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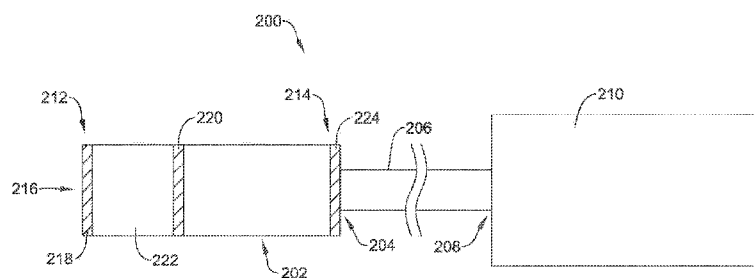


FIG. 12

(57) Abstract: A device configured to deliver and deploy an implantable medical device (IMD) includes a handle assembly and a shaft extending distally therefrom. A device containment housing configured to accommodate the IMD is coupled to the distal region of the shaft. At least one of the shaft and device containment housing includes a compressible region that is configured to compress by an amount that is related to an applied force. The device may include a first position indicator and a second position indicator. An applied force causes the compressible region to compress by an amount that is related to the applied force, causing a change in distance between the first position indicator and the second position indicator and thus providing an indication of the applied force.



DELIVERY SYSTEM WITH FORCE SENSOR FOR LEADLESS CARDIAC DEVICE**CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 62/291,330 filed on February 4, 2016, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present disclosure pertains to medical devices, and methods for manufacturing and/or using medical devices. More particularly, the present disclosure pertains to leadless devices and methods, such as leadless pacing devices and methods, and delivery devices and methods for such leadless devices.

BACKGROUND

[0003] A wide variety of medical devices have been developed for medical use, for example, cardiac use. Some of these devices include catheters, leads, pacemakers, and the like, and delivery devices and/or systems used for delivering such devices. These devices are manufactured by any one of a variety of different manufacturing methods and may be used according to any one of a variety of methods. Of the known medical devices, delivery systems, and methods, each has certain advantages and disadvantages. There is an ongoing need to provide alternative medical devices and delivery devices as well as alternative methods for manufacturing and using medical devices and delivery devices.

SUMMARY

[0004] This disclosure provides design, material, manufacturing method, and use alternatives for medical devices, including delivery devices.

[0005] An example delivery and deployment device may include a handle assembly and a shaft extending distally from the handle assembly. A distal containment housing may be coupled to a distal region of the shaft and extend distally therefrom. The distal containment housing may be configured to accommodate an Implantable Medical Device (IMD) therein. The IMD may be a leadless pacemaker, a lead, a neurostimulation device, a sensor or any other suitable IMD. At least one of the shaft and distal containment housing may include a compressible region that is configured to compress by an amount that is related to an applied force. The example delivery

and deployment device may include a first position indicator and a second position indicator, wherein at least part of the compressible region is situated between the first position indicator and the second position indicator. An applied force causes the compressible region to compress by an amount that is related to the applied force, which causes a change in distance between the first position indicator and the second position indicator, which provides an indication of the applied force.

[0006] In some cases, the distal containment housing may include the compressible region.

[0007] In some cases, the compressible region may be configured to shorten in length in response to the applied force. In some cases, there are more than one compressible region.

[0008] In some cases, the first position indicator comprises a first radiopaque marker band and the second position indicator comprises a second radiopaque marker band, and the change in distance between the first position indicator and the second position indicator is visible via fluoroscopy.

[0009] In some cases, the first position indicator comprises a first electrode and the second position indicator comprises a second electrode, and the change in distance between the first electrode and the second electrode is indicated via a change in impedance between the first electrode and the second electrode. In some cases, the first electrode may include a ring electrode. Alternatively or additionally, the first electrode may include one or more of a plurality of electrodes that are disposed radially about a distal end of the distal containment housing and alignable with each of a plurality of talons of the IMD. In some cases, the second electrode may comprises a ring electrode or any other suitable electrode.

[0010] In some cases, the delivery and deployment device may further include a force sensor arranged and configured to provide an indication of a force applied to the IMD during implantation. In some cases, the delivery and deployment device may include a force sensor arranged and configured to provide an indication of an applied force to an IMD during a tug test after deployment of the IMD.

[0011] A second example IMD implantation device may include a handle assembly and a shaft extending distally from the handle assembly. A distal containment housing that is configured to accommodate the IMD therein may be coupled to a distal region of the shaft and extend distally therefrom. A deployment member may extend through the shaft and may be configured to apply a distal deployment force to the IMD in order to move the IMD from the distal containment

housing to deploy the IMD in the patient's heart. The second example IMD implantation device may further include a first force detector for detecting a measure related to a force applied by the device containment housing against the patient's heart during deployment of the IMD and a second force detector for detecting a measure related to a force applied by the deployment member to the IMD during deployment of the IMD.

[0012] In some cases, the deployment member may be a push tube, and the IMD implantation device may include a tether extending distally through the push tube and coupled to the IMD. The tether may be configured to be used to retrieve the IMD back into the distal containment housing if an alternate deployment location is desired.

[0013] In some cases, the IMD implantation device may further include a plurality of electrodes that are disposed radially about a distal end of the distal containment housing and alignable with each of a plurality of talons of the IMD.

[0014] In some cases, the first force detector may include a compressible region that is configured to compress by an amount that is related to the force applied by the device containment housing against the patient's heart during deployment of the IMD.

[0015] In some cases, the first force detector may include a first electrode and a second electrode, wherein at least part of the compressible region is between the first electrode and the second electrode.

[0016] In some cases, the first force detector may include a strain sensor and/or the second force detector may include a strain sensor.

[0017] Another example IMD implantation device may include a shaft including a distal region and a distal containment housing that is configured to accommodate the IMD therein. The distal containment housing may be coupled to the distal region of the shaft and extend distally therefrom. A deployment member may extend through the shaft and may be configured to apply a distal deployment force to the IMD in order to move the IMD from the distal containment housing to deploy the IMD in the patient's heart. A plurality of electrodes may be disposed radially about a distal end of the distal containment housing and may be alignable with each of a plurality of talons of the IMD. One or more force detectors may detect a measure related to a force applied by the distal containment housing against the patient's heart during deployment of the IMD.

[0018] In some cases, the force detector may include a compressible region that is configured to compress by an amount that is related to the force applied by the distal containment housing

against the patient's heart during deployment of the IMD. In some cases, the force detector may include a first electrode and a second electrode, wherein at least part of the compressible region is between the first electrode and the second electrode.

[0019] The above summary of some illustrative embodiments is not intended to describe each disclosed embodiment or every implementation of the present disclosure. The Figures, and Detailed Description, which follow, more particularly exemplify some of these embodiments.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020] The disclosure may be more completely understood in consideration of the following detailed description in connection with the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0021] Figure 1 is a plan view of an example leadless pacing device implanted within a heart;

[0022] Figure 2 is a side view of an example implantable leadless cardiac pacing device;

[0023] Figure 3 is a cross-sectional view of the implantable leadless cardiac pacing device of Figure 2;

[0024] Figure 4 is a plan view of an example delivery device for an implantable leadless cardiac pacing device;

[0025] Figure 5 is a partial cross-sectional side view of the distal portion of the delivery device of Figure 4;

[0026] Figure 6 is a top view of the handle of the illustrative delivery device of Figure 4;

[0027] Figure 7 is a bottom view of the handle of the illustrative delivery device of Figure 4;

[0028] Figure 8 is a cross-section view of the handle of the illustrative delivery device of Figure 4 taken at line 8-8 in Figure 6;

[0029] Figure 9 is a perspective view of the handle of the illustrative delivery device of Figure 4 with portions removed;

[0030] Figures 10A-10E are schematic views illustrating the use of the illustrative delivery device to deploy an implantable leadless cardiac pacing device;

[0031] Figures 11A-11B are schematic views illustrating a telescoping feature of the illustrative delivery device;

[0032] Figure 12 is a schematic view of an illustrative delivery device;

[0033] Figure 13 is an end-view of the delivery device of Figure 12, illustrating an implantable device in the device containment housing;

[0034] Figures 14A-14C are schematic views of the distal portion of the delivery device of Figure 12;

[0035] Figures 15A-C are schematic views of the distal portion of the delivery device of Figure 12;

[0036] Figures 16A-C are schematic views showing the distal portion of the delivery device of Figure 12 contacting tissue;

[0037] Figure 17 is a schematic view of the distal portion of the delivery device of Figure 12;

[0038] Figure 18 is a schematic view of the distal portion of the delivery device of Figure 12;

[0039] Figure 19 is a schematic view of the distal portion of the delivery device of Figure 12; and

[0040] Figure 20 is a schematic view of the distal portion of the delivery device of Figure 12.

[0041] While the disclosure is amenable to various modifications and alternative forms, specifics thereof have been shown by way of example in the drawings and will be described in detail. It should be understood, however, that the intention is not to limit the disclosure to the particular embodiments described. On the contrary, the intention is to cover all modifications, equivalents, and alternatives falling within the spirit and scope of the disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0042] For the following defined terms, these definitions shall be applied, unless a different definition is given in the claims or elsewhere in this specification.

[0043] All numeric values are herein assumed to be modified by the term “about,” whether or not explicitly indicated. The term “about” generally refers to a range of numbers that one of skill in the art would consider equivalent to the recited value (i.e., having the same function or result). In many instances, the terms “about” may include numbers that are rounded to the nearest significant figure.

[0044] The recitation of numerical ranges by endpoints includes all numbers within that range (e.g. 1 to 5 includes 1, 1.5, 2, 2.75, 3, 3.80, 4, and 5).

[0045] As used in this specification and the appended claims, the singular forms “a”, “an”, and “the” include plural referents unless the content clearly dictates otherwise. As used in this specification and the appended claims, the term “or” is generally employed in its sense including “and/or” unless the content clearly dictates otherwise.

[0046] It is noted that references in the specification to “an embodiment”, “some embodiments”, “other embodiments”, etc., indicate that the embodiment described may include one or more particular features, structures, and/or characteristics. However, such recitations do not necessarily mean that all embodiments include the particular features, structures, and/or characteristics. Additionally, when particular features, structures, and/or characteristics are described in connection with one embodiment, it should be understood that such features, structures, and/or characteristics may also be used connection with other embodiments whether or not explicitly described unless clearly stated to the contrary.

[0047] The following detailed description should be read with reference to the drawings in which similar structures in different drawings are numbered the same. The drawings, which are not necessarily to scale, depict illustrative embodiments and are not intended to limit the scope of the disclosure.

[0048] Cardiac pacemakers provide electrical stimulation to heart tissue to cause the heart to contract and thus pump blood through the vascular system. Conventional pacemakers may include an electrical lead that extends from a pulse generator implanted subcutaneously or sub-muscularly to an electrode positioned adjacent the inside or outside wall of the cardiac chamber. As an alternative to conventional pacemakers, self-contained or leadless cardiac pacemakers have been proposed. Leadless cardiac pacemakers are small capsules that may, for example, be fixed to an intracardiac implant site in a cardiac chamber. In some cases, the small capsule may include bipolar pacing/sensing electrodes, a power source (e.g. a battery), and associated electrical circuitry for controlling the pacing/sensing electrodes, and thus may provide electrical stimulation to heart tissue and/or sense a physiological condition. The capsule may be delivered to the heart using a delivery device which may be advanced through a femoral vein, into the inferior vena cava, into the right atrium, through the tricuspid valve, and into the right ventricle. Accordingly, it may be desirable to provide delivery devices which facilitate advancement through the vasculature.

[0049] Figure 1 illustrates an example implantable leadless cardiac pacing device 10 (e.g., a leadless pacemaker) implanted in a chamber of a heart H, such as the right ventricle RV. A side view of the illustrative implantable medical device (IMD) 10 is shown in Figure 2 and a cross-sectional view of the illustrative IMD 10, taken at line 3-3 in Figure 2, is illustrated in Figure 3. The implantable device 10 may include a shell or housing 12 having a proximal end 14 and a distal end 16. In some instances, the IMD 10 may include a first electrode 20 positioned adjacent to the

distal end 16 of the housing 12 and a second electrode 22 positioned adjacent to the proximal end 14 of the housing 12. In some cases, the housing 12 may include a conductive material and may be insulated at least a portion of its length. A section along the proximal end 14 may be free of insulation so as to define the second electrode 22. The electrodes 20, 22 may be sensing and/or pacing electrodes to provide electro-therapy and/or sensing capabilities. The first electrode 20 may be configured to be positioned against the cardiac tissue of the heart H or may otherwise contact the cardiac tissue of the heart H while the second electrode 22 may be spaced away from the first electrode 20, and thus spaced away from the cardiac tissue.

[0050] The IMD 10 may include a pulse generator (e.g., electrical circuitry) and a power source (e.g., a battery) within the housing 12 to provide electrical signals to the electrodes 20, 22 and thus control the pacing/sensing electrodes 20, 22. In some cases, electrical communication between the pulse generator and the electrodes 20, 22 may provide electrical stimulation to heart tissue and/or sense a physiological condition.

[0051] The IMD 10 may include a fixation mechanism 24 proximate the distal end 16 of the housing 12 configured to attach the IMD 10 to a tissue wall of the heart H, or otherwise anchor the IMD 10 to the anatomy of the patient. As shown in Figure 1, in some instances, the fixation mechanism 24 may include one or more, or a plurality of hooks or tines 26 anchored into the cardiac tissue of the heart H to attach the IMD 10 to a tissue wall. In other cases, the fixation mechanism 24 may include one or more, or a plurality of passive tines, configured to entangle with trabeculae within the chamber of the heart H and/or a helical fixation anchor configured to be screwed into a tissue wall to anchor the IMD 10 to the heart H.

[0052] The IMD 10 may include a docking member 30 proximate the proximal end 14 of the housing 12 configured to facilitate delivery and/or retrieval of the IMD 10. For example, the docking member 30 may extend from the proximal end 14 of the housing 12 along a longitudinal axis of the housing 12. The docking member 30 may include a head portion 32 and a neck portion 34 extending between the housing 12 and the head portion 32. The head portion 32 may be an enlarged portion relative to the neck portion 34. For example, the head portion 32 may have a radial dimension from the longitudinal axis of the IMD 10 which is greater than a radial dimension of the neck portion 34 from the longitudinal axis of the IMD 10. The docking member 30 may further include a tether retention structure 36 extending from the head portion 32. The tether retention structure 36 may define an opening 38 configured to receive a tether or other anchoring

mechanism therethrough. While the retention structure 36 is shown as having a generally “U-shaped” configuration, the retention structure 36 may take any shape which provides an enclosed perimeter surrounding the opening 38 such that a tether may be securably and releasably passed (e.g. looped) through the opening 38. The retention structure 36 may extend though the head portion 32, along the neck portion 34, and to or into the proximal end 14 of the housing 12, as is shown more clearly in Figure 3. The docking member 30 may be configured to facilitate delivery of the IMD 10 to the intracardiac site and/or retrieval of the IMD 10 from the intracardiac site. Other docking members 30 are contemplated.

[0053] In some cases, the IMD 10 may be delivered to the heart H using a delivery device which may be advanced through a femoral vein, into the inferior vena cava, into the right atrium, through the tricuspid valve, and into the right ventricle. Accordingly, it will be appreciated that the delivery device may need to be navigated through relatively tortuous anatomy to deliver the IMD 10 to a suitable location. The target region for the delivery of the IMD 10 may be a portion of the right ventricle, for example, a portion of the right ventricle near the apex of the heart. The target region may also include other regions of the heart (e.g., right atrium, left atrium, or left ventricle), blood vessels, or other suitable targets. It may be desirable to provide the delivery system with certain features that may allow for easier or better control for navigation or delivery purposes.

