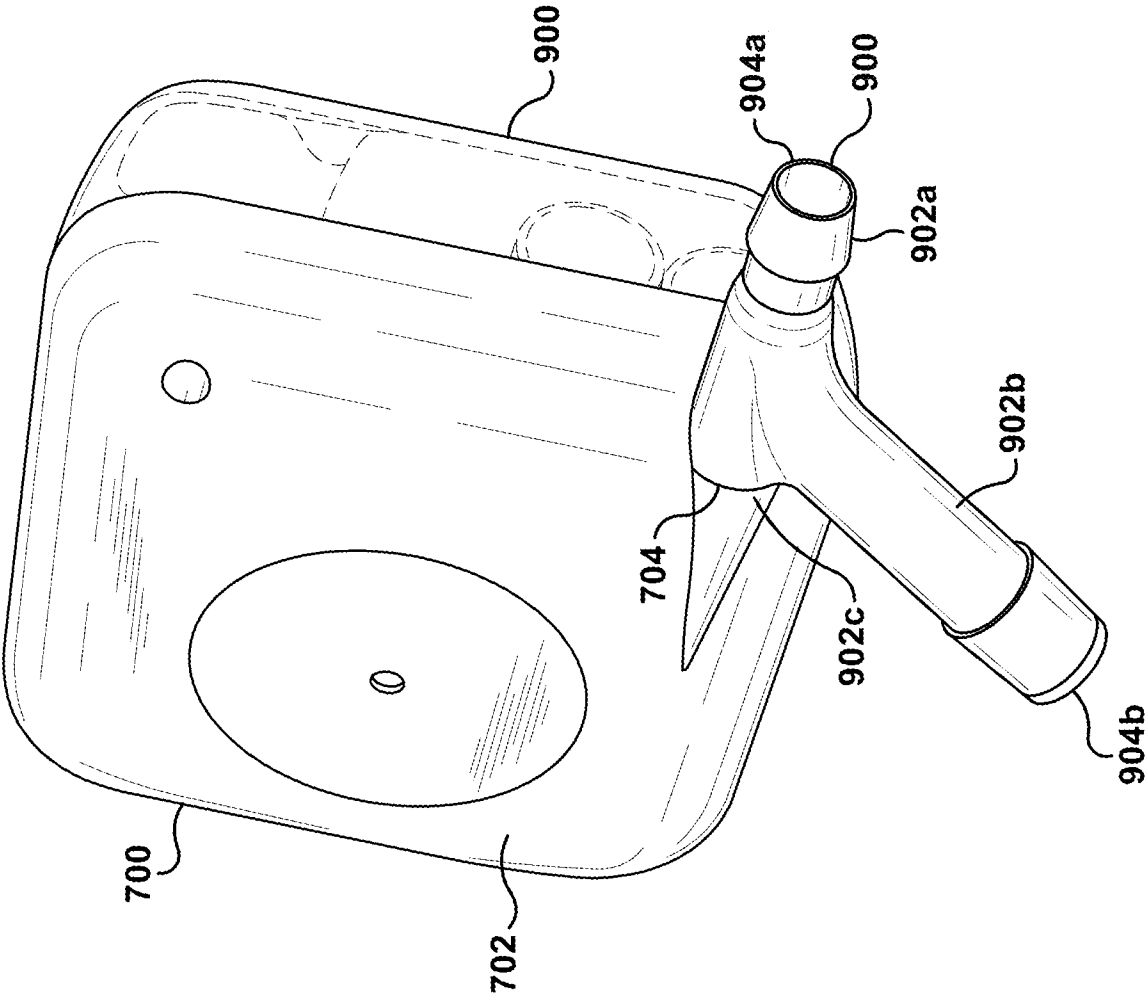


FIG. 19A

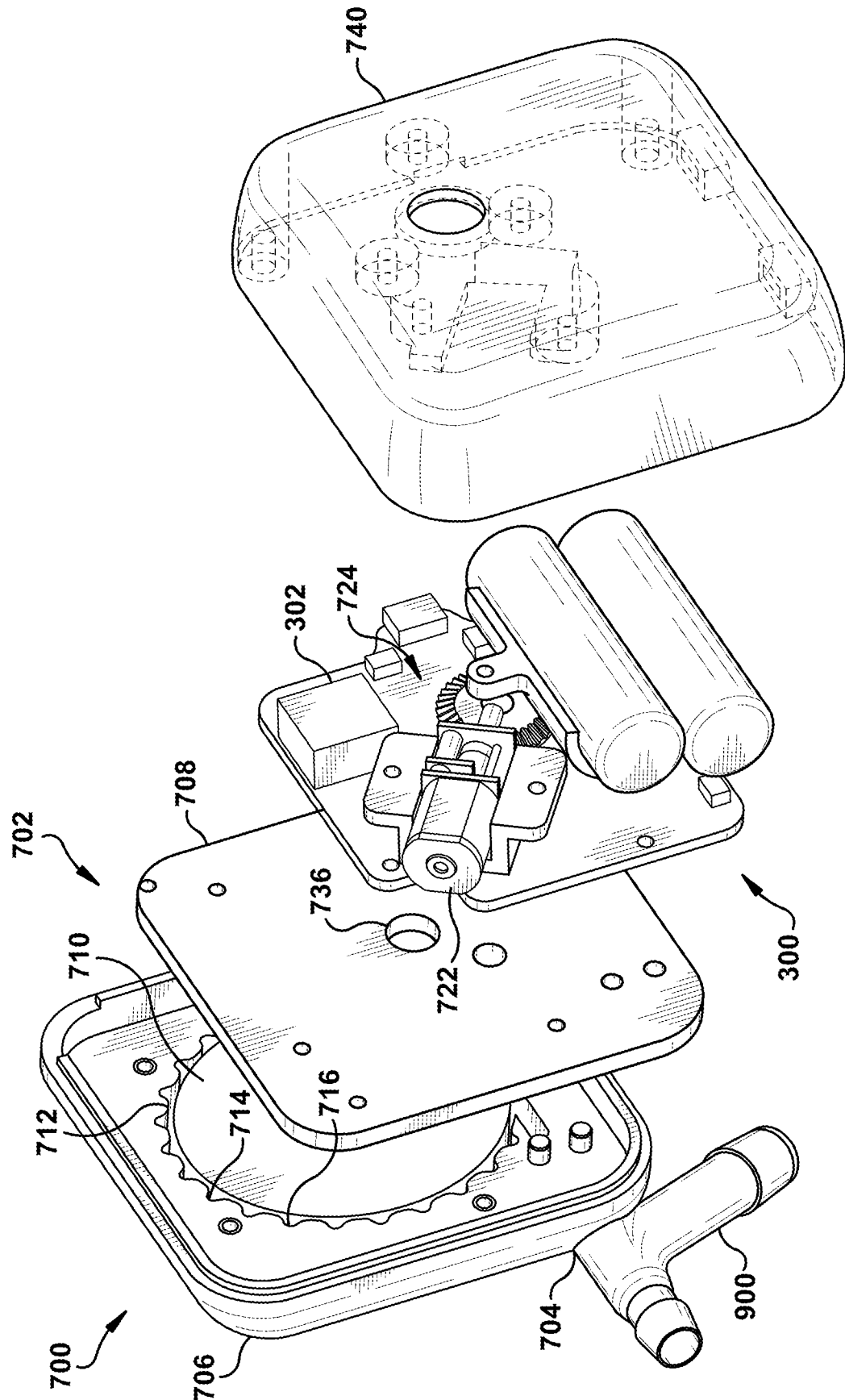


