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(54) Title: INTEGRATED MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ENDOSCOPIC TOOL

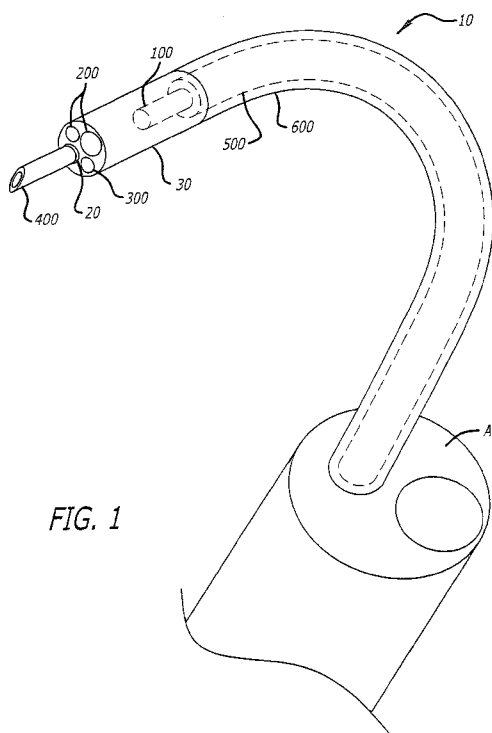


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A system for extending the visual capabilities and working channel of a bronchoscope including a probe having optic and/or tracking capabilities at a distal tip thereof and capable of being advanced through the working channel of a standard bronchoscope. The probe also includes a working channel through which various diagnostic and treatment tools may be advanced.



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INTEGRATED MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ENDOSCOPIC TOOL

Background of the Invention

[0001] Identifying and treating lung tissue abnormalities presents challenges that are somewhat unique to the lungs. If a tissue lesion or tumor is to be identified and excised surgically, the chest wall must be opened to provide access to the lungs. Opening the chest wall is a common procedure but one that presents risks of infection and lengthy recovery time, nonetheless. If a tissue lesion or tumor is to be identified endoscopically, the complicated bronchial maze must be navigated.

[0002] Bronchoscopes are small cameras attached to the end of a navigable probe and are useful in navigating the airways. The live, illuminated images provide the physician a direct look at the inside surfaces of the airways; however, these bronchoscopes have some inherent shortcomings. First, their present size limits how far into the airways they can be navigated. The airways decrease in diameter as the alveoli are approached. Second, the lungs are a moist environment and can cause the camera lens to become obscured with moisture. Similarly, if a tissue procedure, such as a biopsy, is performed in an airway that can accommodate an endoscope and a cutting tool, there is a chance that blood, mucous, or tissue may land on the lens and obscure the physician's view.

[0003] To address the first shortcoming, technology has been developed that allows a physician to track, in real-time, the position of a probe (hereinafter "locatable guide" or "LG") traveling through the airways. This technology incorporates a plurality of coils at the end of an LG and a magnetic field generator outside of the patient. The patient is placed in the magnetic field created by the generator. As the LG is navigated through the airways, electrical current is induced in the coils and sent via conductors to a computer. The computer can calculate the position and orientation of the probe based on the relative strengths of the current being induced. This technology is shown and described in greater detail

in U.S. Patents 7,233,820 6,226,543, 6,188,355, 6,380,732, 6,593,884, 6,711,429, 6,558,333, 6,887,236, 6,615,155, 6,574,498, 6,947,788, 6,996,430, 6,702,780, and 6,833,814; and U.S. Patent Publications 20050171508, 20030074011, 20020193686, each of which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety and also PCT application WO 03/086498 titled 'Endoscope Structure and Techniques for Navigation in Branched Structure' to Gilboa, fully incorporated herein by reference.

[0004] These references describe a method and apparatus in which a thin locatable guide, enveloped by a sheath, is used to navigate a bronchoscopic tool to a target location within the lung, aimed in particular to deliver treatments to the lung periphery beyond the bronchoscope's own reach. The coordinates of the target are predetermined based upon three-dimensional CT data. A location sensor is incorporated at the locatable guide's tip. The enveloped guide is inserted into the lung via the working channel of a bronchoscope. First, the bronchoscope's tip is directed to the furthest reachable location in the direction of the target. Next, the guide is advanced beyond the tip of the bronchoscope towards the designated target, based on the combination of the CT data and the position of the guide's tip as measured in body coordinates. When the guide's tip is at the target, the guide is withdrawn, freeing the sheath for insertion of a bronchoscopic tool. In order to prevent the distal end portion of the sheath from sliding away from the target, the sheath is locked to the bronchoscope's body and the bronchoscope itself is held steadily to prevent it from slipping further into the lungs or outwards. Because the airways in the periphery of the lung are narrow, approximately in the same dimensions as the sheath, sideways movements are extremely limited.

[0005] The above system and apparatus are aimed to navigate standard bronchoscopic tools to a target located in the lung. In its basic operation, first the target is identified in the CT data, then the guide is navigated to the target and a medical treatment is delivered. It would be advantageous, however, to perform more sophisticated treatments, such as by combining different types of treatments into a single session. Because these locatable guides are smaller than endoscopes, they can travel deeper into the airways. Additionally, rather than relying on visible

landmarks and the physician's knowledge of the anatomy of the airways, the position of the LG is superimposed on a computer rendering or x-ray image of the lungs, thereby increasing the navigation value of the sensor. Advantage may be taken of both technologies by placing a probe within a working channel of the endoscope. Thus, real-time images may be viewed while navigating the endoscope as far into the airways as its size allows. Then, the LG is advanced out of the distal end of the working channel of the bronchoscope and deeper into the airways. The LG is surrounded by a sheath. In some embodiments the sheath is steerable and in others, the LG itself is steerable.

[0006] Once the LG has been navigated to a target area, presently the LG is retracted through the sheath, while the sheath is left in place. The sheath is referred to as an "extended working channel" ("EWC") because it is effectively an extension of the working channel of the bronchoscope. The EWC is then used as an avenue for inserting working tools to the target site. Such tools include biopsy needles, ablation devices, etc. After the LG is removed from the EWC, the physician is operating blind, relying on the EWC to remain fixed at the target site. If a tool, such as an aspiration needle or an ablation tool, is being used that requires repositioning in order to treat a greater target area, the repositioning must be done without guidance.