[0054] Figure 4 is a plan view of an illustrative delivery device 100, such as a catheter, that may be used to deliver the IMD 10. The delivery device 100 may include an outer tubular member 102 having a proximal section 104 and a distal section 106. An intermediate tubular member 110 may be longitudinally slidably disposed within a lumen 150 of the outer tubular member 102 (see e.g. Figure 5). An inner tubular member 116 may be longitudinally slidably disposed within a lumen 152 of the intermediate tubular member 110 (see e.g. Figure 5). A distal holding section, or device containment housing 108 may be attached to a distal end portion 114 of the intermediate tubular member 110, as illustrated in Figure 5. The delivery device 100 may also include a handle assembly 120 positioned adjacent to the proximal section 104 of the outer tubular member 102. In some instances, the outer tubular member 102 may include at least a section thereof that has an outer diameter D2 that is less than the outer diameter D1 of at least a portion of the device containment housing 108 (see e.g. Figure 5).

[0055] The handle assembly 120 may include a first or distal hub portion 126 attached to, such as fixedly attached to, the proximal end section 104 of the outer tubular member 102, a second or intermediate hub portion 128 attached to, such as fixedly attached to, a proximal end section of the intermediate tubular member 110, and a third or proximal hub portion 130 attached to, such as fixedly attached to, a proximal end section of the inner tubular member 116 (see e.g. Figure 5). The first hub portion 126, second hub portion 128, and third hub portion 130 may be positioned in a generally telescoping arrangement and longitudinally slidable relative to each other. As will be discussed in more detail below, each of the first hub portion 126, the second hub portion 128, and the third hub portion 130 may be longitudinally slidable and rotatable relative to each other such that the outer tubular member 102, intermediate tubular member 110, and inner tubular member 116 may be individually actuated. In some instances, it may be desirable to move the outer tubular member 102, intermediate tubular member 110 and inner tubular member 116 simultaneously. The handle assembly 120 may include a multi-stage deployment mechanism or a first locking mechanism 134 to releasably couple the second hub portion 128 to the third hub portion 130 to prevent relative longitudinal movement therebetween, and thus prevent relative longitudinal movement between the intermediate tubular member 110 and the inner tubular member 116, as will be discussed in more detail below. The handle assembly 120 may also include a second locking mechanism 132 to releasably couple the first hub portion 126 to the second hub portion 128 to prevent relative longitudinal movement therebetween, and thus prevent relative longitudinal movement between the outer tubular member 102 and the intermediate tubular member 110, as will be discussed in more detail below.

[0056] The device containment housing 108 may be configured to receive the IMD 10 therein. For example, referring to Figure 5, which illustrates a cross-sectional view of a distal portion of the delivery device 100, the device containment housing 108 may define a cavity 142 for slidably receiving the IMD 10, and may include a distal opening 144 for slidable insertion and/or extraction of the IMD 10 into and/or out of the cavity 142. The device containment housing 108 may include a body portion 138 and a distal tip portion 140 that may be, for example, configured to be atraumatic to anatomy, such as a bumper tip. For example, as the catheter is navigated through the anatomy, the distal tip may come into contact with anatomy. Additionally, when the catheter is used to deliver the implantable device 10, the tip 140 of the delivery device 100 will likely come into contact with tissue adjacent the target site (e.g. cardiac tissue of the heart). In some cases, as

will be discussed with respect to subsequent Figures, the device containment housing 108 or the outer tubular member 102 proximate the device containment housing 108 may be configured to provide, for example, an indication of the force being applied to the distal tip portion 140 by virtue of the distal tip portion 140 being urged into contact with tissue such as a wall of the heart H.

[0057] In some cases, a hard distal tip formed of the material of the outer tubular member 102 and/or intermediate tubular member 110 may injure a vessel wall or cardiac tissue. As such, it may be desirable to provide the delivery device 100 with a softer distal tip 140 that can be introduced into the anatomy and come into contact with anatomy adjacent the target site without causing unnecessary trauma. In some cases, the distal tip 140 may be made of a material that is softer than the body portion 138 of the device containment housing 108. In some cases, the distal tip 140 may include a material that has a durometer that is less than the durometer of the material of the body portion 138. In some particular embodiments, the durometer of the material used in the distal tip 140 may be in the range of about 5 D to about 70 D, or for example, in the range of about 25 D to about 65 D. Additionally, the distal tip 140 may include a shape or structure that may make it less traumatic to tissue. For example, the distal tip 140 may have a distal surface, such as a tissue contacting surface, that is that is rounded or includes a curvature configured to be more atraumatic to tissue.

[0058] In some instances, all or a portion of the device containment housing 108 may include an inner surface that may be configured to resist getting caught on the fixation mechanism 24, such as the one or more, or a plurality of hooks or tines 26 on the implantable device 10. For example, the device containment housing 108 may include an inner layer or coating of harder or more lubricious material that resists force applied by the fixation mechanism 24 onto the inner surface of the device containment housing 108. For example, the device containment housing 108 may include a multi-layered structure, and an inner layer may be made of a material that is harder than an outer layer.

[0059] The inner tubular member 116 may be disposed (e.g., slidably disposed) within a lumen 152 of the intermediate tubular member 110. The inner tubular member 116 may be engaged by a user near or at the third hub portion 130, and extend through a lumen 152 of the intermediate tubular member 110 and into the device containment housing 108. A distal portion 118 of the inner tubular member 116 may be capable of engaging the IMD 10, and the inner tubular member 116 may be used to “push” the IMD 10 out from device containment housing 108 so as

to deploy and anchor the IMD 10 within a target region (e.g., a region of the heart such as the right ventricle). The inner tubular member 116 may have a lumen 154 extending from the proximal end 117 to a distal portion 118 thereof. A tether 112 or other retaining feature may be used to releasably secure the IMD 10 to the delivery device 100. In some instances, the tether 112 may be a single or unitary length of material that may extend from a proximal end 117 of the lumen 154, out through the distal portion 118, through the opening 38 of the IMD 10 and return to the proximal end 117 of the inner tubular member 116 through the lumen 154 such that both ends of the tether 112 are positioned adjacent to the third hub portion 130. In some instances, as will be discussed in more detail below, the ends of the tether 112 may be secured within a locking feature in the third hub portion 130.

[0060] In order to more specifically place or steer the delivery device 100 to a position adjacent to the intended target, the delivery device 100 may be configured to be deflectable or articulable or steerable. Referring to Figure 4, for example, the outer tubular member 102 and/or intermediate tubular member 110 may include one or more articulation or deflection mechanism(s) that may allow for the delivery device 100, or portions thereof, to be deflected, articulated, steered and/or controlled in a desired manner. For example, the outer tubular member 102 may include at least a portion thereof that can be selectively bent and/or deflected in a desired or predetermined direction. This may, for example, allow a user to orient the delivery device 100 such that the device containment housing 108 is in a desirable position or orientation for navigation or delivery of the IMD 10 to a target location. The outer tubular member 102 may be deflected, for example, along a deflection region.

[0061] A wide variety of deflection mechanisms may be used. In some example embodiments, deflection may be effected by one or more actuation members, such as pull wire(s) extending between a distal portion of the outer tubular member 102 and an actuation mechanism 122 near the proximal end of the outer tubular member 102. As such, the one or more pull wires may extend both proximally and distally of the desired deflection or bending region or point. This allows a user to actuate (e.g., “pull”) one or more of the pull wires to apply a compression and/or deflection force to at least a portion of the outer tubular member 102 and thereby deflect or bend the outer tubular member 102 in a desired manner. In addition, in some cases the one or more wires may be stiff enough so that they can also be used to provide a pushing and/or tensioning

force on the outer tubular member 102, for example, to “push” or “straighten” the shaft into a desired position or orientation.

[0062] In some embodiments, the actuation member takes the form of a continuous wire that is looped through or otherwise coupled to a distal end region of the outer tubular member 102 so as to define a pair of wire sections. Other embodiments are contemplated, however, including embodiments where the actuation member includes one or a plurality of individual wires that are attached, for example, to a metal or metal alloy ring adjacent the distal end region of the outer tubular member 102.

[0063] The actuation mechanism 122 may include a desired mechanism that may allow for applying tension (i.e. pulling force), or compression (i.e. pushing force), or both, on the actuation member(s). In some embodiments, the actuation mechanism 122 may include an external rotatable member 124 connected to and rotatable about the longitudinal axis of the handle assembly 120. The rotatable member 124 may threadingly engage an internal member that is attached to the proximal end of the actuation member(s) or pull wires. When the external rotatable member 124 is rotated in a first rotational direction, the internal member translates in a first longitudinal direction, thereby applying tension to the pull wire(s), which applies compression force to the shaft, so as to deflect the outer tubular member 102 from an initial position to a deflected position. When the external rotatable member 124 is rotated in a second rotational direction, the internal member translates in a second longitudinal direction, thereby reducing and/or releasing the tension on the pull wire(s), and allowing the outer tubular member 102 to relax back toward the initial position. Additionally, in some cases, as mentioned above, where the one or more wires may be stiff enough, rotation of the rotatable member 124 in the second rotational direction such that the internal member translates in a second longitudinal direction may apply compression to the wire(s), such that the wire(s) may apply tension to the outer tubular member 102 and “push” the outer tubular member 102 back toward an initial position, and possibly into additional positions beyond the initial position.

[0064] The one or more articulation and/or deflection mechanism(s) may also entail the outer tubular member 102 including structure and/or material that may provide for the desired degree and/or location of the deflection when the compressive or tensile forces are applied. For example, the outer tubular member 102 may include one or more sections that include structure and/or material configured to allow the shaft to bend and/or deflect in a certain way when a certain

predetermined compressive and/or tensile force is applied. For example, the shaft may include one or more sections that are more flexible than other sections, thereby defining a bending or articulating region or location. Some such regions may include a number of varying or changing flexibility characteristics that may define certain bending shapes when predetermined forces are applied. Such characteristics may be achieved through the selection of materials or structure for different sections of the outer tubular member 102.

[0065] In other embodiments, other articulation and/or deflection mechanism(s) are contemplated. For example, all or a portion of the delivery device 100, such as the outer tubular member 102, may be made of a shape memory material, such as a shape memory polymer and/or a shape memory metal. Such materials, when stimulated by an actuation mechanism, such as a change in temperature or the application of an electrical current, may change or move from a first shape to a second shape. As such, these material and mechanism may be used to deflect or bend the outer tubular member 102 in a desired manner. Other suitable deflection mechanism(s) that are able to deflect the delivery device 100 may also be used. Such alternative mechanisms may be applied to all other embodiments shown and/or discussed herein, and others, as appropriate.

[0066] Furthermore, the outer tubular member 102 may include one or more predefined or fixed curved portion(s) along the length thereof. In some cases, such curved sections may be configured to fit with particular anatomies or be configured for better navigation or delivery of the IMD 10. Additionally, or alternatively, some such curved sections may be configured to allow the outer tubular member 102 to be predisposed to be bent and/or deflected in a certain direction or configuration when compression and/or tension forces are applied thereto. In some cases, the outer tubular member 102 may be a laser cut metallic tubing, a braid reinforced polymeric tubing, or other flexible tubular structure as desired.

[0067] Returning again to Figure 5, the device containment housing 108 may be affixed to a distal end portion 114 of the intermediate tubular member 110. The device containment housing 108 may include a hub portion 136 and a tubular body portion 138. In some instances, the hub portion 136 may be formed from a metal or metal alloy while the body portion 138 may be formed from a polymeric material, although this is not required. In some instances, a proximal region 143 of the body portion 138 may be heat bonded to a distal end portion 137 of the hub portion 136, or otherwise affixed. The hub portion 136 may include a tapered intermediate region 145 disposed between a proximal end portion 139 and the distal end portion 137.

[0068] In some cases, the outer tubular member 102 may include a metal ring or tip adjacent the distal end 103 thereof for attaching one or more pull wires thereto. In some cases, the outer tubular member 102 may further include a lubricious liner, such as, but not limited to a polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) liner. The proximal end portion 139 of the hub portion 136 may extend proximally into the lumen 150 of the outer tubular member 102. In some instances, an outer surface of the proximal end portion 139 may form an interference fit with an inner surface of the outer tubular member 102. In some cases, the outer surface of the proximal end portion 139 and the inner surface of the outer tubular member 102 may be coupled in a tapered engagement. For example, the distal end 103 of the outer tubular member 102 may flare radially outwards in the distal direction and/or the proximal end portion 139 may taper radially inward in the proximal direction. The two angled surfaces may engage as the proximal end portion 139 is proximally retracted within the outer tubular member 102. Other coupling arrangements may be used as desired.

[0069] In some cases, as the outer tubular member 102 is bent to navigate the IMD 10 to the desired location, the proximal end portion 139 may advance distally and disengage from the inner surface of the outer tubular member 102 creating a kink point or weakened region adjacent to the bonding region 146. Proximally retracting the intermediate tubular member 110 to bring the intermediate region 145 into contact with the outer tubular member 102 at contact point 148 and/or bringing the proximal end portion 139 into the outer tubular member 102 and fixing the intermediate tubular member 110 in this configuration may help prevent migration of the device containment housing 108 during navigation of the delivery device 100 to the desired location. Such a configuration may also place the intermediate tubular member 110 in tension while the device containment housing 108 applies a compression force on the outer tubular member 102, as will be discussed in more detail below. As discussed above, a locking mechanism 132 in the handle assembly 120 may be utilized to releasably maintain the outer tubular member 102 and the intermediate tubular member 110 in a desired orientation.

[0070] Figure 6 illustrates a top view of the handle assembly 120 of the delivery device 100. Figure 7 illustrates a bottom view of the handle assembly, approximately 180° from the view shown in Figure 6. The handle assembly 120 may include one or more ports 158, 160, 162 for delivering fluids, such as, but not limited to, a contrast and/or flushing fluid to the cavity 142 of the device containment housing 108. The flush ports 158, 160, 162 may be in fluid communication

with the lumens 150, 152, 154 of the outer, intermediate or inner tubular members 102, 110, 116, as desired. For example, the flush port 158 may be in fluid communication with the lumen 150 of the outer tubular member 102, the flush port 160 may be in fluid communication with the lumen 152 of the intermediate tubular member 110, and the flush port 162 may be in fluid communication with the lumen 154 of the inner tubular member 116.

[0071] The handle assembly 120 may further include a tether lock 164. The tether lock 164 may be actuatable between a locked and an unlocked configuration to maintain the tether 112 in a desired orientation. The ends of the tether 112 may be affixed to, secured to, or otherwise engage a tether cap 166 positioned at a proximal end of the third hub portion 130. The tether cap 166 may be removably secured to the third hub portion 130 to allow a clinician access to the ends of the tether 112. When the tether lock 164 is in the locked configuration, the tether cap 166 may not be removed from the third hub portion 130. When the tether lock 164 is in the unlocked configuration, the tether cap 166 may be removed and the ends of the tether 112 may be actuated. For example, once the IMD 10 has been implanted and its location verified, the tether 112 may be removed from the tether retention feature 36 of the IMD 10 by pulling on one of the ends until the opposite end has passed through the opening 38 such that the IMD 10 is free from the tether 112.

[0072] In some instances, the handle assembly 120 may also include visual markings, such as, but not limited to the markings illustrated at 170, 172, 174. These markings 170, 172, 174 may provide visual instructions or indications to the clinician. For example, the marking shown at 170 may be positioned proximate the rotatable member 124 of the actuation mechanism 122 to indicate that the rotatable member 124 controls deflection of the outer tubular member 102 and/or to indicate which direction the distal section 106 will deflect when the rotatable member 124 of the actuation mechanism 122 is rotated in a given direction. The markings shown at 172 may provide an indication of whether the second locking mechanism 132 is in the unlocked and/or locked configuration. Similarly, the markings shown at 174 may provide an indication of whether the tether lock 164 is in the unlocked and/or locked configuration.