FIG. 19B

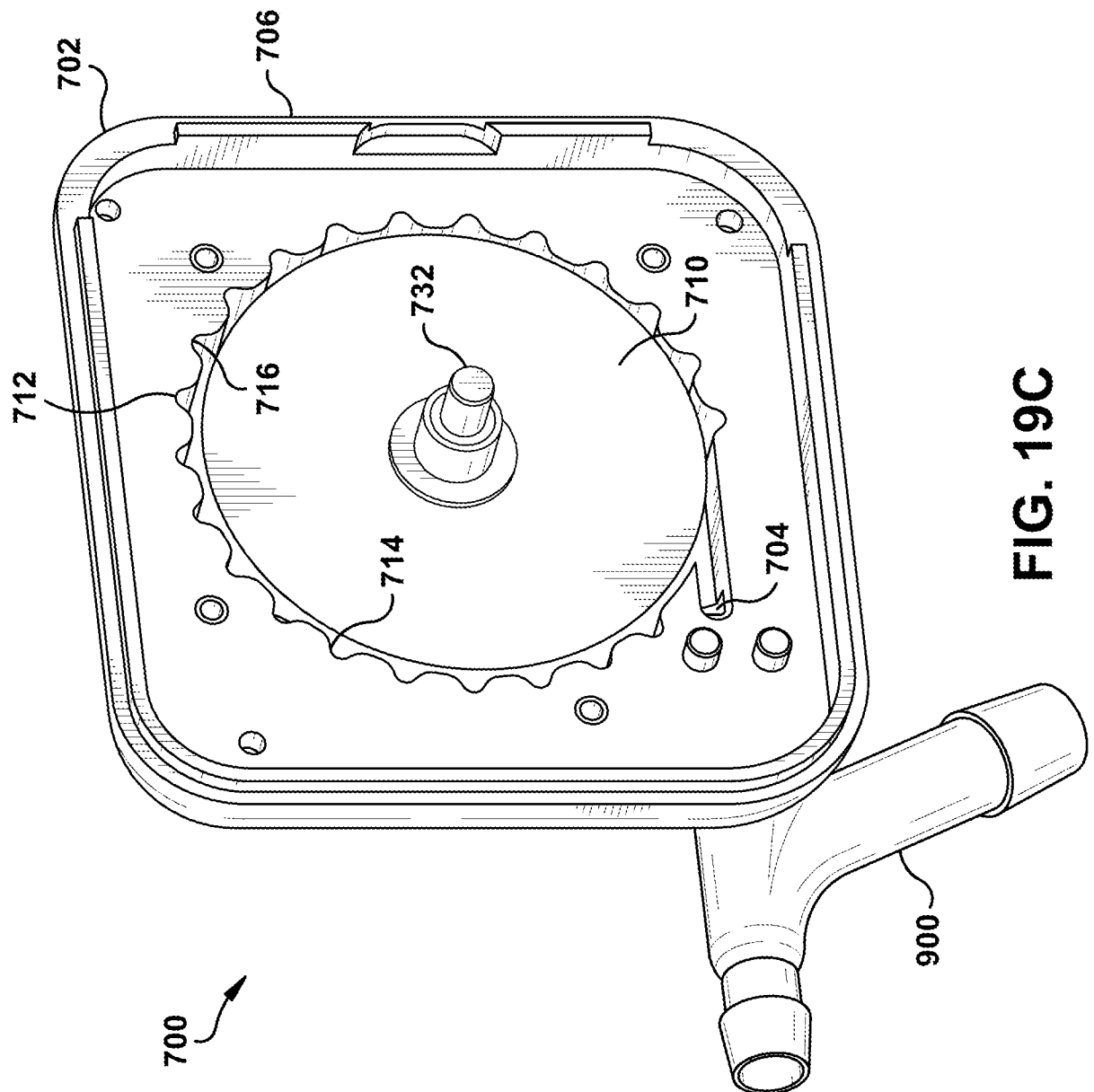


FIG. 19C

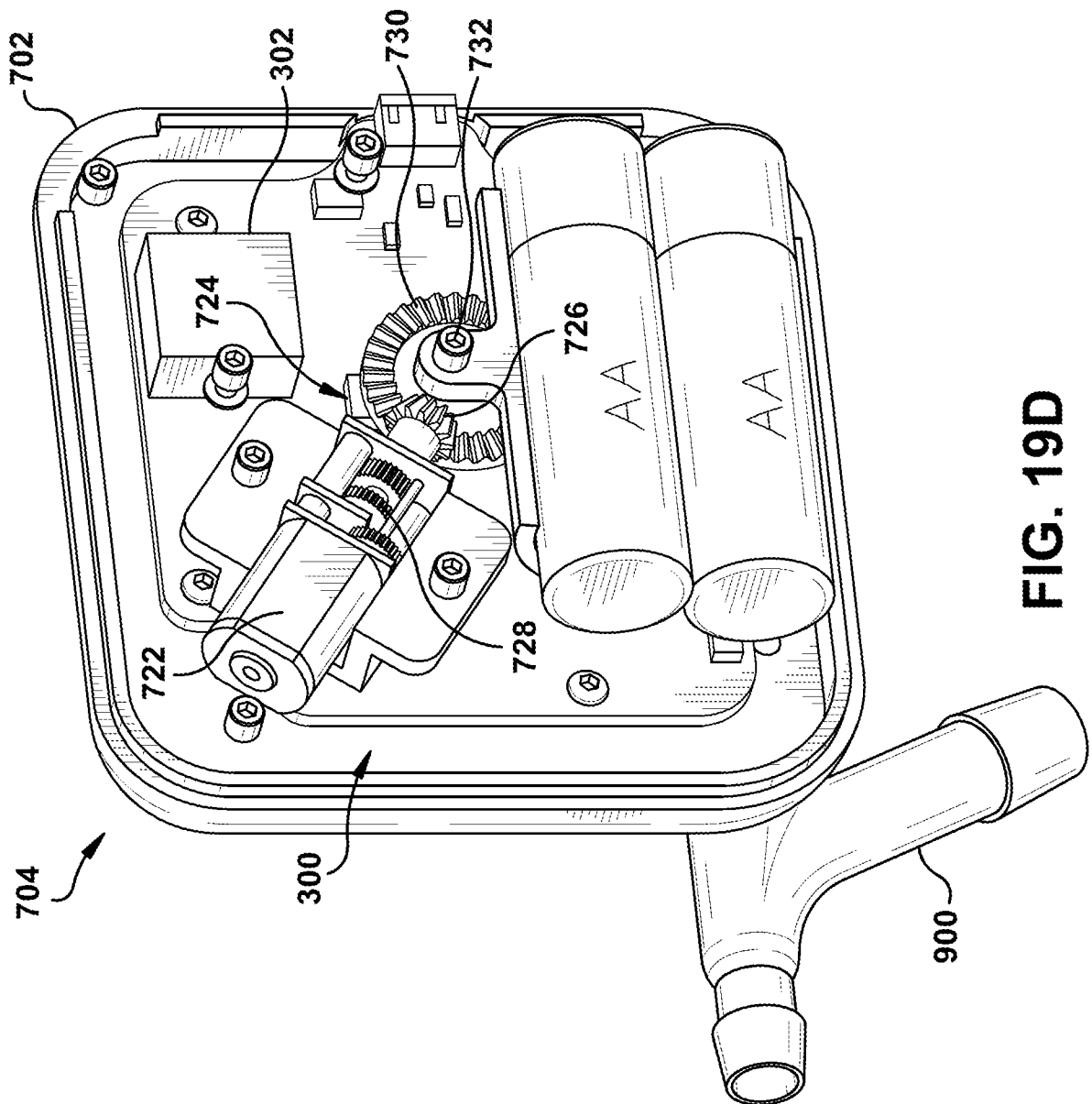