[0007] There is a need for an apparatus that allows a physician to operate on a target site endoscopically, while benefiting from the concurrent use of a bronchoscope, an LG, or both. There is a further need for an endoscopic tool that has the capability of maintaining a clear lens during a procedure in a moist environment.

Summary of the Invention

[0008] The present invention represents a step forward in endoscopic procedures by providing an endoscopic tool that is capable of being inserted into narrow passageways and performing procedures once a target has been reached.

Preferably the instrument of the present invention is insertable through the working channel of a standard bronchoscope.

[0009] More specifically, the present invention is a catheter designed to be extended out of the distal end of the working channel of a bronchoscope. The catheter includes a micro-camera with a means for cleaning the lens thereof in situ. Additionally, the catheter includes a location sensor capable of either transmitting a location signal or detecting location fields such that location and orientation data may be provided to the practitioner.

[0010] Additionally, the catheter of the present invention includes one or more miniature working channels capable of receiving diagnostic and therapeutic tools and catheters, such as biopsy or ablation tools and catheters. Other examples of diagnostic and therapeutic tools for use with the device of the present invention include various needles, forceps, guide catheters, cyrocateters, needle aspiration catheters, modified athereoctomy devices, just to name a few. The combination of the camera, the miniature working channel, and the sensor, provides the practitioner with a real-time view of the tissue being manipulated during the procedure. The practitioner also has an unprecedented degree of confidence that the tissue being manipulated is the targeted tissue.

[0011] One aspect of the present invention uses the devices of the present invention for applications such as integrated in situ diagnostic techniques (AF, ULS, OCT, etc.), delivering pre-therapy tools to direct subsequent therapeutic procedures such as markers to guide radiosurgery or inject dye to direct VATS procedures, therapeutic delivery such as LDR brachy seeds or site-specific drug delivery.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0012] Figure 1 is a perspective view of a general embodiment of the device of the present invention;

[0013] Figure 2 is a diagram of the basic components of an embodiment of the location system of the present invention;

[0014] Figure 3 is an elevation of an embodiment of a sensor assembly of the present invention;

[0015] Figure 4A is a perspective view of an embodiment of a sensor assembly of the present invention;

[0016] Figure 4B is a circuit diagram of the sensor assembly of Figure 4A;

[0017] Figure 5 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a sensor assembly of the present invention;

[0018] Figure 6 is an exploded view of an embodiment of a location board of the present invention;

[0019] Figure 7 is a perspective view of an embodiment of an optic system of the present invention;

[0020] Figure 8 is an elevational cutaway view of a distal tip of an embodiment of the catheter of the present invention;

[0021] Figure 9 is a perspective view of an embodiment of an optical cleaning system of the present invention;

[0022] Figure 10 is a perspective cutaway view of a distal tip of an embodiment of the catheter of the present invention;

[0023] Figure 11 is a perspective view of a distal tip of an embodiment of the catheter of the present invention;

[0024] Figure 12 is a plan view of an embodiment of a tool of the present invention;

[0025] Figure 13 is a plan view of an embodiment of a tool of the present invention within an embodiment of a catheter of the present invention;

[0026] Figure 14 is a plan view of an embodiment of a tool of the present invention within an embodiment of a catheter of the present invention;

[0027] Figure 15 is a cutaway perspective view of an embodiment of a distal tip of a catheter of the present invention;

[0028] Figure 16 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a steering system of the present invention;

[0029] Figure 17 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a distal tip of a catheter of the present invention;

[0030] Figure 18 is a see-through view of an embodiment of a distal tip of a catheter of the present invention;

[0031] Figure 19 is a close up of a portion of the distal tip of the catheter shown in Figure 18;

[0032] Figure 20 is a close up of a portion of an embodiment of a distal tip of a catheter of the present invention;

[0033] Figure 21 is a comparison of the bending radius of two catheters having different rigid tip lengths;

[0034] Figure 22 is an elevation view of several embodiments of distal tips of catheters of the present invention juxtaposed to compare sizes; and

[0035] Figure 23 is an end view of several embodiments of distal tips of catheters of the present invention juxtaposed to compare sizes.

Detailed Description of the Invention

[0036] Referring now to Figure 1, there is shown a general embodiment of the catheter 10 of the present invention. The embodiment in Figure 1 is described as “general” because it is being used as a platform to introduce the various aspects and components of the present invention, which will then be discussed separately in more detail. Hence, Figure 1 shows that the catheter 10 is sized to extend from the distal end of a working channel of a standard bronchoscope A. For example, some common bronchoscopes have working channels with an internal diameter of about 2.8mm, while others have working channels with an internal diameter of about 2.65mm. Hence, the catheter 10 has an outside diameter of 2.8mm, or slightly less, or preferably 2.65mm, or slightly less, such that it slides freely within the working channels of these bronchoscopes A. The catheter 10 generally includes a working channel 20, a location system 100 (only a component of which is shown in Figure 1), an optical system 200, an optic cleaning system 300, a tool 400, a steering mechanism 500, and a catheter body 600. It is to be understood that the catheter 10 of the present invention is considered to be any device containing one or more of these features, in any of their respective variations discussed below, in any combination. These components are being described individually specifically so as not to limit the scope of the present invention to one or more combinations of these features. One skilled in the art will quickly realize that the number of components of the catheter 10, each described in various forms below, would result in too many combinations to practically describe individually.

[0037] Location System 100

[0038] The location system 100, shown in Figures 2-X, generally includes a sensor assembly 120, a location board 140, and a control system 180.

[0039] The sensor assembly 120 may be passive or active. A system using a passive sensor assembly 120 is shown in Figures 2-6 and also in U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 12/417,381 filed April 2, 2009 entitled *Magnetic Interference Detection System and Method*, which claims priority to provisional application

serial numbers 61/042,191, filed April 3, 2008, and 61/042,578, filed April 4, 2008 entitled *Magnetic Interference Detection System and Method*, all of which are incorporated by reference herein in their entireties. The sensor assembly 120 of the passive system is a receiver that generally includes a plurality of (preferably three) field component sensors 122, 124 and 126. Each of the field sensor components is arranged for sensing a different component of an electromagnetic field generated by the location board 140. Alternatively, the field sensor components could use ultrasound technology, or a combination of electromagnetic and ultrasound technologies.

[0040] In one embodiment, shown in Figures 2 and 3, each field component sensor 122, 124 and 126 includes two sensor elements, 122a, 122b, 124a, 124b, 126a, and 126b, respectively. Typically, the sensor elements are coils of wire, and the sensed components are independent magnetic field components. The coils may be formed by wrapping wire around a core. The core may then be removed to form an air core at the center of the coil or may be left in place, forming a solid core coil. Preferably, the solid core coils are made of a material such as ferrite or another material having similar magnetic properties.