[0073] Figure 8 illustrates a cross-sectional view of the handle assembly 120 of the delivery device. As discussed above, the handle assembly 120 may include a first hub portion 126 attached to the proximal end section 104 of the outer tubular member 102, a second hub portion 128 attached to a proximal end section of the intermediate tubular member 110, and a third hub portion 130 attached to a proximal end section of the inner tubular member 116. Each of the first hub portion

126, the second hub portion 128, and the third hub portion 130 may be slidable and rotatable relative to each other such that the outer tubular member 102, intermediate tubular member 110, and inner tubular member 116 may be individually longitudinally actuated.

[0074] The inner tubular member 116 may extend distally from a proximal end 117. The proximal end 117 of the inner tubular member 116 may be positioned within or adjacent to the tether lock 164. The tether lock 164 may include a port 162 which may be in fluid communication with a lumen 154 of the inner tubular member 116. The lumen 154 may extend from the proximal end 117 to the distal portion 118 for delivering fluids, such as, but not limited to, a contrast and/or flushing fluid to the cavity 142 of the device containment housing 108. In some instances, the inner tubular member 116 may be coupled or affixed to the third hub portion 130 adjacent the proximal end 117 of the inner tubular member 116, although this is not required. In some cases, the inner tubular member 116 may be affixed to the third hub portion 130 at any longitudinal location desired. In some instances, a tether, such as tether 112, for securing the IMD 10 to the distal portion 118 of the inner tubular member 116 may be disposed within the lumen 154 and may exit the delivery device 100 through or adjacent to tether cap 166, although this is not required.

[0075] The intermediate tubular member 110 may extend distally from a proximal end 111. The proximal end 111 of the intermediate tubular member 110 may be positioned within the second hub portion 128. The intermediate tubular member 110 may include a lumen 152 extending from the proximal end 111 to a distal end of the intermediate tubular member 110. The inner tubular member 116 may be slidably disposed within the lumen 152 of the intermediate tubular member 110. In some instances, the intermediate tubular member 110 may be coupled or affixed to the second hub portion 128 adjacent the proximal end 111 of the intermediate tubular member 110, although this is not required. In some cases, the intermediate tubular member 110 may be affixed to the second hub portion 128 at any longitudinal location desired.

[0076] The outer tubular member 102 may extend distally from a proximal end 105. The proximal end 105 of the outer tubular member 102 may be positioned within the first hub portion 126. The outer tubular member 102 may include a lumen 150 extending from the proximal end 105 to a distal end 103 of the outer tubular member 102. The intermediate tubular member 110 may be longitudinally slidably disposed within the lumen 150 of the outer tubular member 102. In some instances, the outer tubular member 102 may be coupled or affixed to the first hub portion 126 adjacent the proximal end 105 of the outer tubular member 102, although this is not required.

In some cases, the outer tubular member 102 may be affixed to the first hub portion 126 at any longitudinal location desired.

[0077] In some instances, the first hub portion 126 may include a retaining ring 182 positioned adjacent to a proximal end of the first hub portion 126. In some instances, the retaining ring 182 may be rotatable about a longitudinal axis of the handle assembly 120. In some cases, the retaining ring 182 may include locking features configured to engage with other locking features of the locking mechanism 132. When the retaining ring 182 engages other features of the locking mechanism 132, longitudinal movement of the first hub portion 126 and the second hub portion 128 relative to one another may be prevented. Rotating the retaining ring 182 may disengage the retaining ring 182 from the other features of the locking mechanism 132. This may allow for longitudinal movement of the first hub portion 126 and the second hub portion 128 relative to one another, as will be described in more detail below. While the second locking mechanism 132 is described as a rotating retaining ring 182, other locking mechanisms capable of releasably securing first hub portion 126 and the second hub portion 128, and thus the outer tubular member 102 and the intermediate tubular member 110, may be used.

[0078] In some instances, the first locking mechanism 134 may include a depressible button 131. The depressible button 131 may include a first outwardly protruding portion 133 configured to engage a region of the third hub portion 130 and a second inwardly protruding portion 135 configured to engage a region of the second hub portion 128. For example, the second protruding portion 135 may be disposed in and engage a groove or recess 178 formed in the second hub portion 128. The engagement of the first locking mechanism 134 may prevent or reduce relative movement of the second hub portion 128 and the third hub portion 130 when the first locking mechanism 134 is not actively actuated (e.g. depressed) by a clinician. A downward force 186 may be applied to the button 131. The force 186 may cause the first protruding portion 133 to lower and/or disengage from a surface of the third hub portion 130 and the second protruding portion 135 to raise and/or disengage from a surface of the second hub portion 128. This may allow the third hub portion 130 to be moved longitudinally (e.g., proximally and/or distally), as shown at 184, along a longitudinal axis of the handle assembly 120 relative to the second hub portion 128, as will be discussed in more detail below. Longitudinal actuation of the third hub portion 130 relative to the second hub portion 128 may result in a corresponding longitudinal actuation of the inner tubular member (and hence the IMD 10) relative to the intermediate tubular

member 110 and the device containment housing 108. Such actuation may be used to incrementally deploy the IMD 10. Figure 8 illustrates the second protruding portion 135 disposed in the middle of the recess 178. However, in some cases, during advancement of the delivery device 100 to the desired treatment location, the second protruding portion 135 may be positioned at the proximal end of the recess 178 to ensure the IMD 10 is fully disposed in the device containment housing 108. This is just an example. While the first locking mechanism 134 is described as a depressible button 131, in some cases other locking mechanisms capable of releasably securing the second hub portion 128 and the third hub portion 130, and thus the intermediate tubular member 110 and the inner tubular member 116, may be used.

[0079] Figure 9 illustrates a partial perspective view of the handle assembly 120 with portions of the third hub portion 130 removed to more clearly illustrate features of the second hub portion 128. A proximal portion 127 of the second hub portion 128 may include a groove or recess 178 formed therein. The groove 178 may extend from a proximal end 179 to a distal end 181. In some embodiments, groove 178 may include a proximal portion 177 and a distal portion 183 which may be circumferentially offset from one another. A hard stop 180 may be provided at a region between the proximal end 179 and the distal end 181. The hard stop 180 may be a wall or other protrusion configured to engage the second protruding portion 135 of the first locking mechanism 134 such that in order to advance the second protruding portion 135 distally past the hard stop 180 from the proximal portion 177, the user rotates the third hub portion 130 to align the second protruding portion 135 with the distal portion 183 of the groove 178. This may allow the implantable device 10 to be incrementally deployed. During advancement of the delivery device 100 through the vasculature, the second protruding portion 135 may be disposed within the proximal portion 177 adjacent to the proximal end 179. As discussed above, the second protruding portion 135 may engage a surface of the second hub portion 128 to prevent and/or minimize relative movement of the second and third hub portions 128, 130 relative to one another.

[0080] The groove 178 may also include an angled region 198 between the proximal portion 177 and the distal portion 183 positioned generally opposite the hard stop 180. When the third hub portion 130 is proximally retracted from the distal end 181 to the proximal end 179, the angled region 198 may guide the second protruding portion 135 from the distal portion 183 of the groove 178 to the proximal portion 177 of the groove in a single fluid movement. For example, the third hub portion 130 may be proximally retracted from the distal end 181 to the proximal end 179

relative to the second hub portion 128 in a single proximal movement, if so desired, without prohibiting travel of the second protruding portion 135 from the distal portion 183 to the proximal portion 177.

[0081] A distal portion 129 of the second hub portion 128 may include a groove or recess 188 configured to receive a mating feature disposed on the first hub portion 126. This may allow the first hub portion 126 to be proximally retracted over the second hub portion 128, as will be discussed in more detail below. The proximal and distal portions 127, 129 of the second hub portion 128 may be separated by a gripping region 176 configured to provide a region for the clinician to hold.

[0082] Referring now to Figures 10A-10E, a method for deploying an IMD 10 using the illustrative delivery device 100 will now be described. The delivery device 100 may be introduced into the vasculature through the femoral vein through a previously introduced guide catheter. This is just an example. The delivery device 100 may be introduced through any desired location and with or without the use of a guide catheter as desired. The delivery device 100 may be advanced through the vasculature to the desired treatment location, which, in the case of a leadless cardiac pacing device, may be a chamber of the heart. The clinician may use the actuation mechanism 122 may to deflect the distal section 106 of the outer tubular member 102 in a desired manner to facilitate advancement of the delivery device 100. During advancement of the delivery device 100, the handle assembly 120 may be in a fully extended configuration, as shown in Figure 10A. In such a configuration, the third hub portion 130 may be at its proximal-most location relative to the second hub portion 128 and the first hub portion 126 may be at its distal-most location relative to the second hub portion 128. When the handle assembly 120 is in its fully extending configuration, the inner tubular member 116, intermediate tubular member 110, and the outer tubular member 102 may be oriented in the manner illustrated in Figure 5. The delivery device 100 can be imaged using known techniques to ensure accurate placement of the IMD 10.

[0083] Once the distal tip portion 140 of the device containment housing 108 has been positioned adjacent to the cardiac tissue where the IMD 10 is desired, deployment of the IMD 10 can begin. The first stage of deploying the IMD 10 may enable activation of the fixation mechanism 24. To initiate the first stage of deployment, the clinician may stabilize the first hub portion 126 relative to the patient and depress the button 131 of the first locking mechanism 134. The clinician may then slide the third hub portion 130 distally, as shown at 190, until the first

locking mechanism 134 engages the hard stop 180 provided in the second hub portion 128 resulting in the handle assembly 120 configuration shown in Figure 10B. Distal actuation of the third hub portion 130 may also move the inner tubular member 116 distally by the same distance. As the inner tubular member 116 advances distally, the distal portion 118 may “push” against the proximal end 14 of the implantable device 10. As the IMD 10 is pushed distally, the hooks 26 engage the heart tissue as shown in Figure 10C. The IMD 10 may be distally advanced out of the device containment housing 108 to deploy the hooks or tines 26 from the device containment housing 108 to engage the hooks or tines 26 in the heart tissue while the proximal portion of the IMD 10 remains within the device containment housing 108. In some instances, the IMD 10 may be advanced distally in the range of 1 to 5 millimeters, although this is merely illustrative. This may allow the IMD 10 to be deployed while minimizing the amount of pressure applied to the heart wall. Further, the first locking mechanism 134 may prevent accidental or unintentional deployment of the IMD 10 as the button 131 must be actuated while advancing the third hub portion 130.

[0084] Referring briefly to Figures 11A and 11B, in some instances, it may be desirable to advance the device containment housing 108 and the intermediate tubular member 110 without advancing the outer tubular member 102 (i.e., telescoping the intermediate tubular member 110). For example, this may facilitate advancement of the delivery device 100 within the heart or maintain the position of the device containment housing 108 once it is placed against the heart wall. To distally advance or telescope the intermediate tubular member 110 relative to the outer tubular member 102, the second locking mechanism 132 may be actuated to “unlock” the first hub portion 126 and the second hub portion 128. As described above, a rotating retaining ring 182 may be rotated, as shown at 194, to move the second locking mechanism 132 from a locked to an unlocked configuration. Once the first locking mechanism has been unlocked, the clinician may distally advance 196 the second and third hub portions 128, 130 together to distally advance the device containment housing 108 as far as desired and/or needed. The actuation of the second and third hub portions 128, 130 may simultaneously move the intermediate tubular member 110 and the inner tubular member 116 as well. This may be done during advancement of the delivery device 100 through the vasculature, before initiating the first stage of deploying the IMD 10, and/or after the first stage of deploying the IMD 10 has been completed, as desired or needed.

[0085] After the first stage of deployment of the IMD 10, in which the tines or hooks 26 have been deployed from the device containment housing 108 into engagement with the heart wall, the tether 112 may be used to perform a tug test to determine if the IMD 10 is sufficiently engaged with the heart wall. In other words, the fixation of the IMD 10 (e.g. how well the hooks 26 are secured to the heart tissue) may be tested by gently tugging on the ends of the tether 112. If it is determined that the IMD 10 is sufficiently engaged with the heart wall, then the user may proceed to the second stage of deployment of the IMD 10 in which the remainder of the IMD 10 is expelled from the device containment housing 108. Otherwise, if the tug test fails and it is determined that the IMD 10 is not sufficiently engaged with the heart wall, the user may use the tether to pull (retract) the IMD 10, including the tines or hooks 26, back into the device containment housing 108 to release the implantable device 10 from the heart wall. The IMD 10 may then be repositioned and the first stage of deployment repeated.

[0086] Returning to Figure 10B, the second stage of deploying the IMD 10 may proximally retract the device containment housing 108, and thus the intermediate tubular member 110, relative to the inner tubular member 116 to fully deploy the IMD 10. Once the clinician has determined that the position of the IMD 10 is satisfactory and the fixation mechanism 24 is securely engaged with the heart tissue, the intermediate tubular member 110, including the device containment housing 108, of the delivery device 100 can be proximally retracted. To initiate the second stage of the deployment, the clinician may first rotate the third hub portion 130, as shown at 192, such that the button 131 is aligned with the distal portion 183 of the groove 178. The clinician may then stabilize the third hub portion 130 relative to the patient and proximally retract the first and second hub portions 126, 128. It should be noted that while it is possible to distally actuate the third hub portion 130 at this point, this may cause additional and unnecessary forces to be applied to the heart wall. Further, such distal movement of the third hub portion 130 may move the inner tubular member 116 (and hence the implantable device 10) distally rather than proximally retracting the intermediate tubular member 110 and/or the outer tubular member 102. The first and second hub portions 126, 128 may be proximally retracted until the first locking mechanism 134 engages the distal end 181 of the groove 178, resulting in the handle assembly 120 configuration shown in Figure 10D. Such actuation of the first and second hub portions 126, 128 may fully deploy the implantable device 10 such that the IMD 10 is exterior of the device containment housing 108 and engaged with the heart wall, as shown in Figure 10E.

[0087] As can be seen in Figure 10E, the IMD 10 may still be affixed to the delivery device 100 through the tether 112. Once the clinician has verified the position of the IMD 10, the fixation of the IMD 10 and/or the electrical performance of the IMD 10, the tether 112 may be removed. In some instances, fixation of the IMD 10 (e.g. how well the hooks 26 are secured to the heart tissue) may be tested by gently tugging on the ends of the tether 112. The tether 112 may be removed by unlocking the tether lock 164, removing the tether cap 166, cutting the tether 112 at some location along its length, and pulling on one of the ends until the opposite end has passed through the opening 38 of the IMD 10 such that the IMD 10 is free from the tether 112. In some instances, the tether 112 may be affixed to a portion of the tether cap 166 (e.g. creating a loop) such that the tether 112 must be cut to allow the IMD 10 to be freed from the tether 112.

[0088] In using the delivery device 100 to deliver the IMD 10, it may be beneficial to be able to verify that the distal end of the delivery device 100 is in adequate contact with the tissue prior to deploying the IMD 10. It will be appreciated that if there is not sufficient tissue contact, fixation of the IMD 10 may be negatively impacted. Further, in some cases application of excessive force may cause the distal end of the delivery device 100 to damage or even perforate the tissue against which the delivery device 100 is engaged. Figure 12 provides a schematic illustration of a delivery and deployment device 200 which may, as will be appreciated, be considered as an example of the delivery device 100.

[0089] In broadest terms, as illustrated in Figure 12, the delivery and deployment device 200 includes a device containment housing 202 that is located at a distal end 204 of a shaft 206. A handle assembly 208 may be located at a proximal end 210 of the shaft 206. In some cases, the device containment housing 202 may be considered as representing the device containment housing 108 discussed with respect to the previous Figures. In some cases, the shaft 206 may be considered as representing the outer tubular member 102 discussed above and may include one or more inner tubular members (not visible in this schematic view). In some instances, the handle assembly 208 may be considered as representing and/or including one or more of the distal hub portion 126, the intermediate hub portion 128 and the proximal hub portion 130. The device containment housing 202 has a distal end 212 and a proximal end 214. In some cases, the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202 may be open, and the device containment housing 202 may define a void 216 therein that may be configured to accommodate an implantable medical device (such as but not limited to the IMD 10).