FIG. 19D

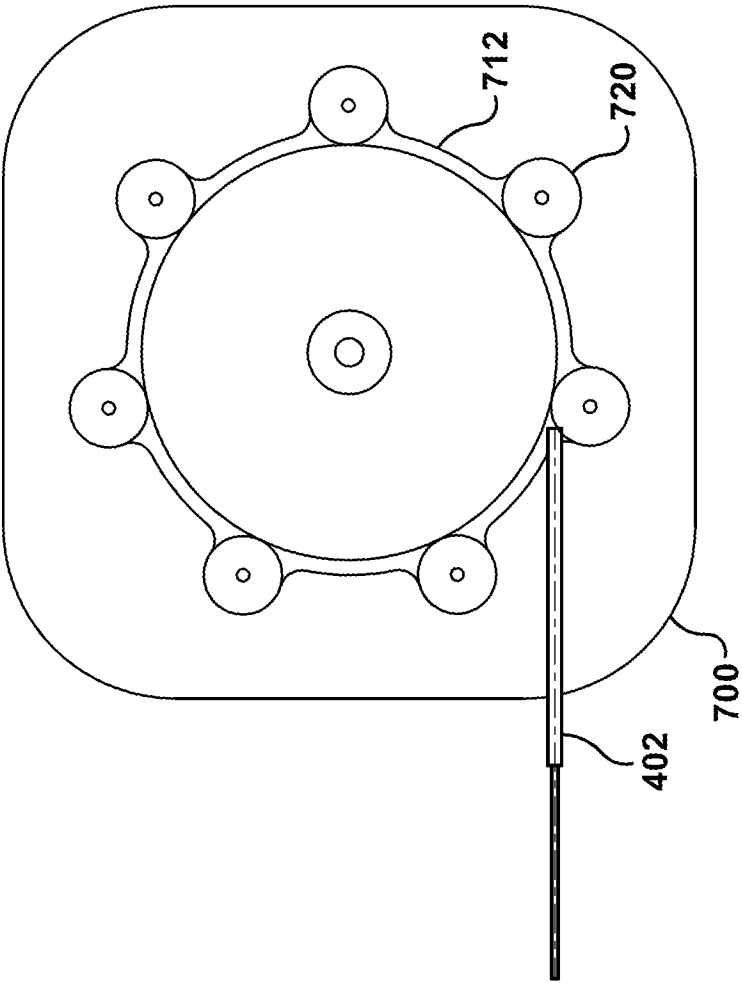


FIG. 19E

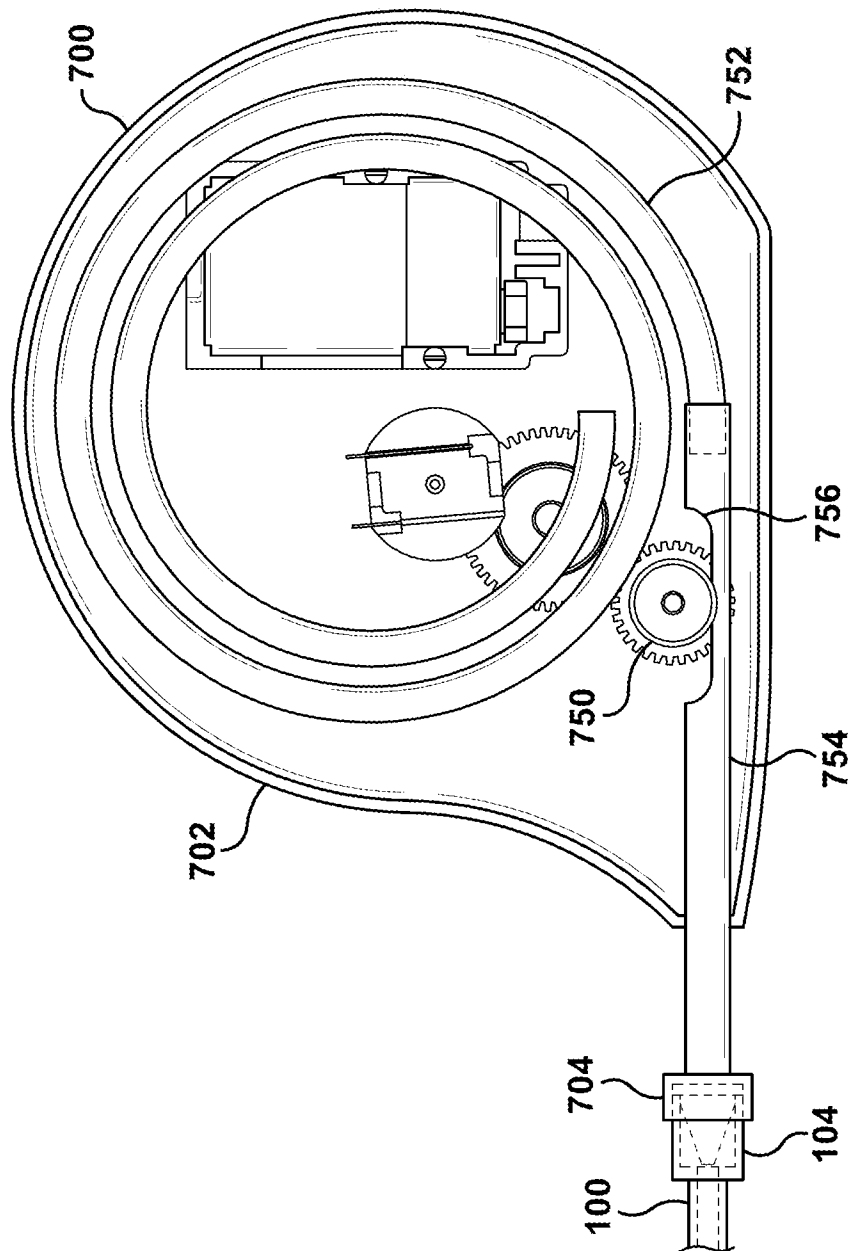