[0041] Preferably, the sensor elements 122, 124 and 126 are arranged in the locatable guide 120 such that the sensor elements 122a and 122b are on opposite sides of, and equidistant from, a common reference point 128. Similarly, sensor elements 124a and 124b are on opposite sides of, and equidistant from, point 128, and sensor elements 126a and 126b also are on opposite sides of, and equidistant from, point 128. In the illustrated example, the sensors 122, 124 and 126 are disposed collinearly along a longitudinal axis 130 of the sensor assembly 120, but other configurations are possible.

[0042] For example, Figure 4 shows a sensor assembly 120 having field sensor components 122, 124 and 126'. Field sensor components 122 and 124 each have two sensor elements 122a and 122b, and 124a and 124b, respectively. Sensor elements 122a and 122b are on opposite sides of, and equidistant from, point 128. Sensor

elements 124a and 124b are on opposite sides of, and equidistant from, point 128. However, field sensor component 126' consists of a single coil centered on point 128.

[0043] Figure 5 shows an embodiment wherein the field sensor components 122, 124 and 126 each include two sensor elements 122c and 122d, 124c and 124d, and 126c and 126d, respectively. Each sensor element is a flat rectangular coil, of many turns of conducting wire that is bent into an arcuate shape to conform to the shape of the cylindrical surface. The dashed lines 134 and dashed circles 136 in Figure 5 denote a conceptual cylindrical surface. The sensor elements 122c, 124c and 126c are interleaved around circle 136a. The sensor elements 122d, 124d, and 126d are interleaved around circle 136b. The sensor elements 122c and 122d are preferably disposed symmetrically with respect to the reference point 128, meaning that sensor elements 122c and 122d are on opposite side of reference point 128, are equidistant from reference point 128 and are oriented so that an appropriate 180 degree rotation about point 128 maps sensor 122c into sensor 122d. Similarly, sensor elements 124c and 124d are disposed symmetrically with respect to reference point 128, and sensor elements 126c and 126d are disposed symmetrically with respect to reference point 128.

[0044] Referring again to Figure 2, the location system 100 also includes the location board 140. The location board 140 is a transmitter of electromagnetic radiation. The location board 140 includes a stack of three substantially planar rectangular loop antennas 142, 144 and 146 connected to drive circuitry 148. Figure 6 provides an expanded view of the loop antennas 142, 144 and 146 of the location board 140 in an expanded view to show the details of their configurations.

[0045] Antenna 142 is skewed in a y direction in that the loops on one side of the antenna 142 are closer together than the loops on the opposite side. Hence, antenna 142 creates a magnetic field that is stronger on the side where the loops are close together than it is on the opposite side. By measuring the strength of the current induced by the antenna 142 in the sensor assembly 120, it can be

determined where the sensor assembly 120 is located in a y direction over the antenna 142.

[0046] Antenna 144 is similarly skewed but in an x direction. Hence, the antenna 144 also creates a magnetic field that is stronger on the side where the loops are closer together than it is on the opposite side. By measuring the strength of the current induced by the antenna 144 in the sensor assembly 120, it can be determined where the sensor assembly 120 is located in an x direction over the antenna 144.

[0047] Antenna 146 is not skewed. Rather, it creates a uniform field that naturally diminishes in strength in a vertical direction when the location board is horizontal. By measuring the strength of the field induced in the sensor assembly 120, it can be determined how far the locatable guide is located above the antenna 146.

[0048] In order to distinguish one magnetic field from another, the fields of each antenna 142, 144 and 146 are generated using independent frequencies. For example, antenna 142 might be supplied with alternating current oscillating at 2.5 kHz, antenna 144 might be supplied with alternating current oscillating at 3.0 kHz, and antenna 146 might be supplied with alternating current oscillating at 3.5 kHz. Hence, each of the field sensors 122, 124, and 126 of the locatable guide will have three different alternating current signals induced in its coils.

[0049] Driving circuitry 148 includes appropriate signal generators and amplifiers for driving each of the loop antennas 142, 144 and 146 at their corresponding frequencies. The electromagnetic waves generated by the location board 140 are received by the sensor assembly 120 and converted into electrical signals that are then sent to the control system 180, shown diagrammatically in Figure 2.

[0050] The control system 180 generally includes reception circuitry 182 that has appropriate amplifiers and A/D converters. The reception circuitry 182 and the

driving circuitry 148, which may be considered part of the control system 180, are controlled by a controller/processor 184 that typically is an appropriately programmed computer. The controller/processor 184 directs the generation of transmitted signals by driving circuitry 148.

[0051] A location system 100 using an active sensor assembly 120 is shown and described in U.S. Patent 6,188,355 to Gilboa, entitled Wireless Six-Degree-of-Freedom Locator. The entirety of the patent is incorporated by reference herein. The principles of operation are similar to the operation of the passive sensor assembly system except that electrical current is sent to the sensor assembly 120, such that magnetic fields are generated thereby. These magnetic fields are then detected by other sensors and that information is used to determine a location of the probe in which the sensor assembly 120 is located.

[0052] Optic System 200

[0053] Referring to Figures 7 and 8, the optic system 200 generally includes an objective lens 210 and one or more light sources 220, all preferably contained under a sealed optic window 240. The optic system 200 may operate within or outside of the visible spectrum. As an example only, the optic system 200 may be an infrared system. If an optic cleaning system 300, described below, is to be used, it may be preferably to make the optic window 240 flush with the distal end of the catheter 10, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the cleaning system 300.

[0054] If, however, a wide-angle view is desired, there may be utility in providing a convex optic window 240 that protrudes from the distal tip 30 of the catheter 10. This may allow the lens 210 to be closer to, or beyond the distal tip 30 of the catheter body.

[0055] The objective lens 210 may be borrowed from existing technology such as a CMOS, fiberscope or a microvideo system. The lens 210 may also be a hybrid between fiberscope and video technology, such as that found on the Olympus BF

type XP160F, also marketed as the Evis Exera Bronchofibervideoscope (hereinafter "Olympus scope").

[0056] The Olympus scope includes a 1.2mm working channel for a tool but, unlike the present invention, does not have an optical cleaning system, does not have a location system, and does not fit within a 2.65mm working channel. The Olympus scope has an outside diameter of 2.8mm.