[0090] In some cases, the device containment housing 202 includes a first position indicator 218 that is located at or near the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202. In some cases, the device containment housing 202 includes a second position indicator 220 that is located proximally of the first position indicator 218. In some embodiments, a compressible region 222 may be located at least partially between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220. In some instances, the compressible region 222 may be entirely located between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220. In some cases, the compressible region 222 may not be entirely located between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220 and may, for example, extend proximally beyond the second position indicator 220. When a force having an axial component is applied to the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202, such as when the device containment housing 202 contacts cardiac or other tissue, the compressible region 222 may compress by an amount that is proportional or otherwise related to the applied force. As a result of the compression, a distance between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220 may change. The amount that the distance between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220 changes may be proportional or otherwise related to the applied force.

[0091] In some cases, the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220 may be configured to be visible via an imaging process such as fluoroscopy, particularly as in some cases implantable devices such as the IMD 10 may be guided to the intended destination under fluoroscopy. For example, in some cases, the first position indicator 218 may be a first radiopaque marker band and the second position indicator 220 may be a second radiopaque marker band. By watching a distance between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220 change during deployment, the person advancing the delivery and deployment device 200 may be able to determine if they are applying sufficient force while not applying excessive force.

[0092] In some instances, the first position indicator 218 may be a first electrode and the second position indicator 220 may be a second electrode. In some cases, the first position indicator 218 and/or the second position indicator 220 may each independently be ring electrodes. It will be appreciated that as the distance between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220 changes, an impedance value between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator may change. Accordingly, the changing impedance value may be used to

ascertain how much force has been applied to the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202. In some cases, the device containment housing 202 may include a third electrode 224. While the third electrode 224 is schematically illustrated as being located at the proximal end 214 of the device containment housing 202, it will be appreciated that in some cases the third electrode 224 may be located elsewhere on the device containment housing 202, be located on the shaft 206, or be absent. In some cases, when the a sufficient amount of force is applied, a first audible and/or tactile feedback may be provided to the user, and if too much force is applied, a second audible and/or tactile feedback may be provided to the user.

[0093] In some cases, the first position indicator 218 may not be a single electrode such as a ring electrode, but may instead be a plurality of electrodes. Figure 13 is a schematic end view looking from the distal end and into the device containment housing 202. Figure 13 shows an implantable medical device (IMD) 230 disposed within the void 216 defined by the device containment housing 202. The IMD 230 may, for example, be considered as being representative of the IMD 10. As illustrated, the example IMD 230 includes a total of four anchoring talons 232, 234, 236 and 238, although in some cases the IMD 230 may have more than four anchoring talons or in some instances may have fewer than four anchoring talons, or may have a different fixation mechanism altogether.

[0094] In some cases, the device containment housing 202 may include a first electrode 240 that may be at least substantially aligned with the anchoring talon 232, a second electrode 242 that may be at least substantially aligned with the anchoring talon 234, a third electrode 244 that may be at least substantially aligned with the anchoring talon 236, and/or a fourth electrode 246 that may be at least substantially aligned with the anchoring talon 238. It will be appreciated that one or more of the electrodes 240, 242, 244, 246 may be used as the first position indicator 218, in combination with another electrode functioning as the second position indicator 220, to provide an indication of the force being applied to the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202 as a result of the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202 contacting tissue such as cardiac tissue.

[0095] It will be appreciated that in many cases, tissue such as cardiac tissue does not present a simple, planar surface. It may be useful to be able to determine which portion or portions of the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202 may be in good tissue contact as this may provide an indication of how well one or more individual talons 232, 234, 236 and 238 may fixate

within the tissue. As the talons 232, 234, 236 and 238 exit the device containment housing during deployment, it can be desirable to have the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202 at each of the talons in contact with the cardiac tissue so that each of the talons 232, 234, 236 and 238 advance into the cardiac tissue (see Figure 5) before curling back to fix the IMD to the heart (see Figure 10C).

[0096] In some cases, the electrodes 240, 242, 244, 246 may individually be utilized, sometimes in combination with another electrode such as the electrode forming the second position indicator 220 or perhaps the third electrode 224, to determine if the aforementioned electrode 240, 242, 244, 246 is in contact with tissue, which may give an indication of whether the corresponding talon 232, 234, 236, 238 might be well-positioned to engage tissue when the IMD 230 is subsequently deployed. If not, a different location may be investigated, or the device containment housing 202 may be rotated before checking again. It is best to have all four talons 232, 234, 236, 238 properly engage tissue.

[0097] Figures 14A-14C provide a closer view of the illustrative device containment housing 202. Figure 14A represents a starting point with respect to the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220, such as may occur prior to the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202 contacting tissue such as cardiac tissue. In Figure 14A, there is a distance 250 between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220. Moving to Figure 14B, there is a distance 252 between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220. In some cases, there may, for example, be a linear relationship between a force applied to the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 108, which may provide an easily recognized relationship between the applied force and the corresponding change in distance between the distance 250 and the distance 252. In some cases, there may be a non-linear relationship between applied force and a change in distance between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220. In such cases, there may be a calibration step during manufacturing, for example, to determine the non-linear relationship.

[0098] It will be appreciated that the distance 252 is less than the distance 250 and the distance 252 is greater than zero. In some cases, the distance 252 may, for example, correspond to a desired compression of the compressible region 222, thereby indicating an appropriate amount of force being applied by virtue of the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202 contacting tissue such as cardiac tissue. Figure 14C illustrates what may happen if too much force has been

applied. In Figure 14C, the second position indicator 220 has moved much closer to the first position indicator 218 and may actually be in contact with the first position indicator 218 and/or the compressible region 222 has reached its fully compressed state. In the example of Figure 14C, there is no visible distance between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220. It is contemplated that the compressible region 222 may be designed such that when the second position indicator 220 is in the intermediate state shown in Figure 14B, an adequate yet safe force is being applied by the device containment housing to the contacting tissue.

[0099] In some embodiments, the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220 may not be disposed on the device containment housing 202, as shown in Figures 14A-C, but may instead be located on the shaft 206, at or near the distal end 204 of the shaft 206. Figures 15A-15C illustrate a changing distance between a first position indicator 318 and the second position indicator 320 when both are disposed on the shaft 206. Figure 15A represents a starting point with respect to the first position indicator 318 and the second position indicator 320, such as may occur prior to the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202 contacting tissue such as cardiac tissue. In Figure 15A, there is a distance 350 between the first position indicator 318 and the second position indicator 320. Moving to Figure 15B, there is a distance 352 between the first position indicator 318 and the second position indicator 320. It will be appreciated that the distance 352 is less than the distance 350 and the distance 352 is greater than zero. In some cases, the distance 352 may, for example, correspond to a desired compression of the compressible region 322, thereby indicating an appropriate amount of force being applied by virtue of the distal end 212 of the device containment housing 202 contacting tissue such as cardiac tissue. Figure 15C illustrates what may happen if too much force has been applied. In Figure 15C, the second position indicator 320 has moved much closer to the first position indicator 318 and may actually be in contact with the first position indicator 318 and/or the compressible region 322 has reached its fully compressed state. In Figure 15C, there is no visible distance between the first position indicator 318 and the second position indicator 320. It is contemplated that the compressible region 322 may be designed such that when the second position indicator 320 is in the intermediate state shown in Figure 15B, an adequate yet safe force is being applied by the device containment housing to the contacting tissue.

[0100] It will be appreciated that there are multiple ways as to how the compressible region 222, 322 may compress in response to an applied force. Figure 16A illustrates the device

containment housing 202 in position against tissue 360. In some cases, the tissue 360 may be cardiac tissue such as a ventricular wall, but this is not required. This represents a starting point, much like that shown in Figure 14A, in which essentially no force has been applied to the device containment housing 202, as indicated by the distance 250 between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220. Figures 16B and 16C provide enlarged views of the device containment housing 202, showing several illustrative but non-limiting examples of how the compressible region 222 may compress during use. In Figure 16B, the compressible region 222 forms an accordion region 362 in which the side wall of the device containment housing 202 forms an undulating wave form. In Figure 16C, the compressible region 222 forms a bulged or billowed region 364 in which the side wall of the device containment housing 202 distends outwardly as a result of an applied force. In either case, the relative change in distance between the first position indicator 218 and the second position indicator 220 may provide an indication of how much force is being applied. In some cases, the compressible region 222 may include a spring sometimes incorporated into a weave, may include a compressible material, and/or may otherwise be constructed to provide a predictable and appropriate compression force versus compression distance profile. The compressible region 222 may be considered a force sensor.

[0101] In some cases, the delivery and deployment device 200 (or the delivery device 100) may include one or more force sensors that may, for example, provide an indication of a force being applied to the IMD 10 during deployment of the IMD 10. In some cases, for example, one or more force sensors that provide an indication of forces (compressive or tensile) applied to the IMD 10 during or after deployment of the IMD 10 may be used in addition to the previously described first and second position indicators that indicate forces applied to the device containment housing 108. In some cases, one or more force sensors that provide an indication of forces (compressive or tensile) applied to the IMD 10 during or after deployment of the IMD 10 may be used instead of measuring or otherwise indicating forces applied to the device containment housing 108. For example, in some instances, it is contemplated that the IMD 10 may be implanted using an implantation structure lacking the device containment housing 108.

[0102] In some cases, the delivery and deployment device 200 (or the delivery device 100) may include one or more force sensors that may, for example, provide an indication of a tensile force being applied to the IMD 10 during a post-deployment tug test. Figures 17-19 are similar to

Figure 5 but provide illustrative but non-limiting examples of where such force sensors may be disposed within or near the device containment housing 108.

[0103] In Figure 17, a force sensor 370 may be seen attached or otherwise disposed on the distal portion 118 of the inner tubular member 116 which, as discussed, may be used to engage and push the IMD 10 out of the device containment housing 108 during deployment of the IMD 10. Figure 18 is similar, but illustrates a force sensor 372 that is attached to or otherwise disposed on the inner tubular member 116. The force sensors 370 and 372 may be any desired type of force sensor that may provide a signal representative of the force being applied to the IMD 10. Figure 19 provides an illustrative but non-limiting example of a force sensor 374 that may be attached to, or form a portion of, the tether 112. The force sensor 374 may, for example, be a strain gauge and thus may provide an indication of the force applied to the IMD 10 via the tether 112 during a tug test after deployment, such as that illustrated in Figure 10E. In some cases, the strain gauge may be a fiber optic or piezo type strain sensor.

[0104] Figure 20 provides an example of a force sensor 376 that may be disposed within the device containment housing 108. In some cases, the force sensor 376 may be a pressure sensor, and may provide an indication of whether fluid that may be pumped into the device containment housing 108 remains in the device containment housing, indicating a good contact between the tip 140 of the device containment housing 108 and the adjoining tissue, or if the fluid has leaked out, indicating poor contact. In some cases, the force sensor 376 may be positioned elsewhere along a fluid path to the device containment housing 108 and could even be disposed within the handle assembly 120.

[0105] In other instances, force sensor 376 may be a strain sensor or the like attached to or incorporated into the device containment housing wall. Such strain sensor may sense the axial, compressive and/or bending strain in the wall of the device containment housing, which will be related to the force applied to the cardiac tissue via the device containment housing. In some cases, the strain sensor may be a fiber optic or piezo type sensor. It will be appreciated that while not illustrated, the force sensors 370, 372, 374, 376 may include additional structure for communicating force values to an outside display, for example.

[0106] While the force sensors 370, 372, 374, 376 are illustrated in separate Figures, it will be appreciated that in some cases a delivery device may utilize two or more of the force sensors 370, 372, 374, 376 in combination. For example, a delivery device may include the force sensor

370 or the force sensor 372 in combination with the force sensor 374. A delivery device may, for example, include the force sensor 370 or the force sensor 374 in combination with the force sensor 376. A delivery device may include the force sensor 374 and the force sensor 376.

[0107] The materials that can be used for the various components of the delivery devices, such as delivery device 100 (and/or other delivery structures disclosed herein) and the various members disclosed herein may include those commonly associated with medical devices. For simplicity purposes, the following discussion makes reference to the delivery device 100 and the delivery and deployment device 200 and components thereof. However, this is not intended to limit the devices and methods described herein, as the discussion may be applied to other similar delivery systems and/or components of delivery systems or devices disclosed herein.

[0108] The delivery device 100 and/or the deployment and delivery device 200, or components thereof, may be made from a metal, metal alloy, polymer (some examples of which are disclosed below), a metal-polymer composite, ceramics, combinations thereof, and the like, or other suitable material. Some examples of suitable polymers may include polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), ethylene tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE), fluorinated ethylene propylene (FEP), polyoxymethylene (POM, for example, DELRIN® available from DuPont), polyether block ester, polyurethane (for example, Polyurethane 85A), polypropylene (PP), polyvinylchloride (PVC), polyether-ester (for example, ARNITEL® available from DSM Engineering Plastics), ether or ester based copolymers (for example, butylene/poly(alkylene ether) phthalate and/or other polyester elastomers such as HYTREL® available from DuPont), polyamide (for example, DURETHAN® available from Bayer or CRISTAMID® available from Elf Atochem), elastomeric polyamides, block polyamide/ethers, polyether block amide (PEBA, for example available under the trade name PEBAX®), ethylene vinyl acetate copolymers (EVA), silicones, polyethylene (PE), Marlex high-density polyethylene, Marlex low-density polyethylene, linear low density polyethylene (for example REXELL®), polyester, polybutylene terephthalate (PBT), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polytrimethylene terephthalate, polyethylene naphthalate (PEN), polyetheretherketone (PEEK), polyimide (PI), polyetherimide (PEI), polyphenylene sulfide (PPS), polyphenylene oxide (PPO), poly paraphenylene terephthalamide (for example, KEVLAR®), polysulfone, nylon, nylon-12 (such as GRILAMID® available from EMS American Grilon), perfluoro(propyl vinyl ether) (PFA), ethylene vinyl alcohol, polyolefin, polystyrene, epoxy, polyvinylidene chloride (PVdC), poly(styrene-*b*-isobutylene-*b*-styrene) (for example, SIBS and/or

SIBS 50A), polycarbonates, ionomers, biocompatible polymers, other suitable materials, or mixtures, combinations, copolymers thereof, polymer/metal composites, and the like. In some embodiments the polymer can be blended with a liquid crystal polymer (LCP). For example, the mixture can contain up to about 6 percent LCP.

[0109] Some examples of suitable metals and metal alloys include stainless steel, such as 304V, 304L, and 316LV stainless steel; mild steel; nickel-titanium alloy such as linear-elastic and/or super-elastic nitinol; other nickel alloys such as nickel-chromium-molybdenum alloys (e.g., UNS: N06625 such as INCONEL® 625, UNS: N06022 such as HASTELLOY® C-22®, UNS: N10276 such as HASTELLOY® C276®, other HASTELLOY® alloys, and the like), nickel-copper alloys (e.g., UNS: N04400 such as MONEL® 400, NICKELVAC® 400, NICORROS® 400, and the like), nickel-cobalt-chromium-molybdenum alloys (e.g., UNS: R30035 such as MP35-N® and the like), nickel-molybdenum alloys (e.g., UNS: N10665 such as HASTELLOY® ALLOY B2®), other nickel-chromium alloys, other nickel-molybdenum alloys, other nickel-cobalt alloys, other nickel-iron alloys, other nickel-copper alloys, other nickel-tungsten or tungsten alloys, and the like; cobalt-chromium alloys; cobalt-chromium-molybdenum alloys (e.g., UNS: R30003 such as ELGILOY®, PHYNOX®, and the like); platinum enriched stainless steel; titanium; combinations thereof; and the like; or any other suitable material.