FIG. 20

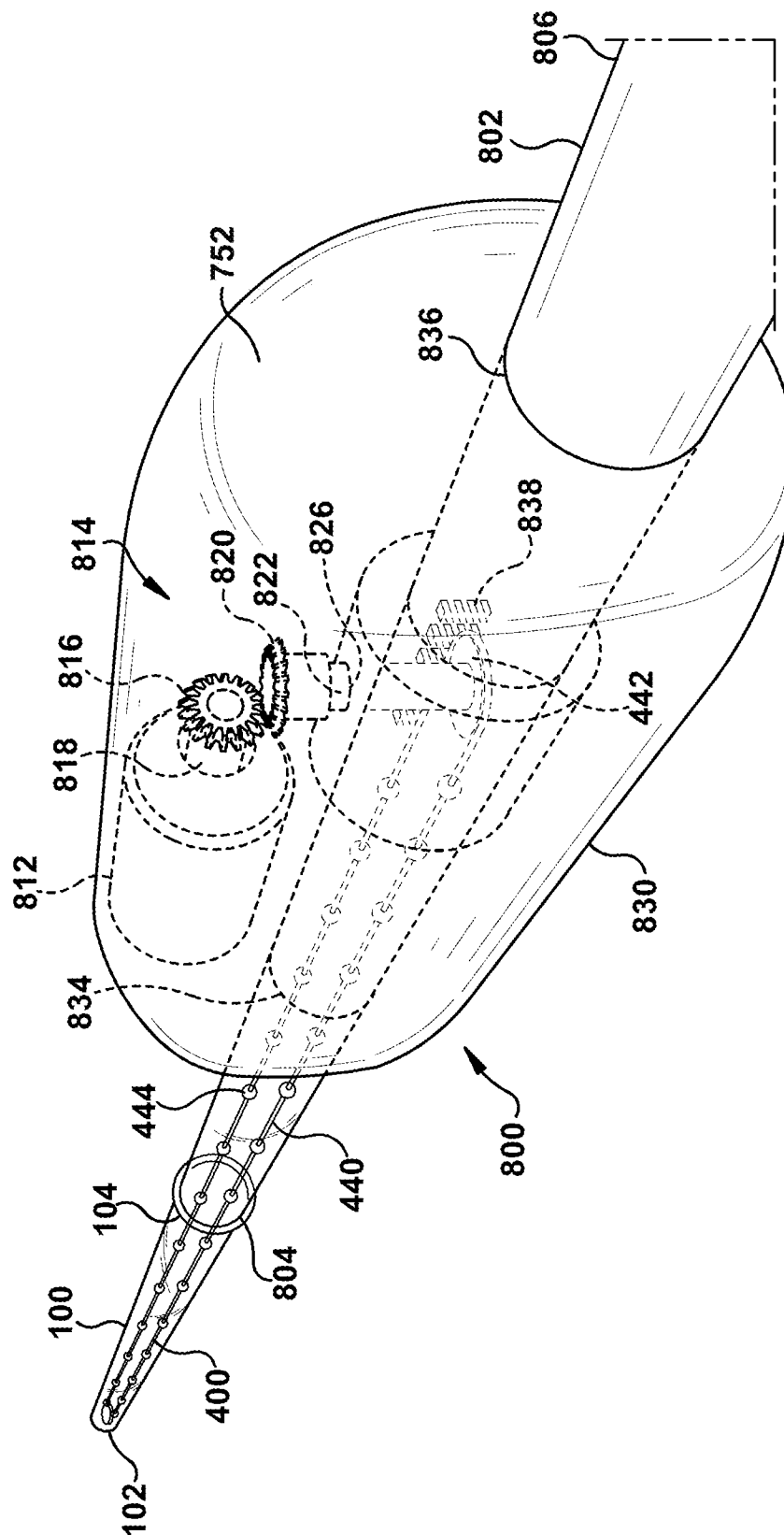
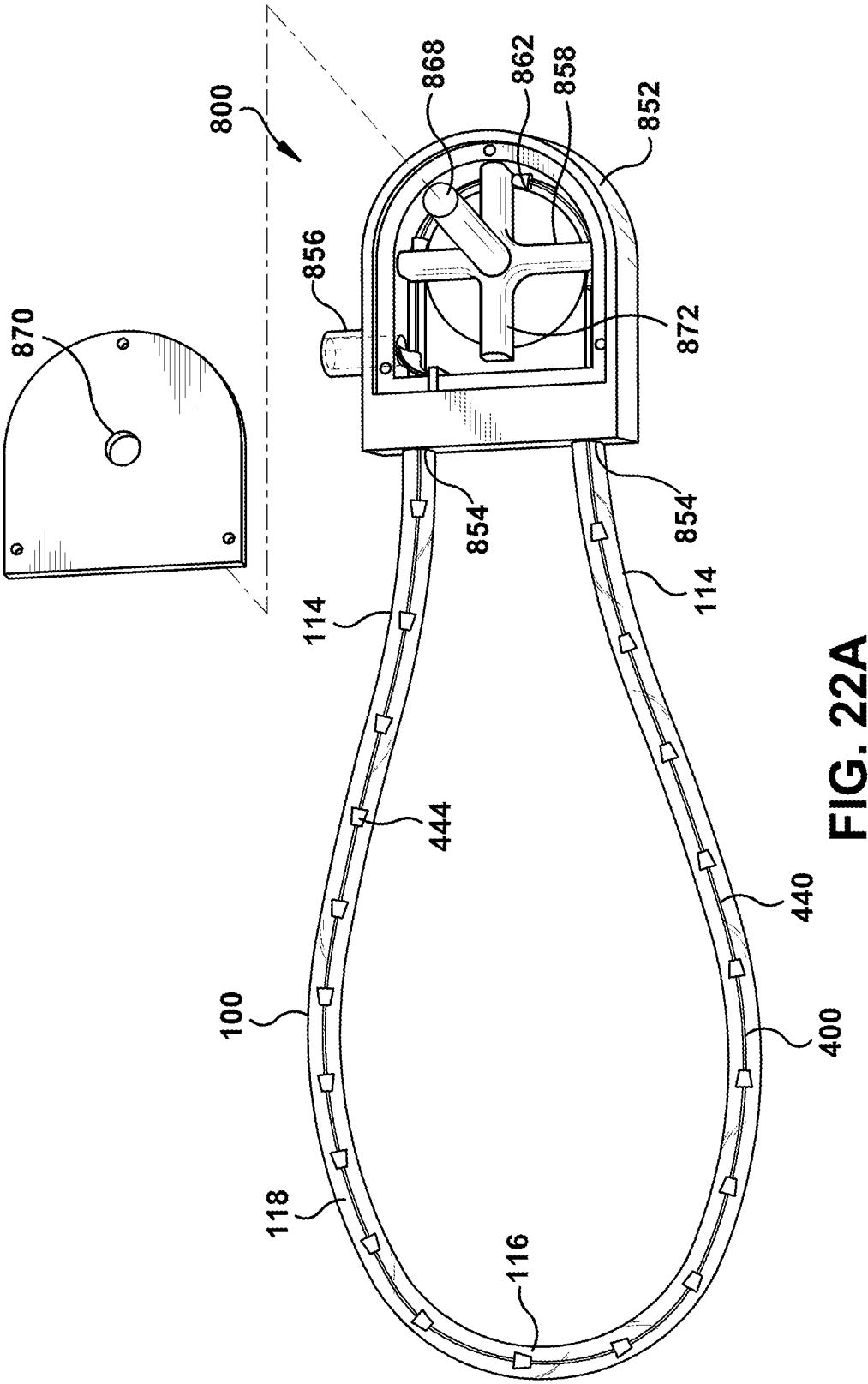