[0057] Nevertheless, the lens system of the Olympus scope may have application in the catheter of the present invention. The Olympus scope uses a single, relatively large, light source. The present invention provides a plurality of individual, very small fibers, each acting as light guides 220 to illuminate the target. By providing a plurality of small light sources 220, rather than one larger light source, more space-saving options become available and it is possible to reduce the overall diameter of the catheter 10.

[0058] The light fibers 220 terminate at a floor 230 of the optic system 200. A space between the floor 230 and the optic window 240 provides room for additional components 250 and also results in an internal sidewall 260 surrounding the floor 230. In one embodiment, this sidewall includes a reflective material, which acts to maximize the amount of light being transmitted through the optic window 240.

[0059] As best seen in Figure 8, the optic system 200 has a relatively short axial length. This leaves room immediately below (proximal) the optic system 200 for the sensor assembly 100. The light fibers 220 have room around the outside of the sensor assembly 100 to travel the length of the catheter for connection to a light source (not shown).

[0060] Optic Cleaning System 300

[0061] The optic cleaning system 300 is shown generally in Figure 9. The optic cleaning system 300 includes a nozzle 310 located at the distal tip 30 of the catheter 10 and directed toward the optic window 240. The nozzle 310 is supplied via a lumen with a pressurized liquid or gas. The nozzle directs a stream 320 of the

pressurized liquid or gas onto the optic window 240 in order to mechanically remove and/or chemically clean mucous, blood, tissue or other debris from the optic window 240. The liquid or gas may be any liquid or gas that can be absorbed by the lungs or exhaled without harming the patient. Liquids may include water, saline, and the like. Gases may include oxygen, nitrogen, helium, air, and the like.

[0062] Preferably, the optic cleaning system 300 is fed by a small supply of liquid or gas that is located in a portion of the catheter system 10 that remains outside of the patient, such as the handle. Similarly, locating the valve associated with the actuating system near the supply, as opposed to near the nozzle 310, will reduce the amount of space occupied by the cleaning system 300. If, on the other hand, space along the length of the catheter 10 is in short supply, but there is room for a small reservoir at the tip 30 of the catheter, it is envisioned that a reservoir and valve mechanism be located at the tip 30 and electrically controlled by a small wire running the length of the catheter 10, obviating the need for a supply lumen.

[0063] Tool 400

[0064] The catheter 10 includes a working channel 20, preferably having an outside diameter of about 1.2mm, that can accommodate a tool 400. The tool 400 may be any endoscopic tool, such as forceps, graspers, brushes, markers, seeds, ablation tools, and the like. By way of example only, several embodiments of a tool 400 are discussed in greater detail herein.

[0065] Referring now to Figures 10 – 14, there is shown a needle embodiment of the tool 400. This tool 400 includes a needle tip 410 attached to the distal end of a flexible tube 420. The flexible tube 420 may then be attached to the distal end of a larger flexible tube 430. This arrangement creates a shoulder 440 between the tubes 420 and 430, which can be used as a stop that limits the extent to which the needle tip 410 may be extended from the distal end of the catheter 10.

[0066] The example shown in Figure 12 includes a needle tip 410, which is a 20 gauge needle having an outside diameter of approximately 0.9mm. The length of

the needle tip 410 is approximately 19mm. It is understood that the length of the needle tip 410 should be selected considering the task the needle tip 410 is to be given as well as the target location. Because the needle is generally inflexible, a longer needle tip 410 will result in a longer inflexible tip portion 30 of the catheter 10, which in turn hampers the navigability of the catheter 10.

[0067] The flexible tube 420 may be made of any suitable, biocompatible material having a desired amount of flexibility and axial strength. A material selected for the embodiment of Figure 12 is transparent nylon. The outside diameter of flexible tube 420 preferably matches the outside diameter of the needle tip 410. The length of the flexible tube 420 is selected to place the shoulder 440 in a desired position to interact with a stop 450 (Figures 13 and 14) and result in a desired maximum extension length of the needle tip 410. It is envisioned that the flexible tube 420 may have a friction fit with the larger flexible tube 430 such that the effective length of the flexible tube 420 may be adjusted for a given procedure by sliding the flexible tube 430 into or out of the larger flexible tube 430 prior to the procedure.

[0068] The larger flexible tube 430 of this embodiment is a PEEK tube with an outside diameter of 1.15mm and extends to the handle of the bronchoscope. The difference in outside diameter of the flexible tube 420 (in this example, 0.9mm) and the outside diameter of the larger tube 430 (in this example, 1.15mm) results in the shoulder 440. Hence, in this example, the shoulder 440 has a height of 0.125mm.

[0069] Figures 13 and 14 show the tool 400 in retracted and extended positions, respectively. In the retracted position of Figure 13, the needle tip 410 is completely contained within the working channel 20 of the catheter 10. A separation exists between the shoulder 430 and a needle stop 450 within the working channel 20.

[0070] In the extended position of Figure 14, the needle tip 410 protrudes beyond the distal tip 30 of the catheter 10. The shoulder 440 abuts against the stop 450, thereby preventing the needle 410 from being extended further.

[0071] Needle uses are known in the art and are applicable to the needle 410 of the present invention. For example, the needle tip 410, the flexible tube 420 and the larger flexible tube 430 all have a central lumen which can be made to create one continuous lumen 460 throughout the tool 400. This lumen 460 can be used to apply suction to the tool 400, thereby creating an aspirating needle or a biopsy needle. The lumen 460 can also be used as an irrigation port or a means for injecting substances into the target. Alternatively, as shown in Figure 11, a separate irrigation lumen 490 can be provided in catheter 10 to be used in conjunction with aspirating suction applied to the tool 400.

[0072] If the needle 410 is to be used for biopsy purposes, one skilled in the art will realize that it may be desirable to keep the tissue sample contained within a distal section of the needle 410 for easy retrieval of the sample after the procedure. In this case the needle lumen 460 may be larger than a suction lumen 470, as seen in Figure 11. Hence, a stop 480 is created that prevents the tissue from traveling too far into the catheter 10.