[0110] In at least some embodiments, portions or all of the delivery device 100 and/or the deployment and delivery device 200, or components thereof, may be doped with, made of, or otherwise include a radiopaque material. Radiopaque materials are understood to be materials capable of producing a relatively bright image on a fluoroscopy screen or another imaging technique during a medical procedure. This relatively bright image aids the user of the delivery device 100 in determining its location. Some examples of radiopaque materials can include, but are not limited to, gold, platinum, palladium, tantalum, tungsten alloy, polymer material loaded with a radiopaque filler, and the like. Additionally, other radiopaque marker bands and/or coils may also be incorporated into the design of the delivery device 100 and/or the deployment and delivery device 200, or components thereof, to achieve the same result.

[0111] It should be understood that this disclosure is, in many respects, only illustrative. Changes may be made in details, particularly in matters of shape, size, and arrangement of steps without exceeding the scope of the disclosure. This may include, to the extent that it is appropriate, the use of any of the features of one example embodiment being used in other embodiments. The

disclosure's scope is, of course, defined in the language in which the appended claims are expressed.

What is claimed is:

1. A delivery and deployment device configured to deliver an implantable medical device (IMD) to a chamber of a patient's heart and deploy the IMD therein, the delivery and deployment device comprising:
 - a handle assembly;
 - a shaft extending distally from the handle assembly, the shaft including a distal region;
 - a device containment housing coupled to the distal region of the shaft and extending distally therefrom, the device containment housing configured to accommodate the IMD therein;
 - at least one of the shaft and device containment housing including a compressible region that is configured to compress by an amount that is related to an applied force;
 - a first position indicator and a second position indicator, wherein at least part of the compressible region is situated between the first position indicator and the second position indicator; andwherein a force applied to the device containment housing causes the compressible region to compress by an amount that is related to the applied force, which causes a change in distance between the first position indicator and the second position indicator, which provides an indication of the applied force.
2. The delivery and deployment device of claim 1, wherein the device containment housing includes the compressible region.
3. The delivery and deployment device of any one of claims 1 or 2, wherein the first position indicator comprises a first radiopaque marker band and the second position indicator comprises a second radiopaque marker band, and the change in distance between the first position indicator and the second position indicator is visible via fluoroscopy.
4. The delivery and deployment device of any one of claims 1 or 2, wherein the first position indicator comprises a first electrode and the second position indicator comprises a second electrode, and the change in distance between the first electrode and the second electrode is indicated via a change in impedance between the first electrode and the second electrode.

5. The delivery and deployment device of claim 4, wherein the first electrode comprises a ring electrode.

6. The delivery and deployment device of claim 4, wherein the first electrode comprises one of a plurality of electrodes that are disposed radially about a distal end of the device containment housing and alignable with each of a plurality of talons of the IMD.

7. The delivery and deployment device of claim 4, wherein the second electrode comprises a ring electrode.

8. The delivery and deployment device of any one of claims 1 to 7, further comprising a force sensor arranged and configured to provide an indication of a force applied to the IMD during implantation.

9. The delivery and deployment device of any one of claims 1 to 8, further comprising a force sensor arranged and configured to provide an indication of a force applied to an IMD during a tug test after deployment of the IMD.

10. An IMD implantation device configured to deliver an implantable medical device (IMD) to a chamber of a patient's heart and deploy the IMD therein, the IMD implantation device comprising:

- a handle assembly;
- a shaft extending distally from the handle assembly, the shaft including a distal region;
- a device containment housing coupled to the distal region of the shaft and extending distally therefrom, the device containment housing configured to accommodate the IMD therein;
- a deployment member extending through the shaft, the deployment member configured to apply a deployment force to the IMD in order to move the IMD from the device containment housing to deploy the IMD in the patient's heart;
- a first force detector for detecting a measure related to a force applied by the device containment housing against the patient's heart during deployment of the IMD; and

a second force detector for detecting a measure related to a force applied by the deployment member to the IMD during deployment of the IMD.

11. The IMD implantation device of claim 10, wherein the deployment member is a push tube, and wherein the IMD implantation device further comprises:

a tether extending distally through the push tube and coupled to the IMD, the tether configured to be used to retrieve the IMD back into the device containment housing if an alternate deployment location is desired.

12. The IMD implantation device of any one of claims 10 or 11, further comprising a plurality of electrodes that are disposed radially about a distal end of the device containment housing and alignable with each of a plurality of talons of the IMD.

13. The IMD implantation device of any one of claims 10 to 12, wherein the first force detector comprises a strain sensor and optionally the second force detector comprises a strain sensor.

14. An IMD implantation device configured to deliver an implantable medical device (IMD) to a chamber of a patient's heart and deploy the IMD therein, the IMD implantation device comprising:

a shaft including a distal region;

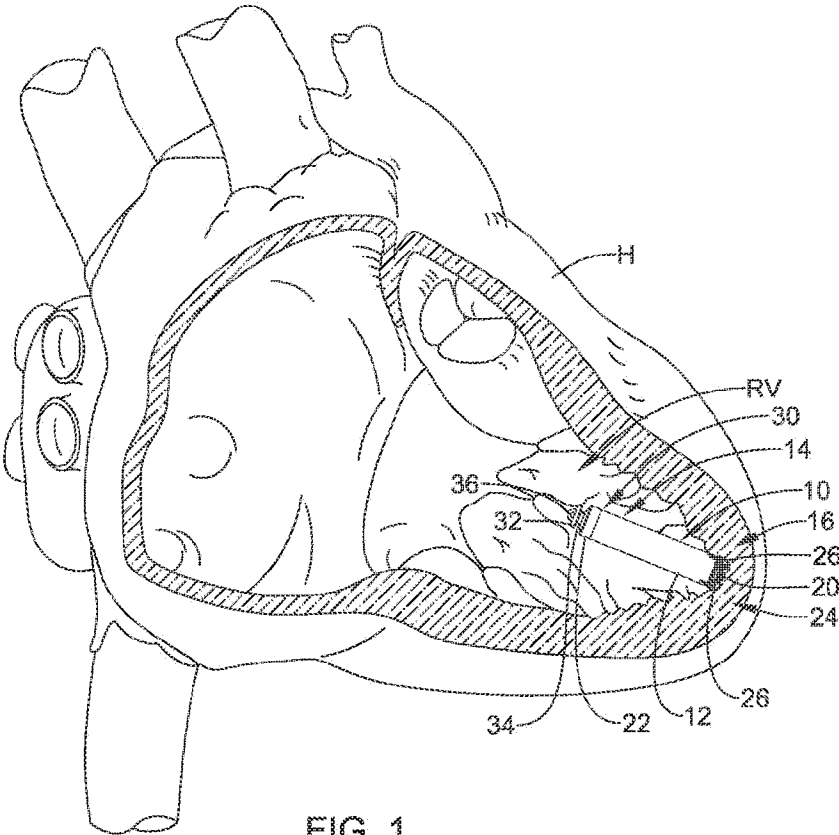
a device containment housing coupled to the distal region of the shaft and extending distally therefrom, the device containment housing configured to accommodate the IMD therein;

a deployment member extending through the shaft, the deployment member configured to apply a deployment force to the IMD in order to move the IMD from the device containment housing to deploy the IMD in the patient's heart;

a plurality of electrodes that are disposed radially about a distal end of the device containment housing and alignable with each of a plurality of talons of the IMD; and

a force detector for detecting a measure related to a force applied by the device containment housing against the patient's heart during deployment of the IMD.

15. The IMD implantation device of claim 14, wherein the force detector comprises a compressible region that is configured to compresses by an amount that is related to the force applied by the device containment housing against the patient's heart during deployment of the IMD.