FIG. 21



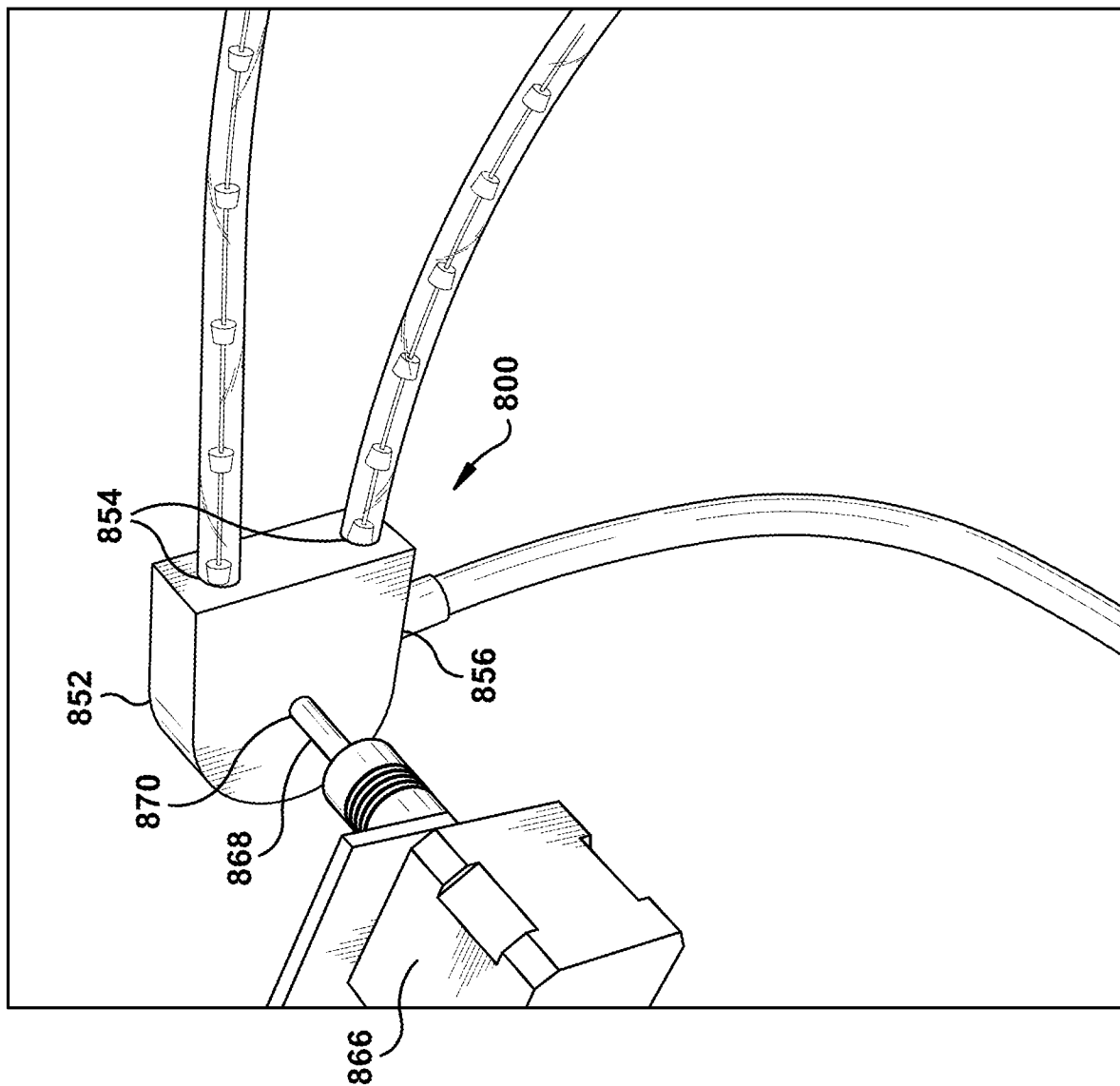


FIG. 22B

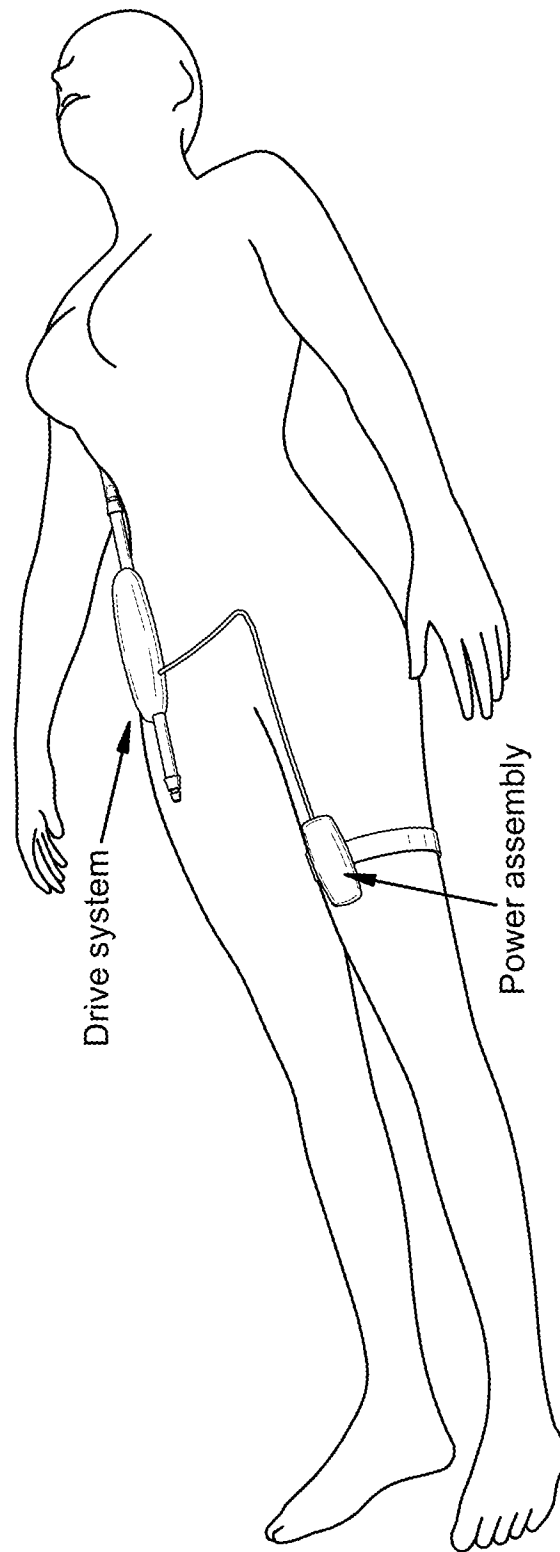
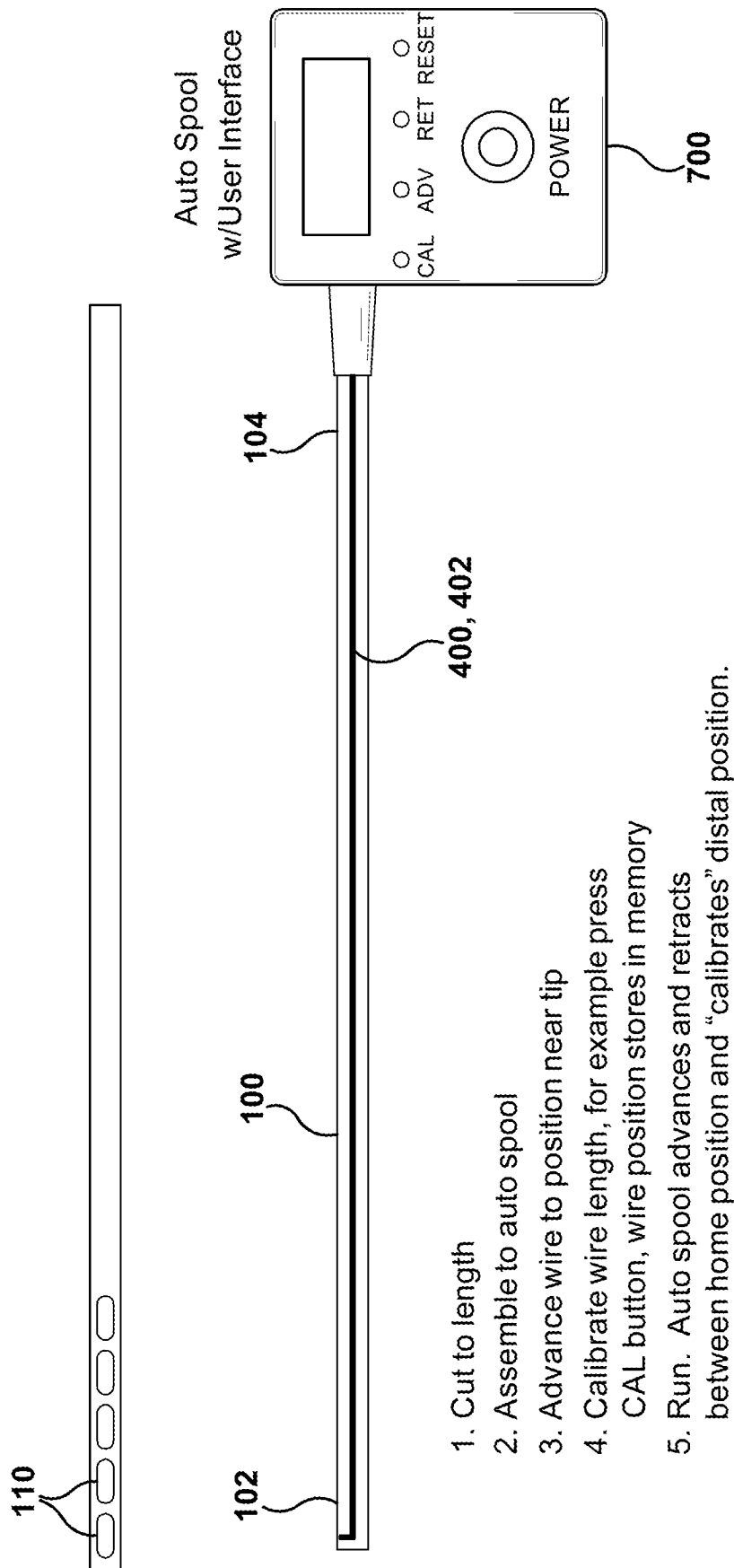