[0073] One embodiment of the present invention uses a needle tip 410 or other suitable delivery device to inject one or more markers into the target site. Markers, such as gold markers, can be used as fiducials in an image-guided radiosurgery treatment during interstitial radiation. The insertion of internal fiducial markers into various organs assists in precise setup and real-time tumor tracking during radiotherapy. Markers may also be used to adjust the center of mass of the target volume to a planned position for an upcoming treatment. The markers are visible on x-ray, CT, MR, or other imaging technique and a device that delivers external beam radiation therapy can use the markers to plan and localize radiation delivery. The detection of fiducial gold markers is useful during automatic on-line megavoltage position verification using a marker extraction kernel (MEK). The markers allow for accurate tumor location three-dimensionally throughout the treatment. Alternatively, it is envisioned that the lumen 460 may be used with a pusher to deliver the markers.

[0074] Similarly, the needle 410 can be used to implant seeds for brachytherapy, as one skilled in the art will realize. The added navigation accuracy of the catheter 10 made possible by the combination of the location system 100 and the optic system 200 makes the catheter 10 an ideal vehicle for the precise delivery of brachytherapy seeds.

[0075] Positive results have been obtained using a needle 410 that is an NMPE needle with a three-sided Trocar stylet. This particular needle 410 was made with 18-gauge thin-walled tubing and has an echogenically enhanced tip for use in combination with ultrasonically guided implants. The needle 410 also has an outer cannula chamber for smooth transition.

[0076] Existing seed implant needles may also be used in combination with the present invention. One example of an existing seed implant needle is the Bard BrachyStar® Needle.

[0077] Steering System 500

[0078] The steering system 500 may utilize any combination of retractable wires and/or pre-formed bends. One embodiment of a steering mechanism 500 is shown on the catheter tip 30 of Figure 15. Represented is a cross-section of the distal end of a catheter 10. The steering mechanism 500 includes a distal housing 510 that contains the location system 100, defines the distal end of the working channel 20, and seals the end of the catheter 10. The distal housing 510 also defines one or more (in this case four) steering wire lumens 520 for receiving steering wires 530. The steering wire lumens 520 extend the length of the catheter 10 but the portions of the lumens 520 defined by the distal housing 510 are slightly larger to accommodate an anchor ball 540 at the distal ends of the steering wires 530. At a proximal end of the lumen 520, the diameter narrows to that of the steering wire 530, thereby creating a shoulder 550 against which the anchor ball 540 acts when pulled.

[0079] Figures 16 - 19 show a variation on the design of Figure 15 in which three steering wires 530 are used instead of four. As seen in Figure 17, the steering mechanism 500 extends from the proximal side of the catheter tip 30 and includes three steering wires 530 spaced 120 degrees apart.

[0080] As shown in Figures 17-19, rather than extending the steering wire lumens 520 to the distal end of the catheter tip 30, access ports 525 are provided such that the steering wires 530 may be routed into the sides of the catheter tip 30 and down to the proximal end of the catheter 10.

[0081] Figure 20 shows another embodiment of a steering system 500 of the present invention. Here, a manifold 560 is provided that separates the catheter tip 30 from the rest of the catheter 10. The manifold 560 includes channels 570 that route a steering wire 530 around the periphery of the disk 560 and back toward the proximal end of the catheter. Thus, one steering wire 530 becomes looped and effectively becomes two steering wires.

[0082] Examples of other steering mechanisms that may be used with the catheter 10 of the present invention include, but are not limited to, those discussed in U.S. Patent 6,702,780 to Gilboa et al.

[0083] Catheter Design

[0084] The catheter body 600 is flexible and carries all of the lumens, steering wires, tools, etc. that are employed by the various tip 30 designs of the present invention. Hence, this section will largely consist of a discussion of the various arrangements envisioned by the present invention. Common to all embodiments, is that the body 600 is preferably sized to fit within the working channel of a typical bronchoscope. Notably, however, the minimum bending radius of the body 600, while inside the working channel of the bronchoscope, is advantageously reduced by a reduced tip 30 length, as shown in Figure 21.

[0085] More specifically, Figure 21 shows a comparison between a prior art catheter 1 with a longer tip 2 and a catheter 10 of the present invention with a

shorter tip 30. Both catheters 1 and 10 have the same diameter and are contained within identical working channels 3. The bending radius is limited by the length of the non-flexible tips 2 and 30. A shorter tip 30 allows a tighter bending radius.

[0086] Several examples of different configurations of catheters 10 of the present invention are shown in Figures 22 – 23. The configurations are juxtaposed adjacent a prior art catheter 1 to show differences in sizes. Figure 22 shows elevations of the various catheters while Figure 23 shows corresponding end views of the distal tips.

[0087] The prior art catheter 1 has a tip 2 attached to a flexible, steerable segment 4. The tip 2 is 10.2 mm long and has a diameter that is less than 2.65mm. However, the location sensor 100 occupies substantially all of the tip 2.

[0088] Configuration 700 includes a tip 702 attached to a flexible, steerable segment 704. The tip 702 contains a 19 Ga needle 400, a sensor 100 and two irrigation lumens 490, one for irrigation fluid supply and one for applying suction. The tip 702 is 6.8 mm long and the flexible, steerable segment 704 is constructed of a flexible material such as nylon.

[0089] Configuration 710 includes a tip 712 attached to a flexible, steerable segment 714. The tip 712 contains a 1.2mm working channel, a sensor 100, and two looped steering wires 530. The tip 712 is 6.4 mm long and the flexible, steerable segment 714 is constructed of transparent flexible nylon.

[0090] Configuration 720 includes a tip 722 attached to a flexible, steerable segment 724. The tip 722 contains a 1.2mm working channel, a sensor 100, and four steering wires 530. The tip 722 is 6.4 mm long and the flexible, steerable segment 724 is constructed of transparent flexible nylon.

[0091] Configuration 730 includes a tip 732 attached to a flexible, steerable segment 734. The tip 732 contains a 1.2mm working channel and a sensor 100, and four access ports 525 containing the distal ends of four steering wires 530. The tip 722 is 6.4 mm long and the flexible, steerable segment 724 is constructed of transparent flexible nylon.

[0092] Configuration 740 includes a tip 742 attached to a flexible, steerable segment 744. The tip 742 contains a 1.2mm working channel with a needle 400 contained therein, a sensor 100, and four access ports 525 containing the distal ends of four steering wires 530. The tip 722 is 6.4 mm long and the flexible, steerable segment 724 is constructed of a flexible spring segment.

[0093] Configuration 750 includes a tip 752 attached to a flexible, steerable segment 754. The tip 752 contains a 1.2mm working channel, a sensor 100, four access ports 525 containing the distal ends of four steering wires 530, an irrigation lumen 490, an optic system 200, and an optic cleaning system 300. The tip 752 is 8.5mm long to accommodate the optic system 200 and the flexible, steerable segment 754 is constructed of a flexible material such as nylon.