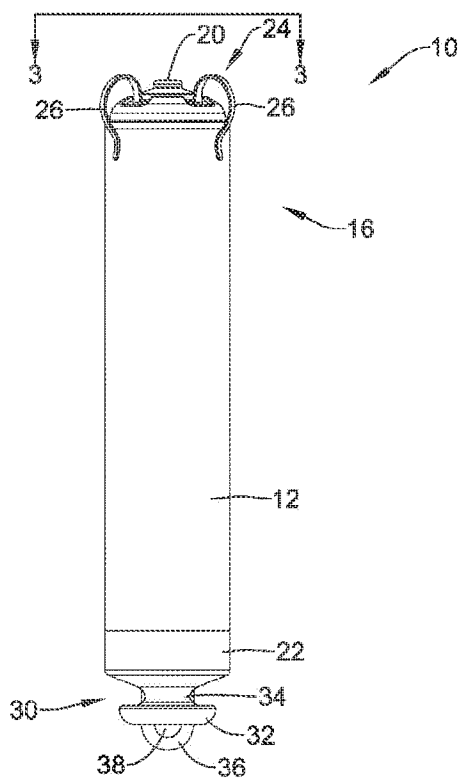


FIG. 2

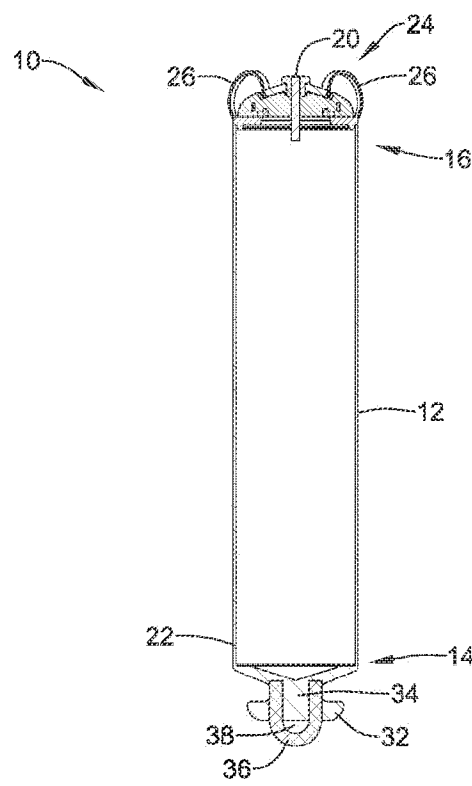


FIG. 3

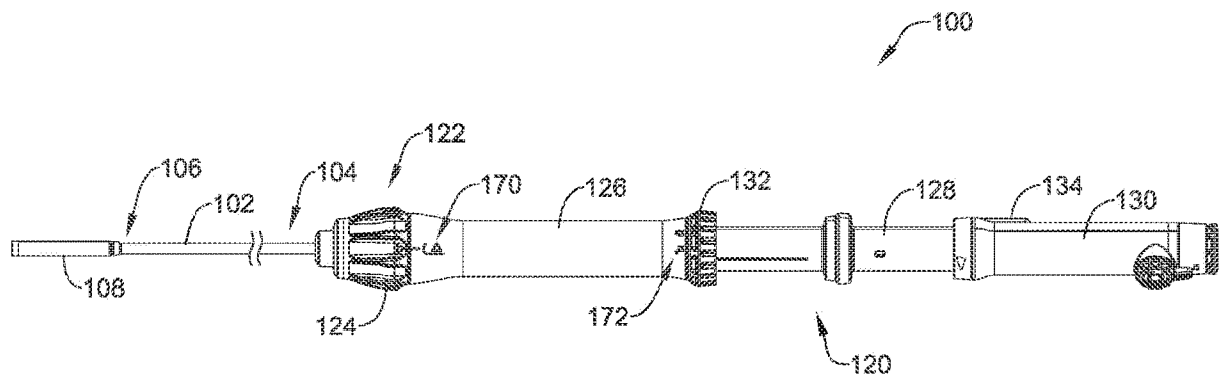


FIG. 4

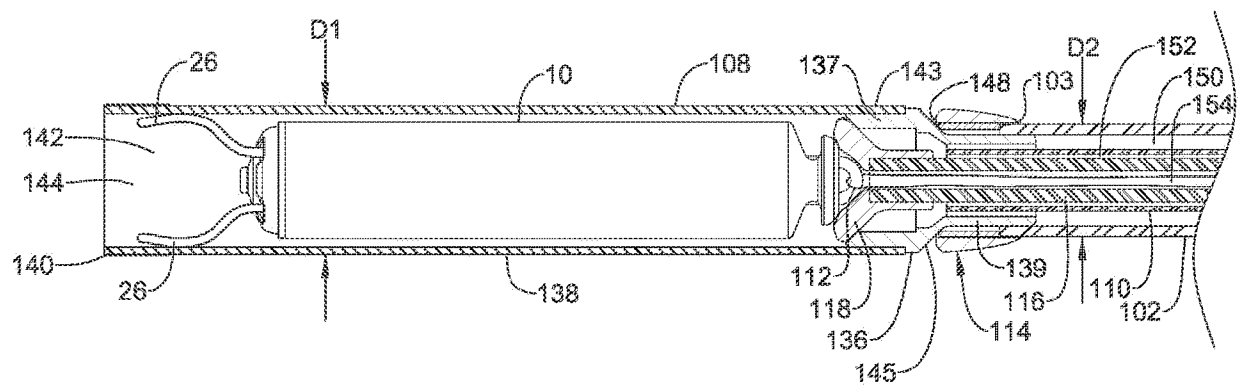


FIG. 5

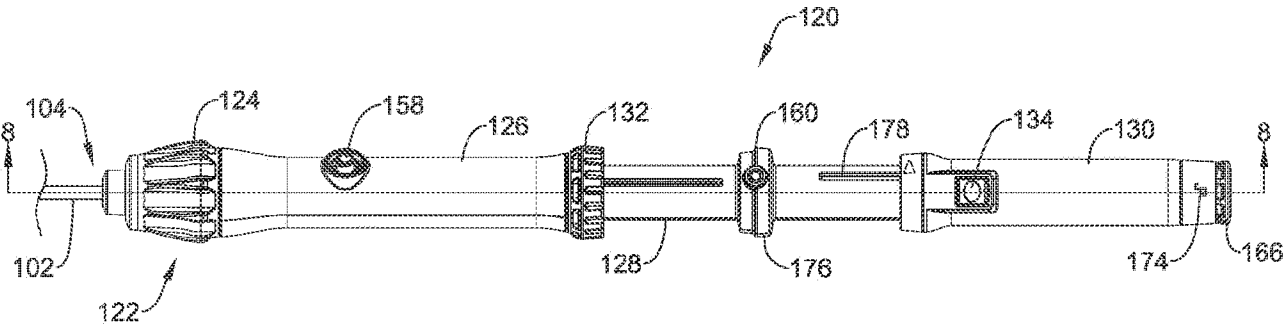


FIG. 6

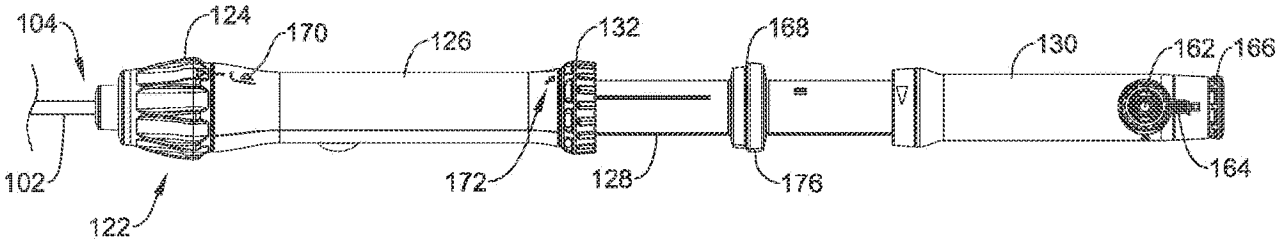


FIG. 7

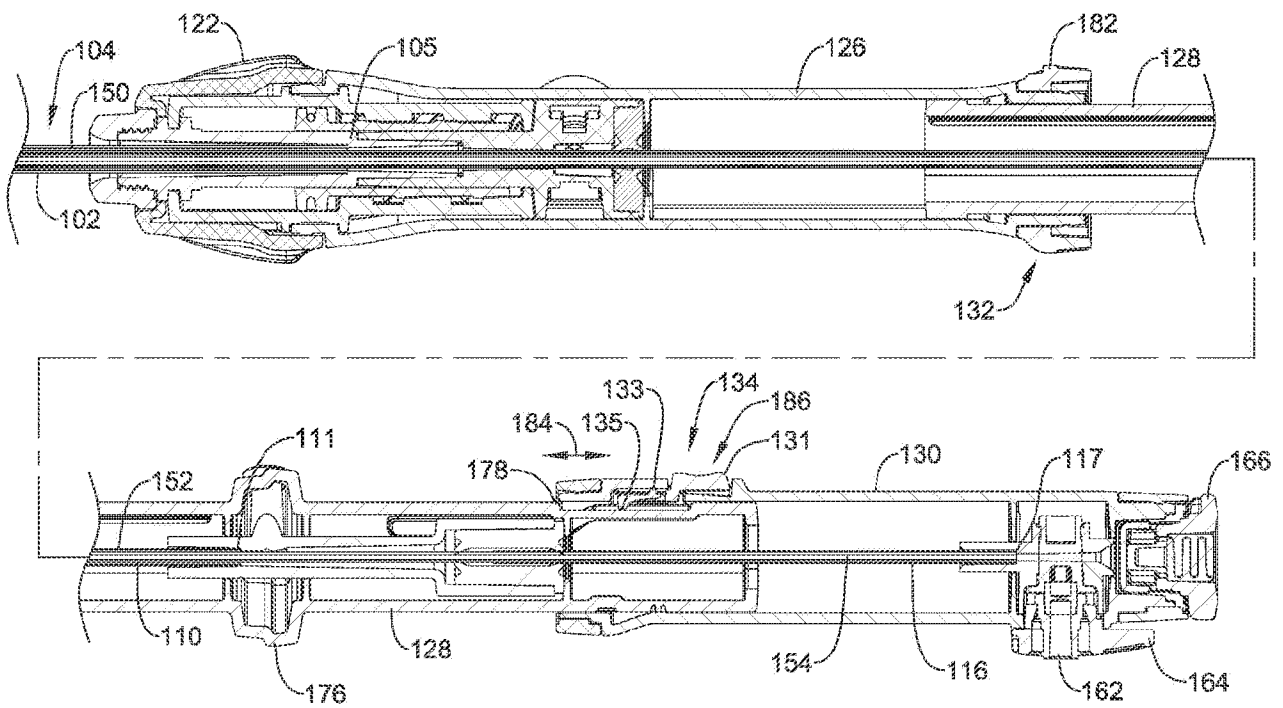


FIG. 8

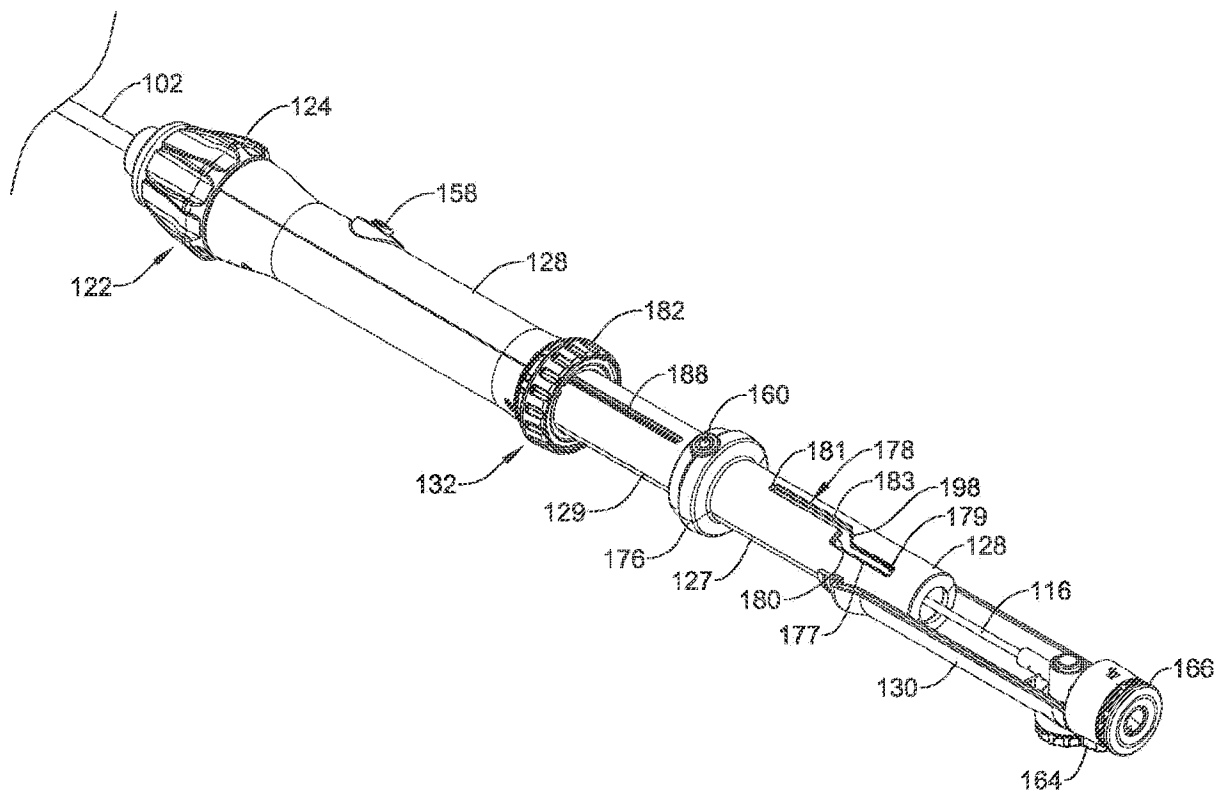


FIG. 9

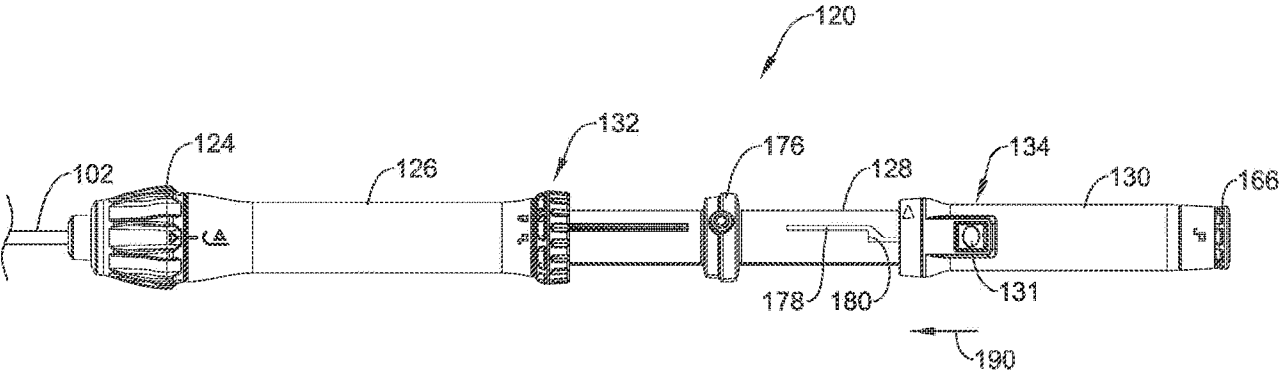


FIG. 10A

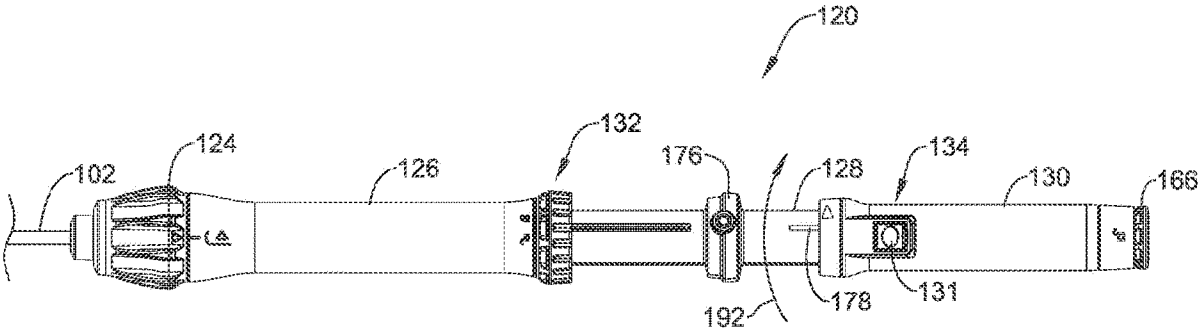
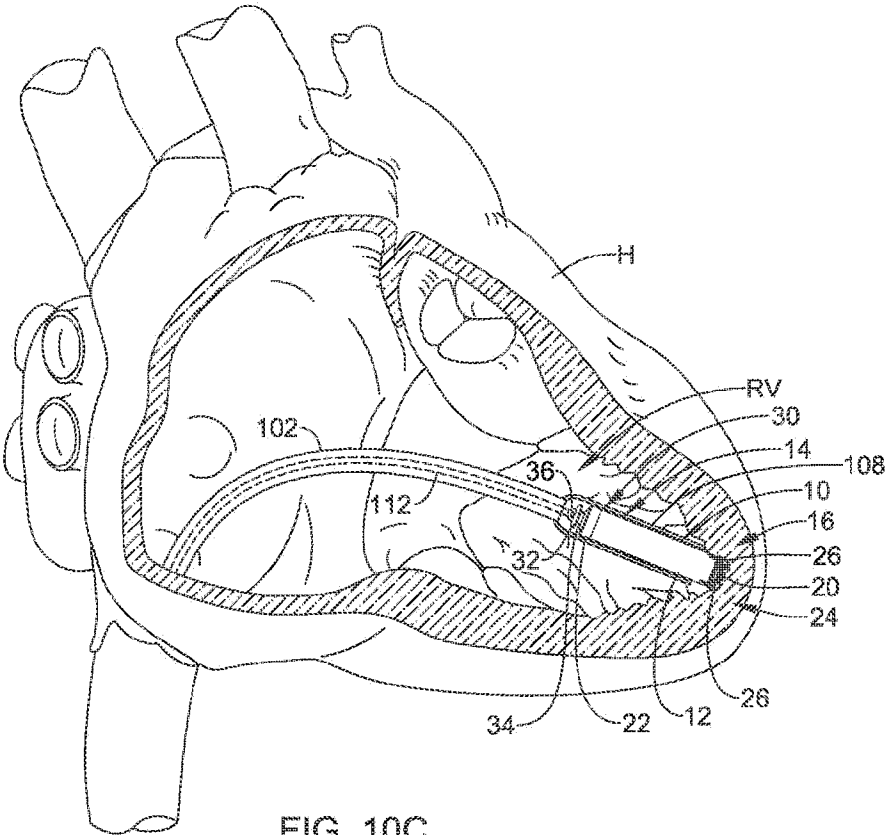


FIG. 10B



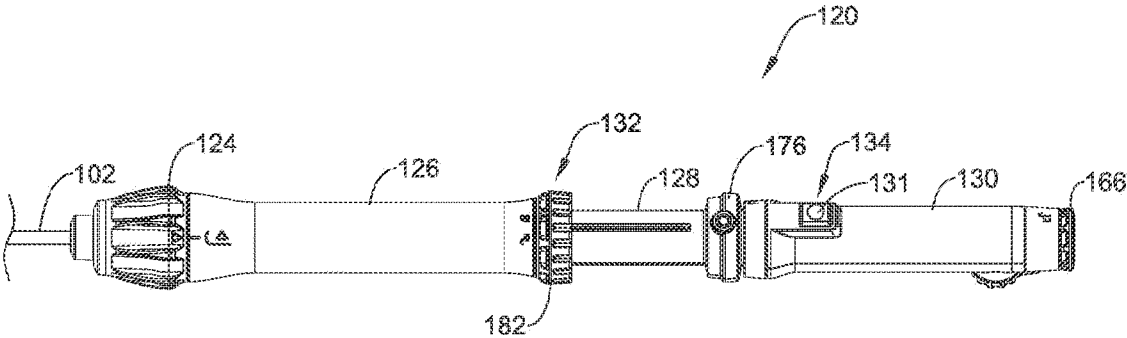
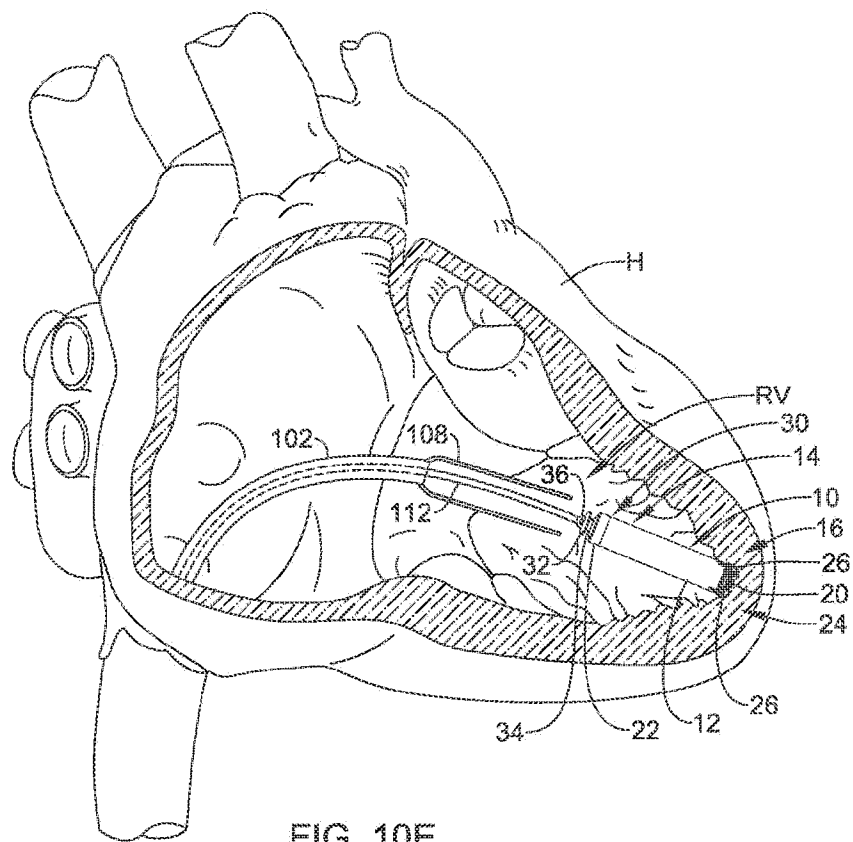