FIG. 23

**FIG. 24**

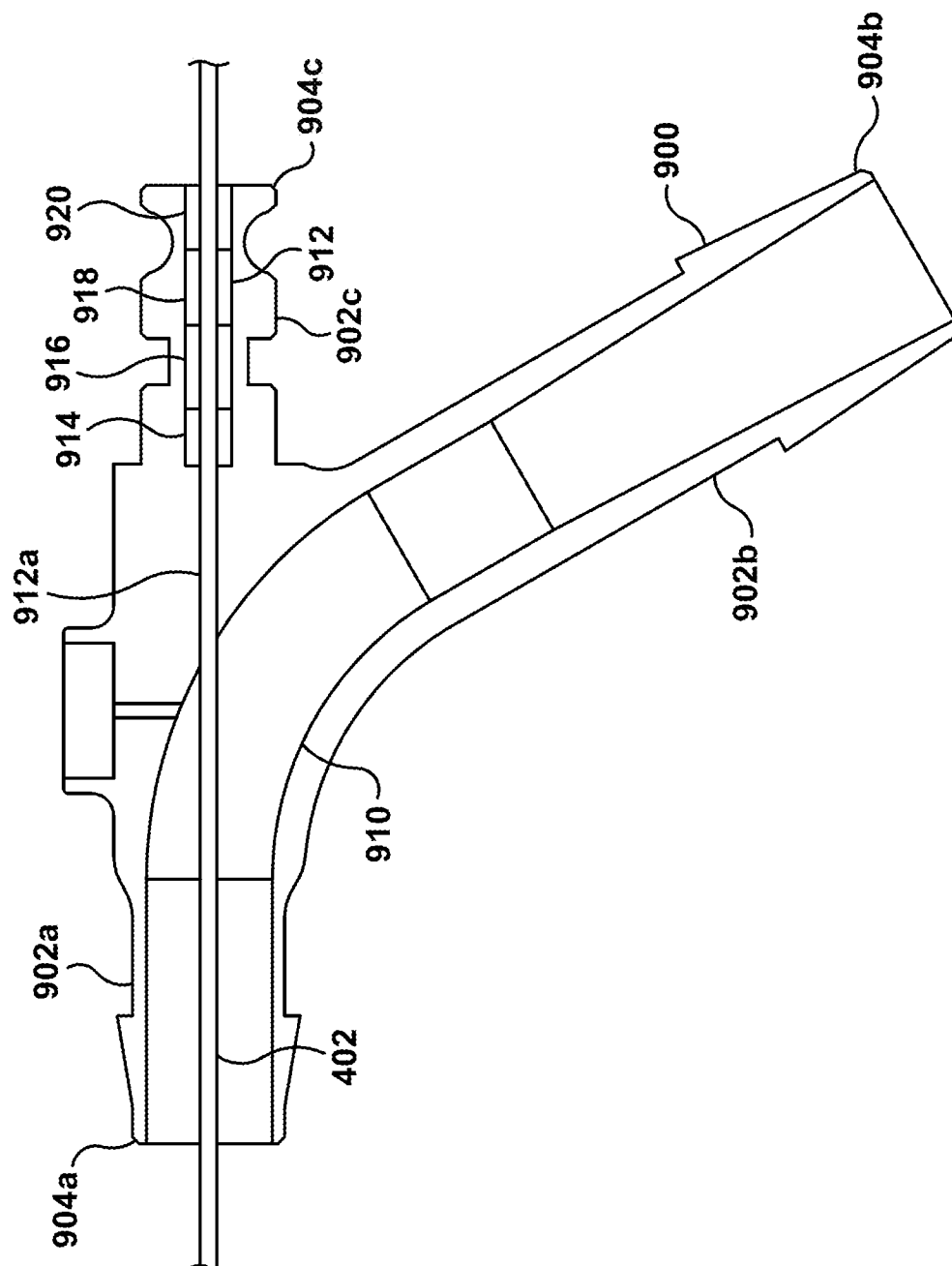


FIG. 25

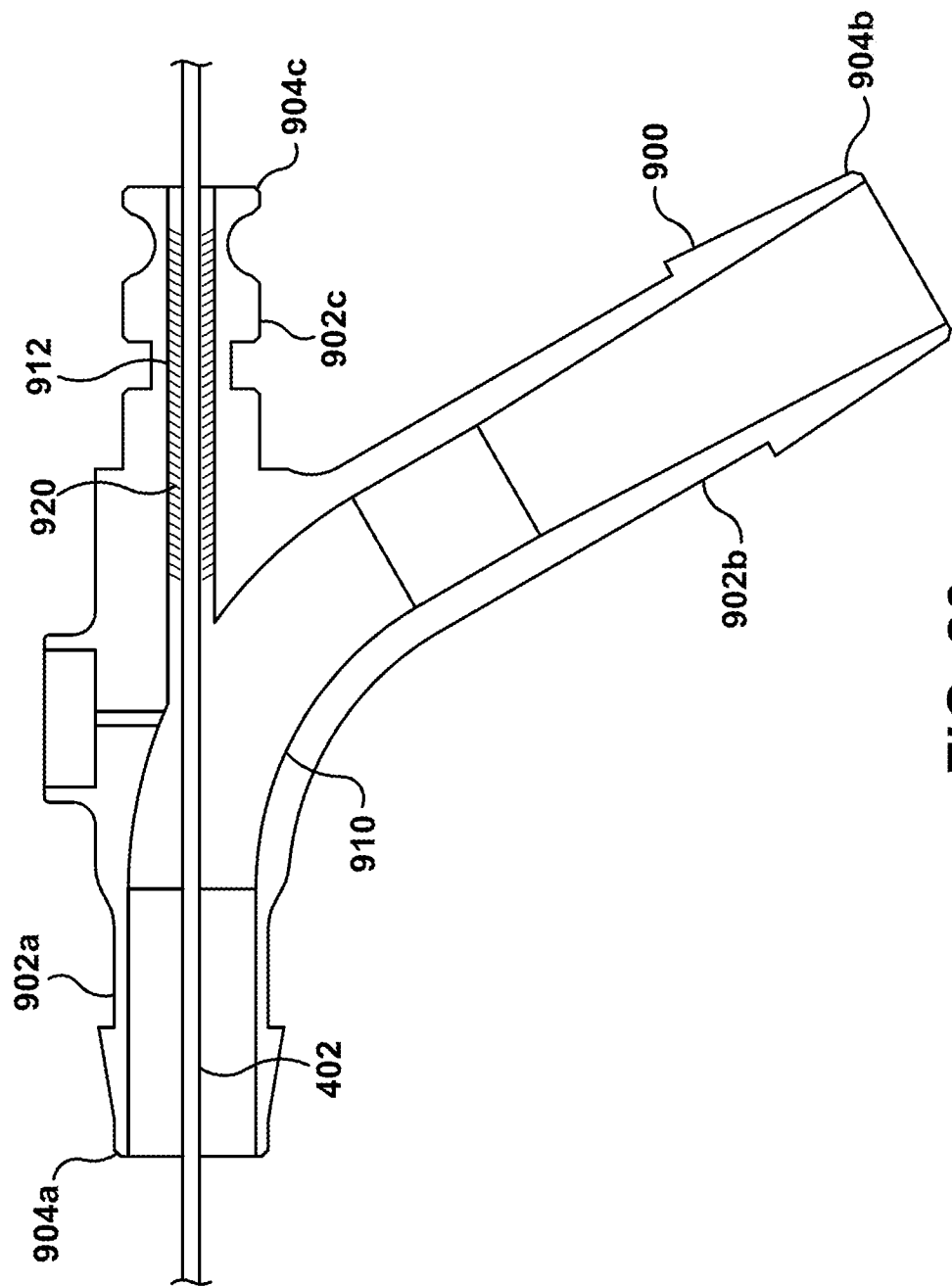


FIG. 26

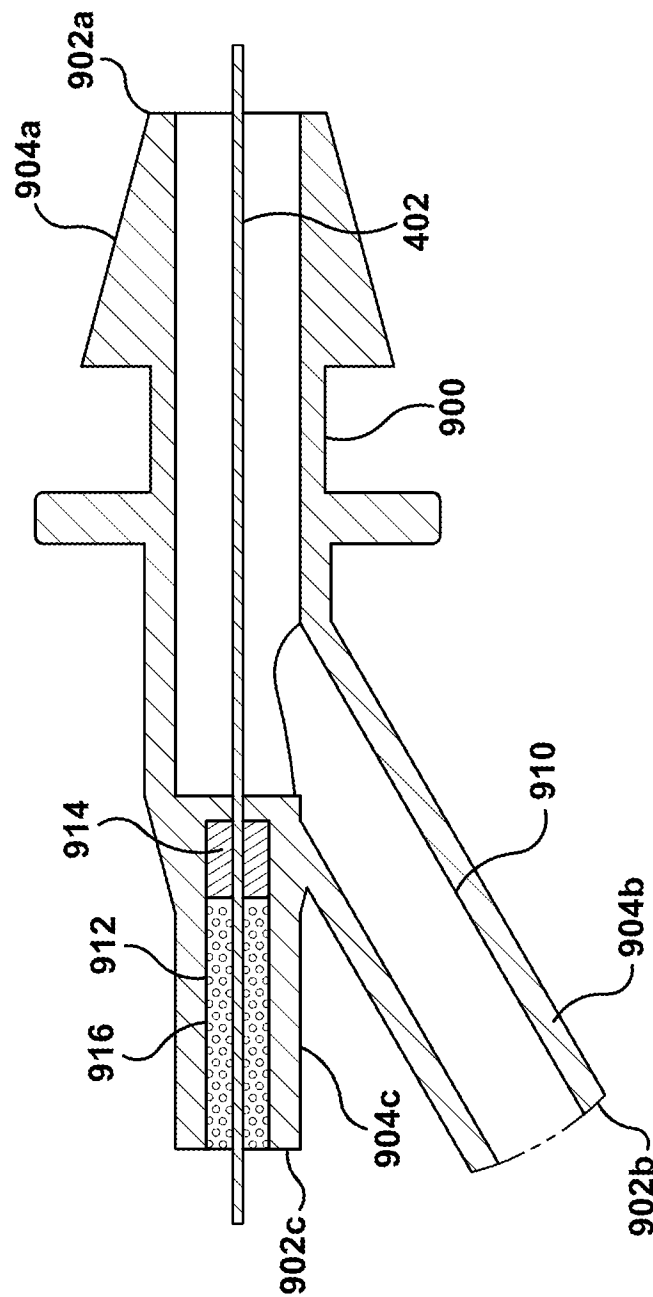


FIG. 27

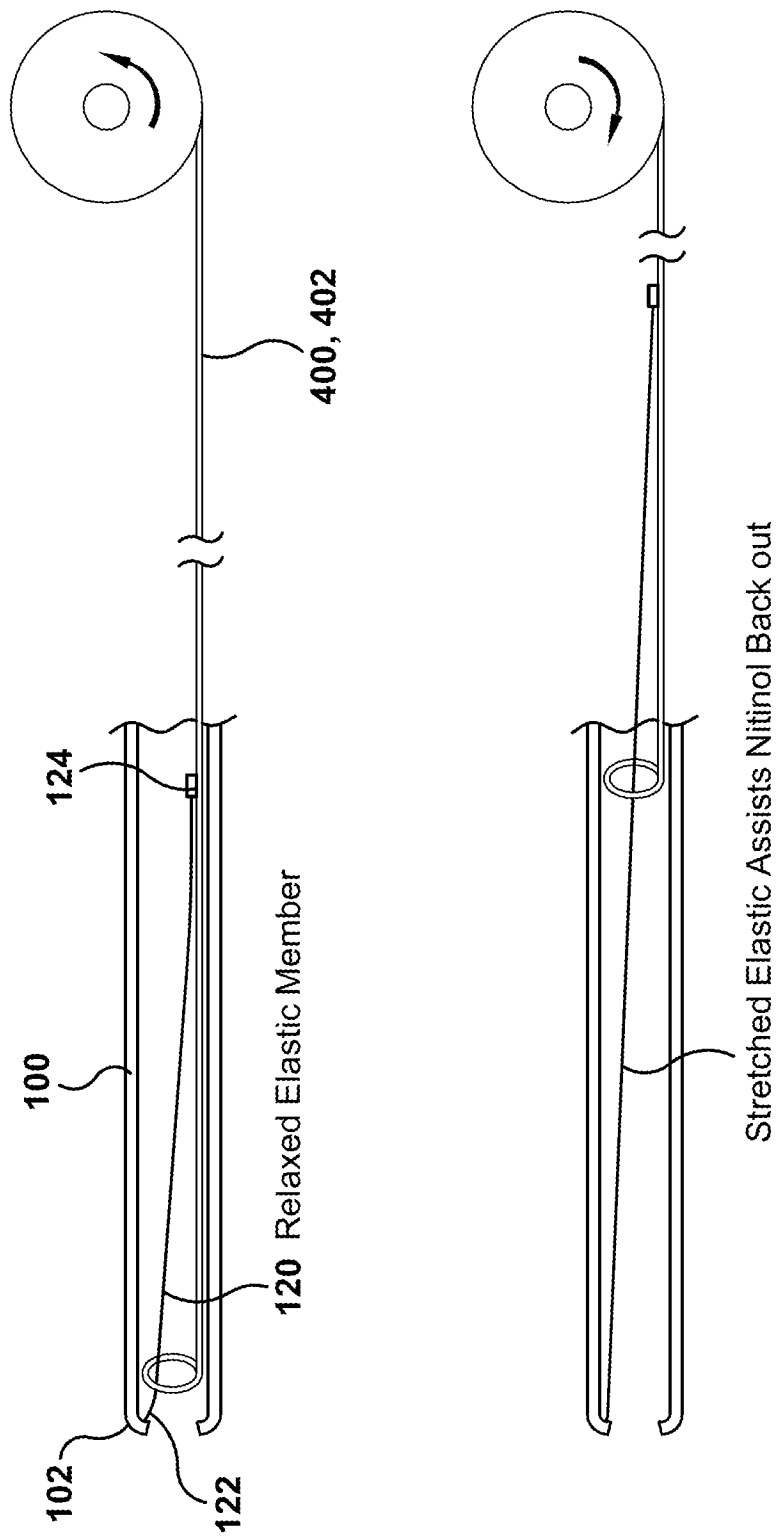


FIG. 28

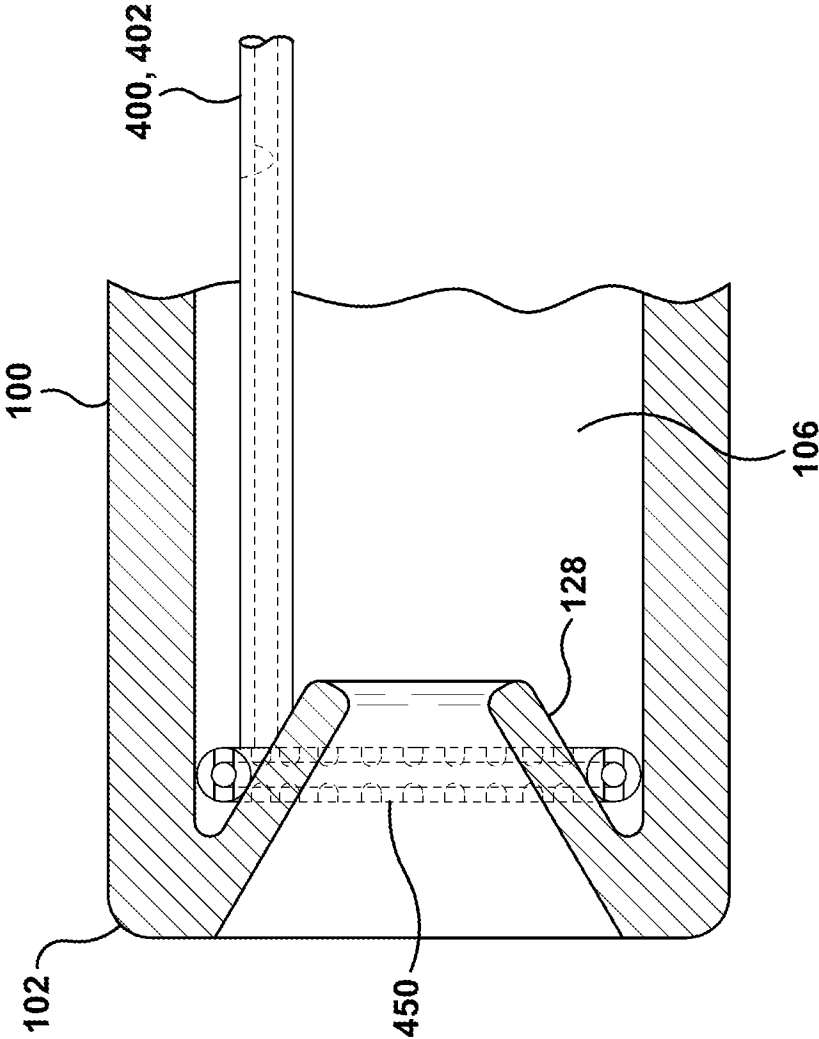
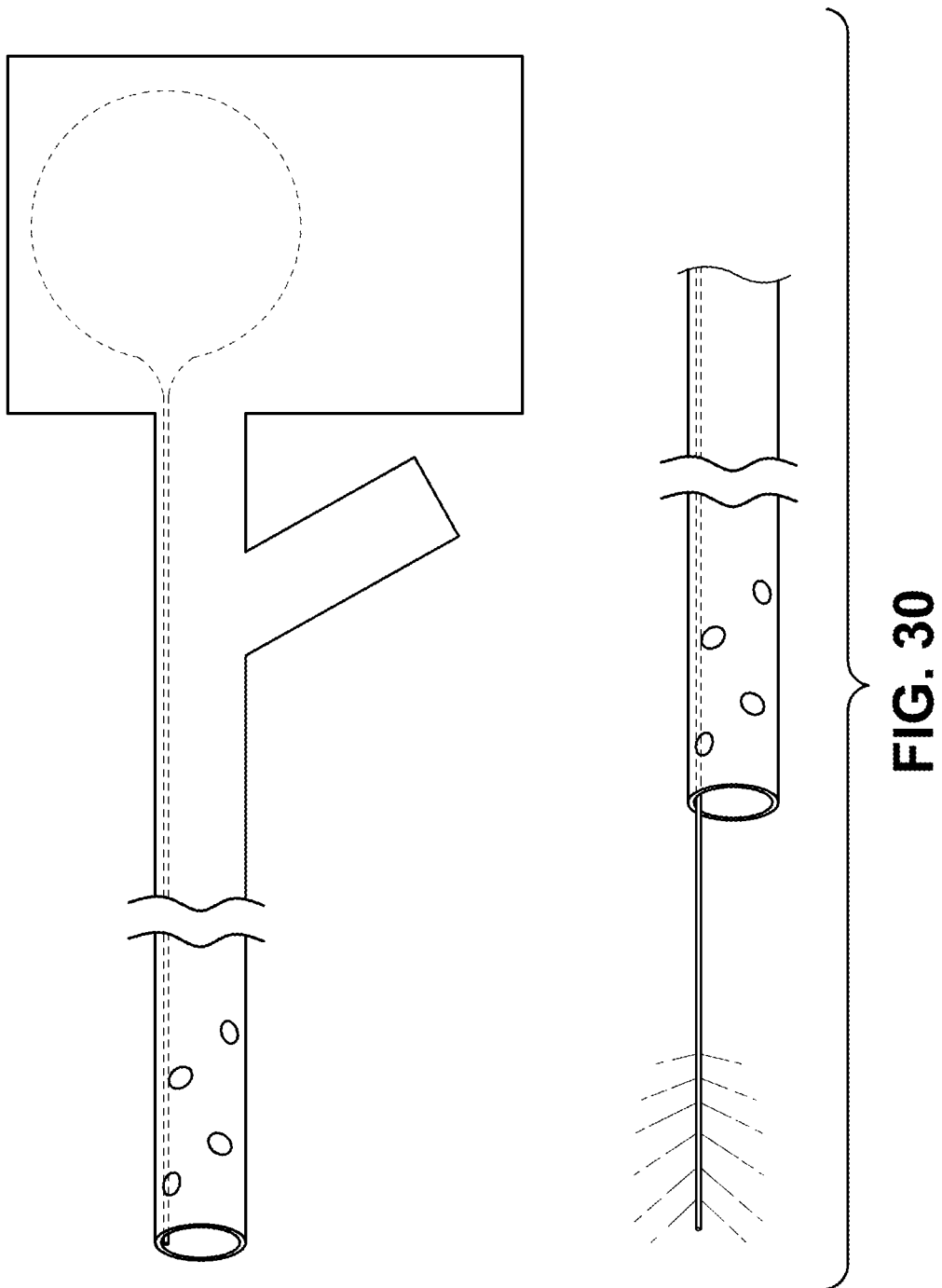


FIG. 29



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US18/17807

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC - A61B 19/34, 90/70, A61M 25/01, 25/09, 25/10, B08B 9/02 (2018.01)

CPC - A61B 1/121, 1/122 A61M 1/008, 25/0017, 25/0026, 25/0113, B08B 9/0436

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)

See Search History document

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

See Search History document

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

See Search History document

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X --- Y	US 2015/0231313 A1 (CLEARFLOW, INC.) 20 August 2015, Fig. 1, 2, 6-9, 14-20, para. [0040], [0042], [0046], [0049]-[0051], [0053]-[0062], [0065]-[0074], [0076]-[0081], [0087], [0097]	1-6, 9, 13, 16-22, 24, 26, 27 --- 7, 8, 10-12, 14, 15, 23, 25
Y	US 2012/0285485 A1 (MAJEED, A) 15 November 2012, Fig. 5, 12, 14, para. [0023], [0087], [0092], [0093], [0125], [0126]	7, 8, 10-12, 14, 15
Y	US 2016/0175563 A1 (B. BRAUN MELSUNGEN AG) 23 June 2016, Fig. 8, 9, para. [0120], [0130], [0131]	23
Y	US 2015/0305819 A1 (KRAUSE, W) 29 October 2015, Fig. 7, 12, para. [0106], [0111]	25
A	US 4,160,451 A (CHITTENDEN, R) 10 July 1979, entire document	1-27

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

* Special categories of cited documents:

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"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"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

07 April 2018 (07.04.2018)

Date of mailing of the international search report

26 APR 2018

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

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