[0094] Although the invention has been described in terms of particular embodiments and applications, one of ordinary skill in the art, in light of this teaching, can generate additional embodiments and modifications without departing from the spirit of or exceeding the scope of the claimed invention. Accordingly, it is to be understood that the drawings and descriptions herein are proffered by way of example to facilitate comprehension of the invention and should not be construed to limit the scope thereof.

CLAIMS:

1. A probe for use through a working channel of a bronchoscope comprising:

a location sensor in a distal end of said probe, said location sensor usable in combination with a location system for determining a location and orientation of said probe distal end;

a working channel extending axially through said probe;

an optical assembly, usable to communicate visual imagery data to a monitor of an optical scope system;

a steering mechanism capable of deflecting an end of said probe.

2. The probe of claim 1 wherein said location sensor comprises an active sensor.

3. The probe of claim 1 wherein said location sensor comprises a passive sensor.

4. The probe of claim 2 wherein said active sensor comprises a magnetic field generator.

5. The probe of claim 3 wherein said passive sensor comprises at least one coil responsive to a magnetic field.

6. The probe of claim 1 wherein said location sensor comprises a 6 degree of freedom sensor.

7. The probe of claim 1 wherein said optical assembly comprises an objective lens.

8. The probe of claim 7 wherein said optical assembly further comprises at least one light source.

9. The probe of claim 7 wherein said optical assembly further comprises a sealed optic window.

10. The probe of claim 1 wherein said optical assembly comprises an optical assembly that operates within the visible spectrum.
11. The probe of claim 1 wherein said optical assembly comprises an infrared optical system.
12. The probe of claim 9 wherein said optic window is flush with a distal end of said probe.
13. The probe of claim 9 wherein said optic window is convex and said objective lens protrudes from a distal end of said probe.
14. The probe of claim 7 wherein said objective lens comprises a CMOS lens.
15. The probe of claim 7 wherein said objective lens comprises a fiberscope.
16. The probe of claim 7 wherein said objective lens comprises a microvideo lens.
17. The probe of claim 7 wherein said objective lens comprises a hybrid between a fiberscope and a video lens.
18. The probe of claim 1 wherein probe has an outside diameter of less than 2.65mm.
19. The probe of claim 1 wherein said optical assembly comprises a plurality of light sources.
20. The probe of claim 19 wherein said plurality of light sources comprises a plurality of light fibers.
21. The probe of claim 20 wherein said light fibers terminate at a floor of said optical assembly.

22. The probe of claim 1 wherein said optical assembly comprises an optical window and a floor spaced apart from said optical window.
23. The probe of claim 22 wherein said optical assembly further comprises walls extending between said floor and said optical window.
24. The probe of claim 23 wherein said walls comprise reflective material.
25. The probe of claim 1 further comprising an optic cleaning system.
26. The probe of claim 25 wherein said optic cleaning system comprises a nozzle directed toward said optical assembly.
27. The probe of claim 26 wherein said optic cleaning system comprises a reservoir located near a proximal end of said probe, in fluid communication with said nozzle.
28. The probe of claim 1 further comprising a tool, extendable from said distal end.
29. The probe of claim 28 wherein said tool extends through said working channel.
30. The probe of claim 28 wherein said tool comprises a needle.
31. The probe of claim 28 wherein said tool comprises a marker delivery needle.
32. The probe of claim 28 wherein said tool comprises a biopsy device.
33. The probe of claim 28 wherein said tool comprises a brachytherapy seed delivery device.

34. The probe of claim 1 wherein said steering mechanism comprises at least one steering wire attached to said probe end.
35. The probe of claim 1 wherein said steering mechanism comprises a passive curve preformed at the distal end of said probe.
36. A probe for use through a working channel of a bronchoscope comprising:
- a catheter body having a proximal end and a distal end, said body having an outside diameter of less than 2.65mm such that it may pass through a working channel of a bronchoscope;
 - a tool lumen extending through said catheter body;
 - an optical assembly, usable to communicate visual imagery data to a monitor of an optical scope system;
 - a tool passable through said tool lumen and extendable from the distal end of the catheter body.
37. The probe of claim 36 further comprising a location sensor in said catheter body distal end, said location sensor usable in combination with a location system for determining a location and orientation of said probe distal end.
38. The probe of claim 36 wherein said location sensor comprises an active sensor.
39. The probe of claim 36 wherein said location sensor comprises a passive sensor.
40. The probe of claim 38 wherein said active sensor comprises a magnetic field generator.
41. The probe of claim 39 wherein said passive sensor comprises at least one coil responsive to a magnetic field.

42. The probe of claim 36 wherein said location sensor comprises a 6 degree of freedom sensor.
43. The probe of claim 36 wherein said optical assembly comprises an objective lens.
44. The probe of claim 43 wherein said optical assembly further comprises at least one light source.
45. The probe of claim 43 wherein said optical assembly further comprises a sealed optic window.
46. The probe of claim 36 wherein said optical assembly comprises an optical assembly that operates within the visible spectrum.
47. The probe of claim 36 wherein said optical assembly comprises an infrared optical system.
48. The probe of claim 45 wherein said optic window is flush with a distal end of said probe.
49. The probe of claim 45 wherein said optic window is convex and said objective lens protrudes from a distal end of said probe.
50. The probe of claim 43 wherein said objective lens comprises a CMOS lens.
51. The probe of claim 43 wherein said objective lens comprises a fiberscope.
52. The probe of claim 43 wherein said objective lens comprises a microvideo lens.
53. The probe of claim 43 wherein said objective lens comprises a hybrid between a fiberscope and a video lens.

54. The probe of claim 36 wherein said optical assembly comprises a plurality of light sources.
55. The probe of claim 54 wherein said plurality of light sources comprises a plurality of light fibers.
56. The probe of claim 55 wherein said light fibers terminate at a floor of said optical assembly.
57. The probe of claim 36 wherein said optical assembly comprises an optical window and a floor spaced apart from said optical window.
58. The probe of claim 57 wherein said optical assembly further comprises walls extending between said floor and said optical window.
59. The probe of claim 58 wherein said walls comprise reflective material.
60. The probe of claim 36 further comprising an optic cleaning system.
61. The probe of claim 60 wherein said optic cleaning system comprises a nozzle directed toward said optical assembly.
62. The probe of claim 61 wherein said optic cleaning system comprises a reservoir located near a proximal end of said probe, in fluid communication with said nozzle.
63. The probe of claim 36 further comprising a tool, extendable from said distal end.
64. A method of treating target tissue in a distal portion of the lungs comprising:

using a bronchoscope to visually navigate through proximal airways in a distal direction toward said target tissue until said airways become too narrow for said bronchoscope;

extending through a working channel of said bronchoscope, a probe having a navigation system and a tool lumen;

navigating said probe to said target tissue;

extending through said tool lumen, a tool usable to treat said target tissue.