FIG. 10D



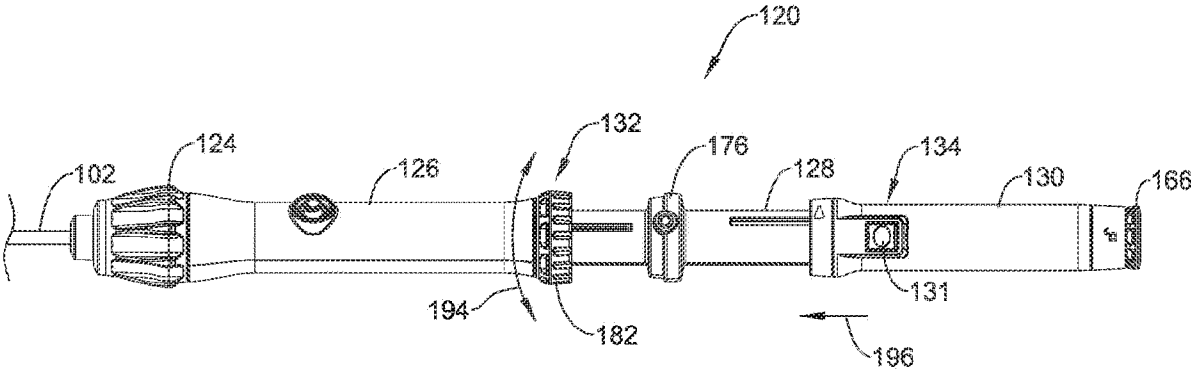


FIG. 11A

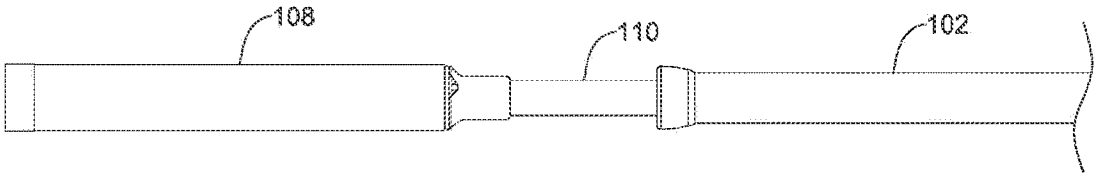


FIG. 11B

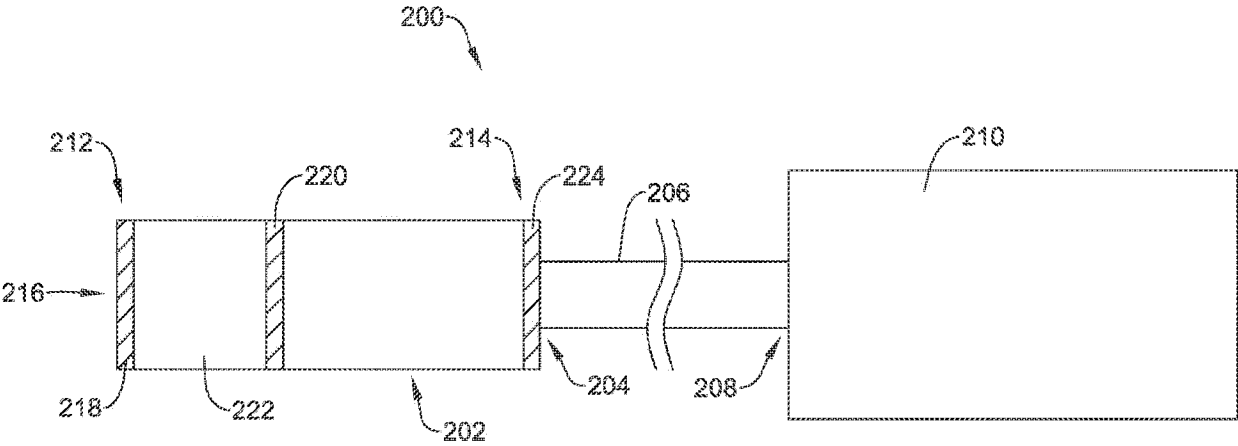


FIG. 12

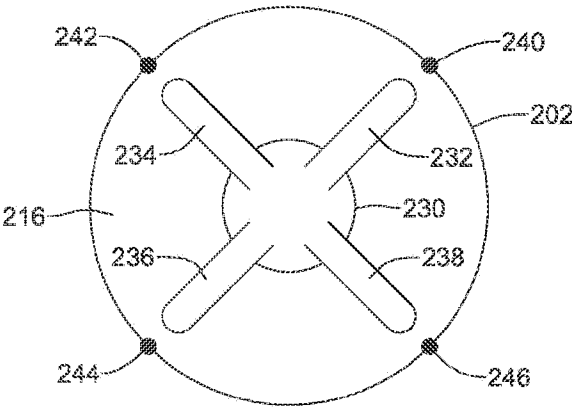


FIG. 13

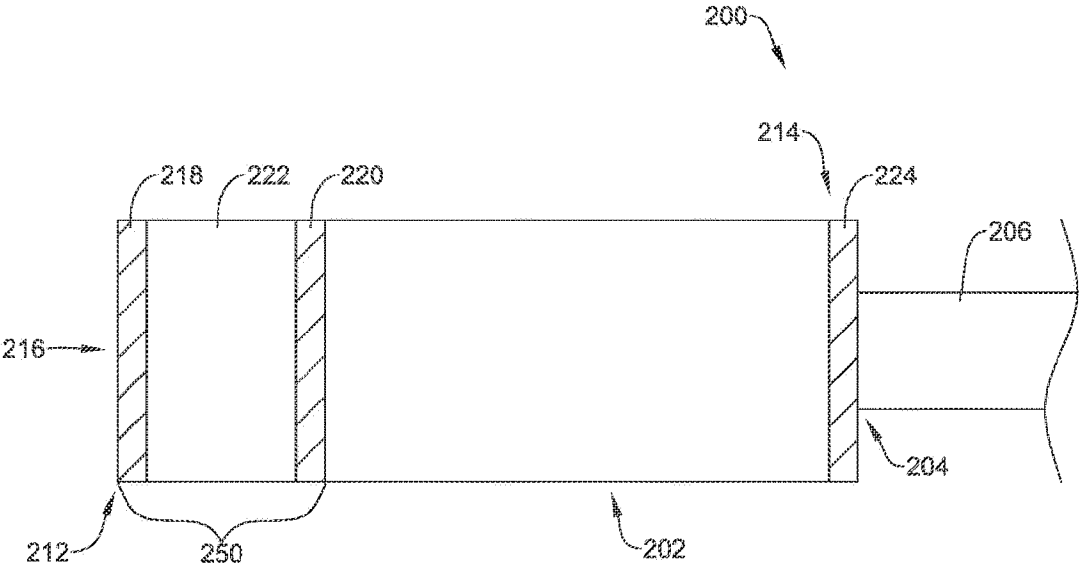


FIG. 14A

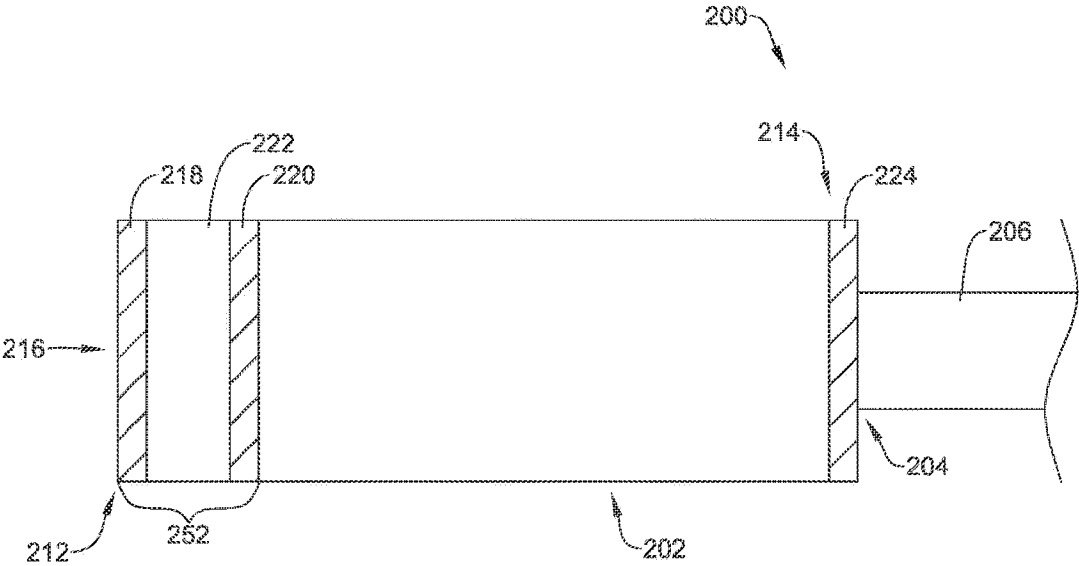


FIG. 14B

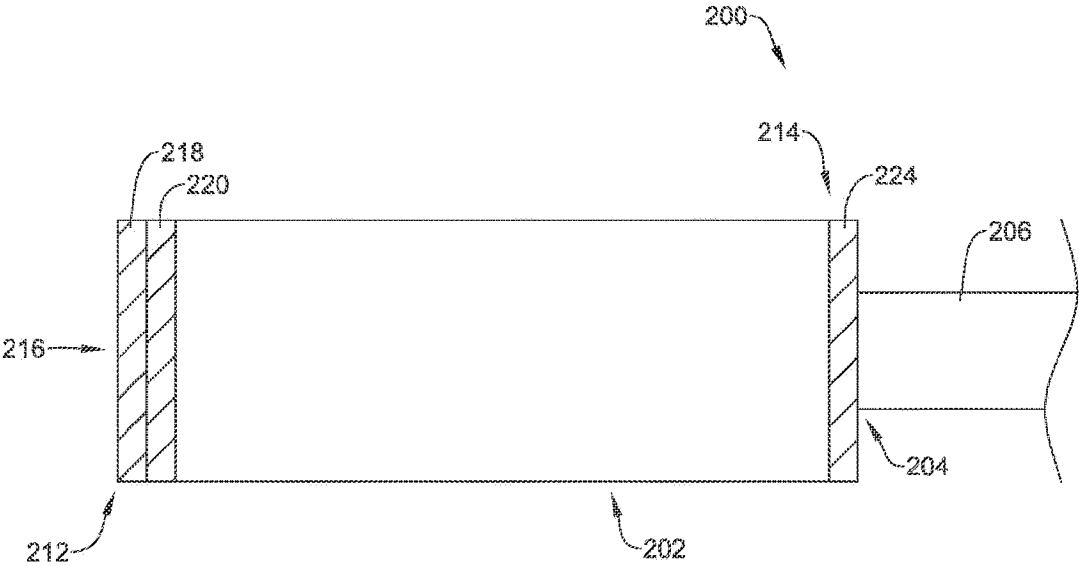


FIG. 14C

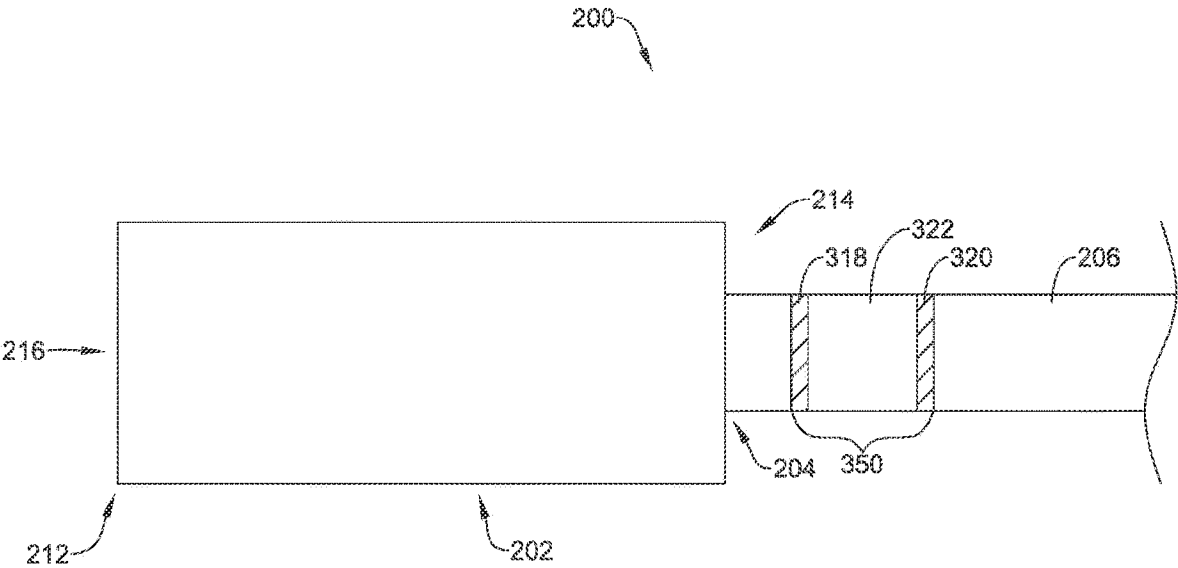


FIG. 15A

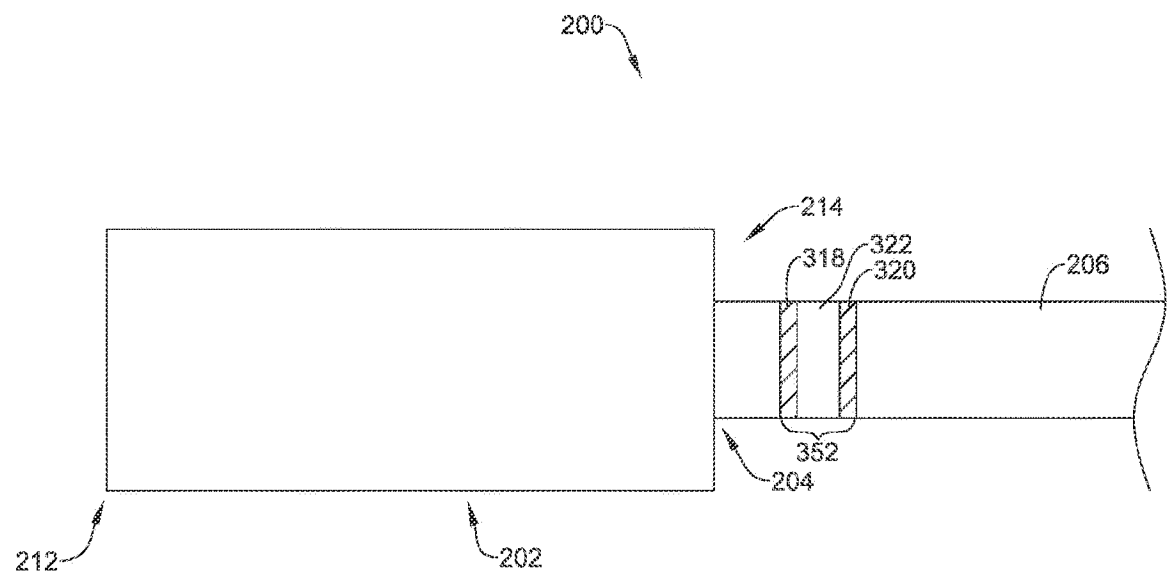


FIG. 15B

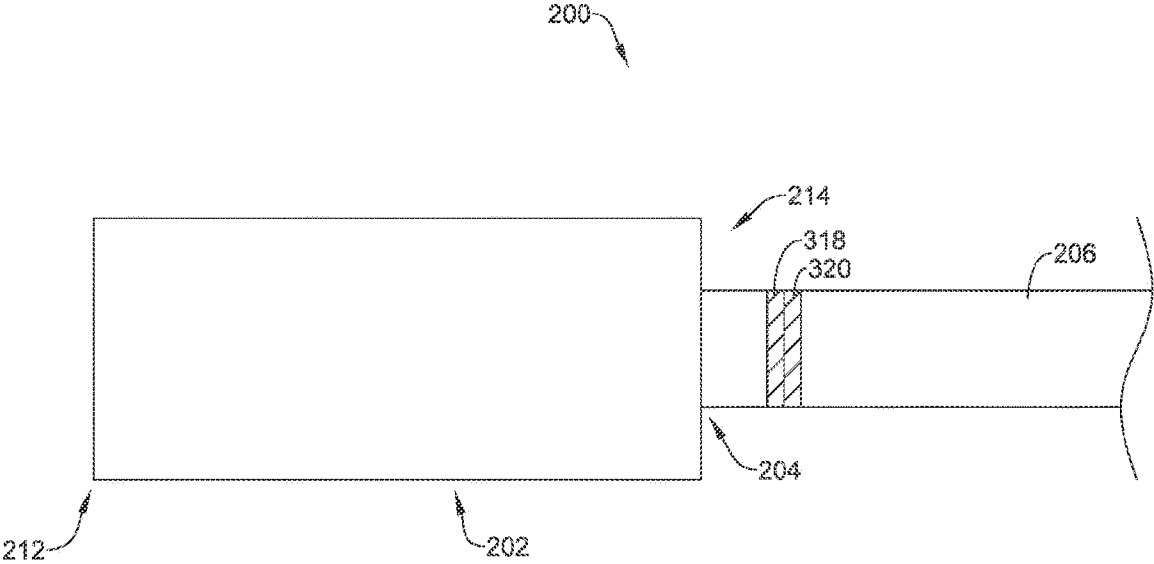


FIG. 15C

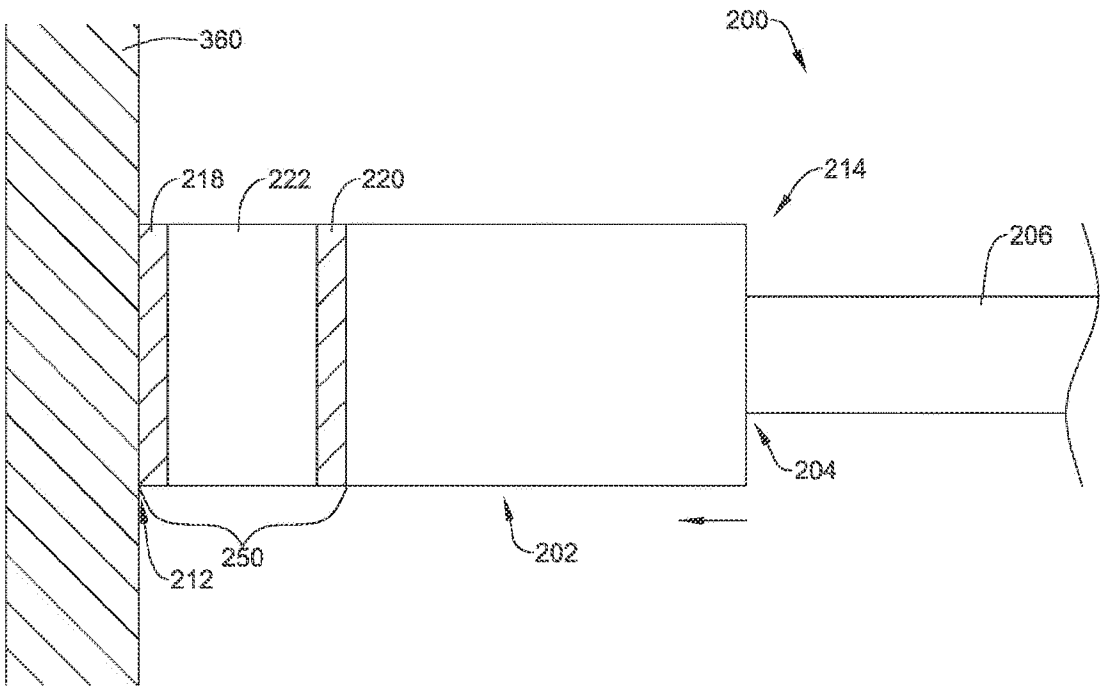


FIG. 16A

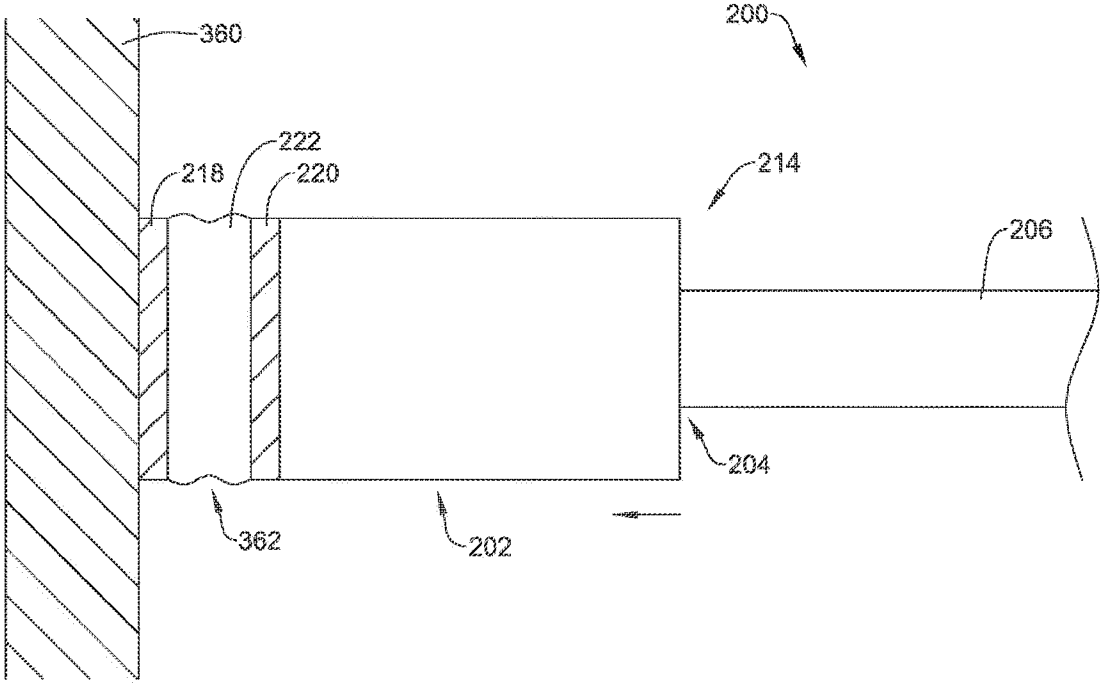


FIG. 16B

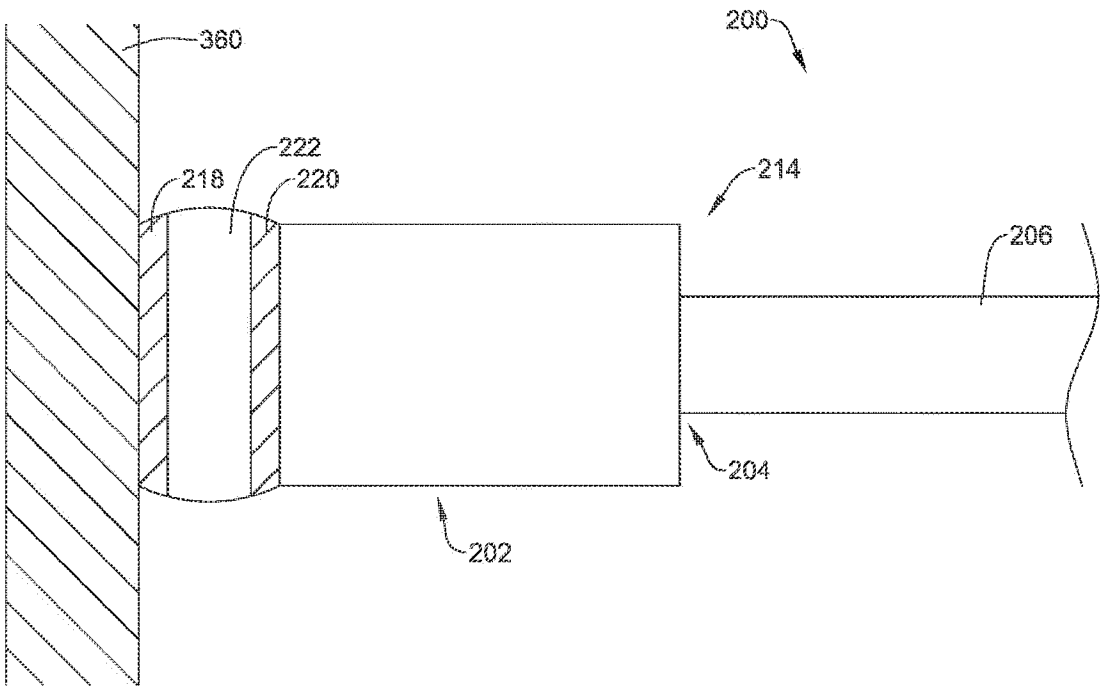


FIG. 16C

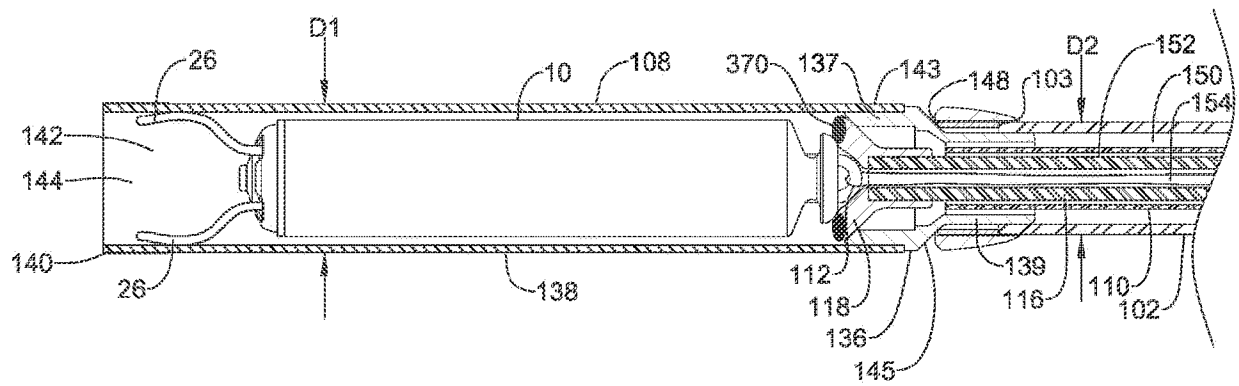


FIG. 17

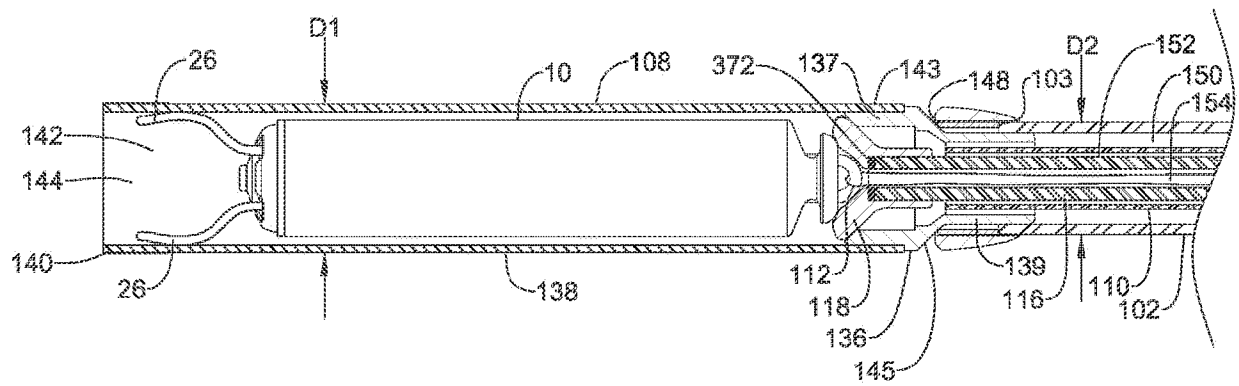


FIG. 18

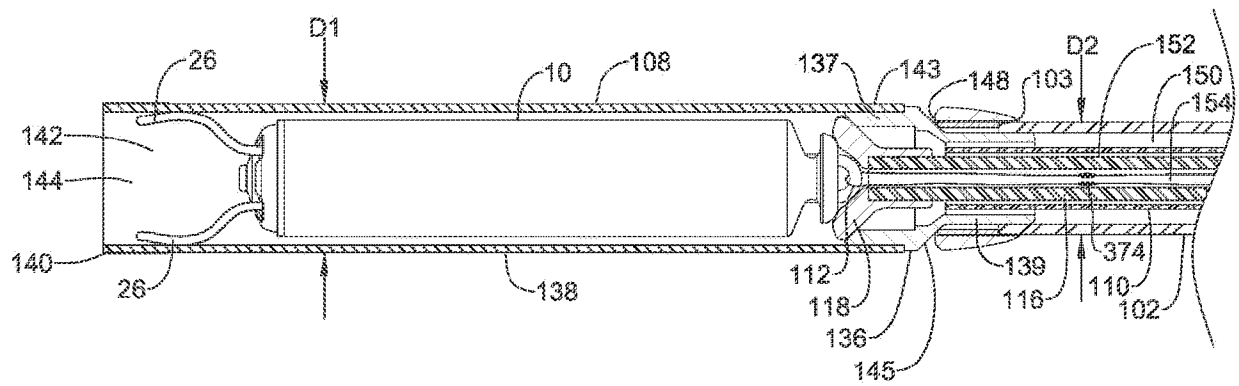


FIG. 19

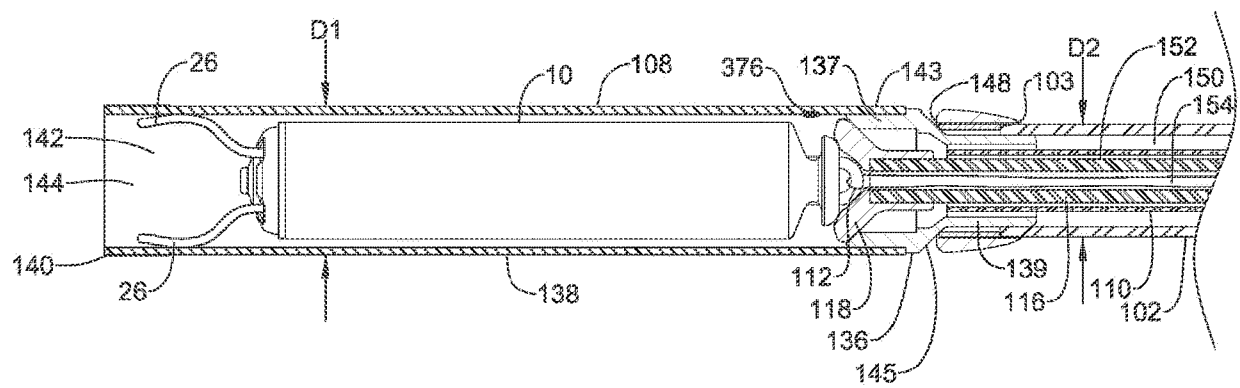


FIG. 20

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2017/016212

Box No. II Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☒ Claims Nos.: 10-15
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:
see FURTHER INFORMATION sheet PCT/ISA/210
3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

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

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

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee.
- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation.
- ☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2017/016212

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. A61N1/375 A61N1/362 A61N1/372
ADD.

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)
A61N

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

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

EP0-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 2012/172891 A1 (LEE NATHAN T [US]) 5 July 2012 (2012-07-05) the whole document -----	1-9
A	WO 2012/156914 A2 (BY PASS INC [US]; BEYAR MORDECHAY [IL]; GLOBERMAN OREN [IL]) 22 November 2012 (2012-11-22) page 36, line 1 - page 38, line 10; figures 13A-C, 14A, B -----	1-9
A	US 2015/306378 A1 (SCHMIDT BRIAN L [US] ET AL) 29 October 2015 (2015-10-29) the whole document -----	1-9



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"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

10 May 2017

Date of mailing of the international search report

18/05/2017

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

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

Authorized officer

Schöffmann

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

PCT/US2017/016212

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 2012172891 A1	05-07-2012	US 2012172891 A1	05-07-2012
		WO 2012091747 A1	05-07-2012

WO 2012156914 A2	22-11-2012	NONE	

US 2015306378 A1	29-10-2015	US 2015306378 A1	29-10-2015
		WO 2015168153 A1	05-11-2015

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

Continuation of Box II.2

Claims Nos.: 10-15

multiple independent claims

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guidelines C-IV, 7.2), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.