65. The method of claim 64 wherein extending through a working channel of said bronchoscope, a probe having a navigation system and a tool lumen comprises extending through said working channel of said bronchoscope, a probe having an optical navigation system.

66. The method of claim 64 wherein extending through a working channel of said bronchoscope, a probe having a navigation system and a tool lumen comprises extending through said working channel of said bronchoscope, a probe having an electromagnetic navigation system.

67. The method of claim 64 wherein extending through a working channel of said bronchoscope, a probe having a navigation system and a tool lumen comprises extending through said working channel of said bronchoscope, a probe having an optical navigation system and an electromagnetic system.

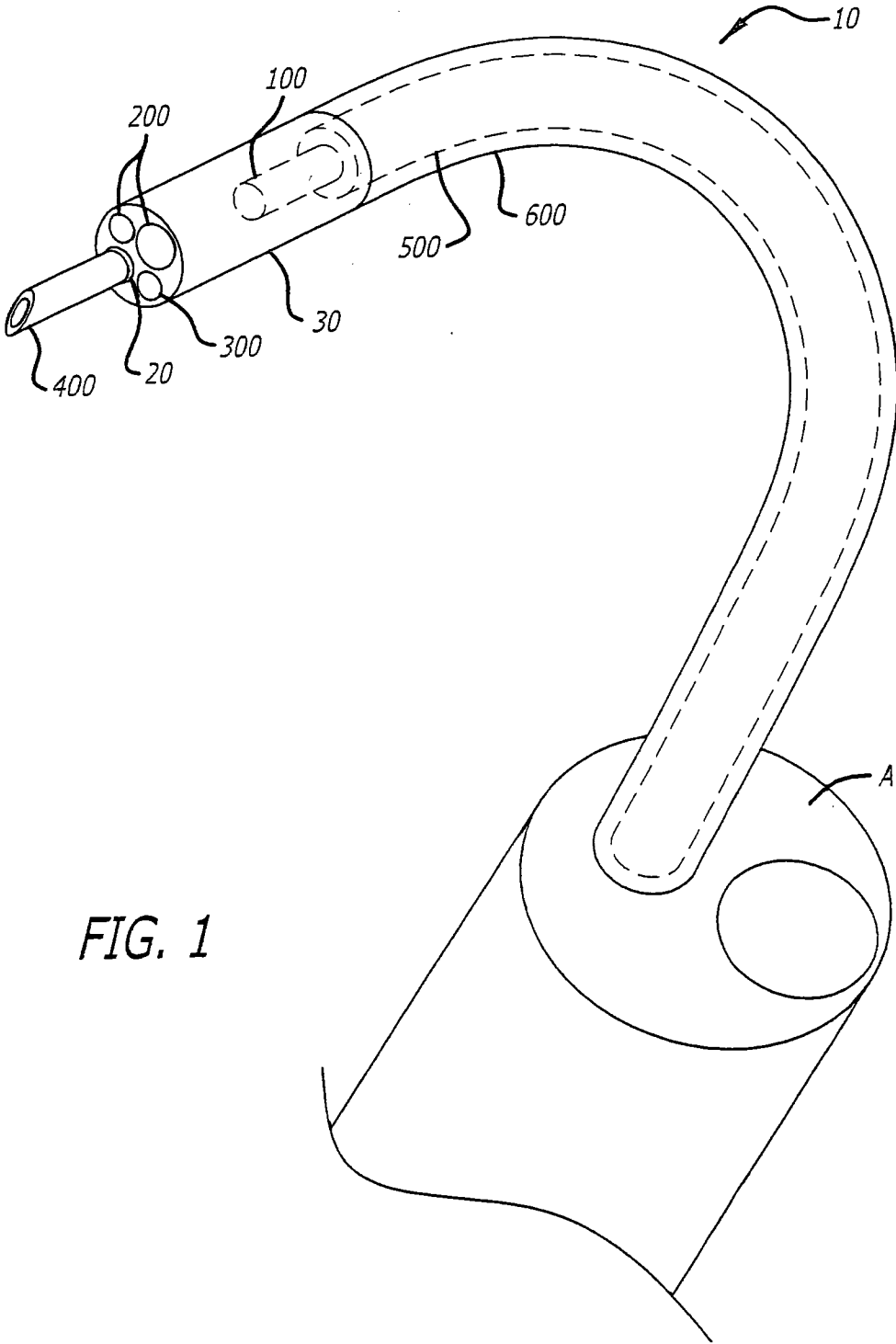


FIG. 1

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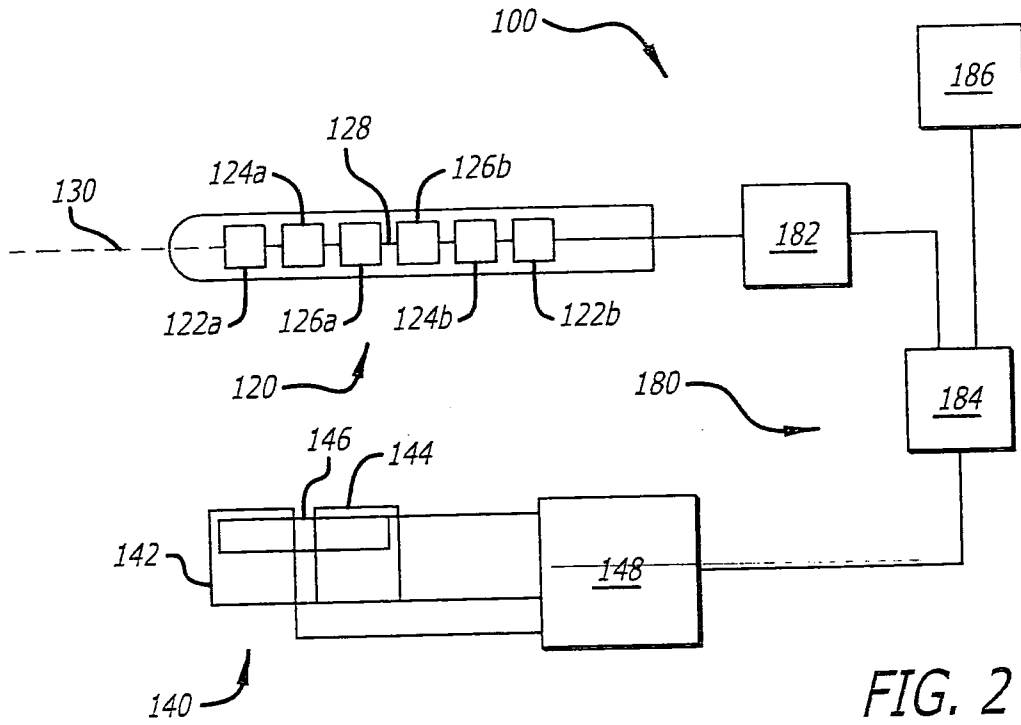


FIG. 2

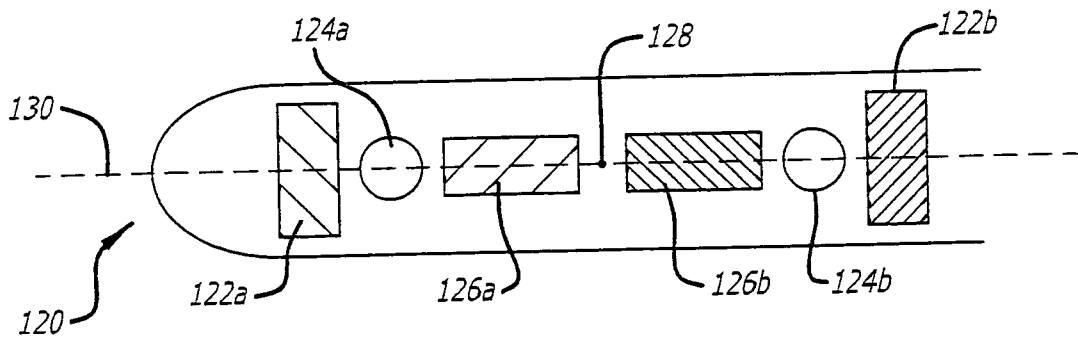
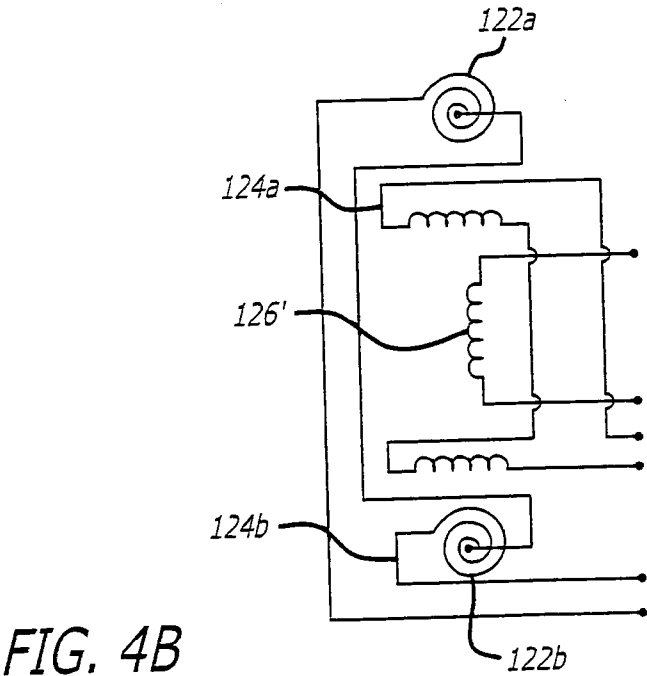
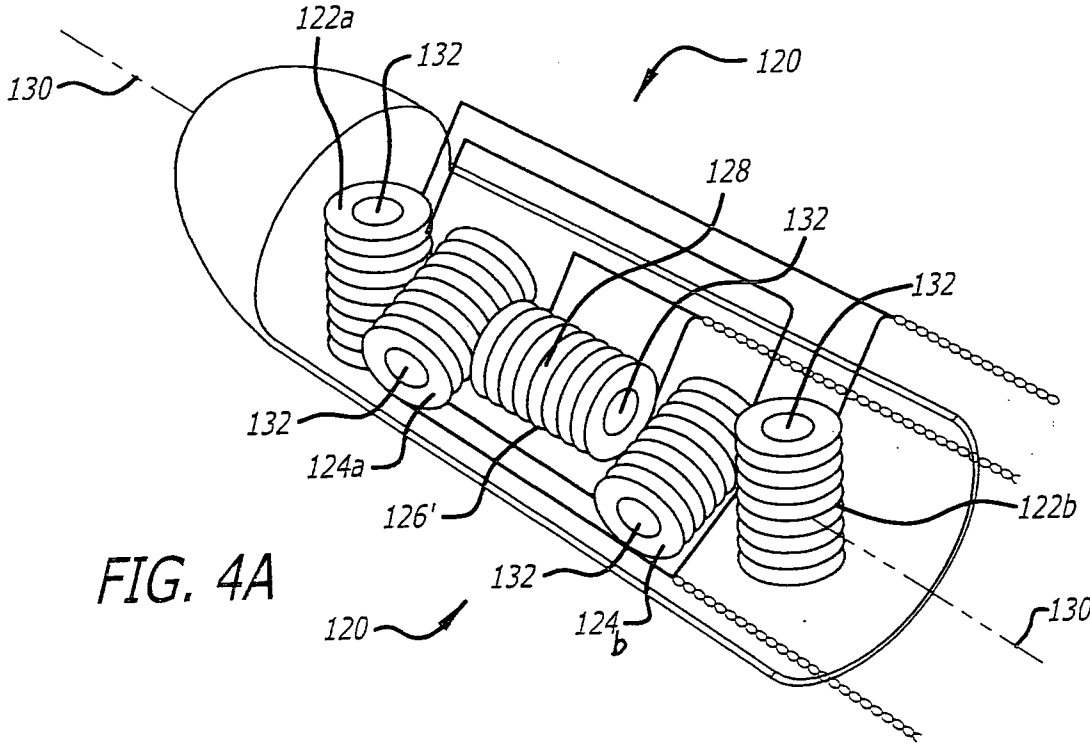


FIG. 3



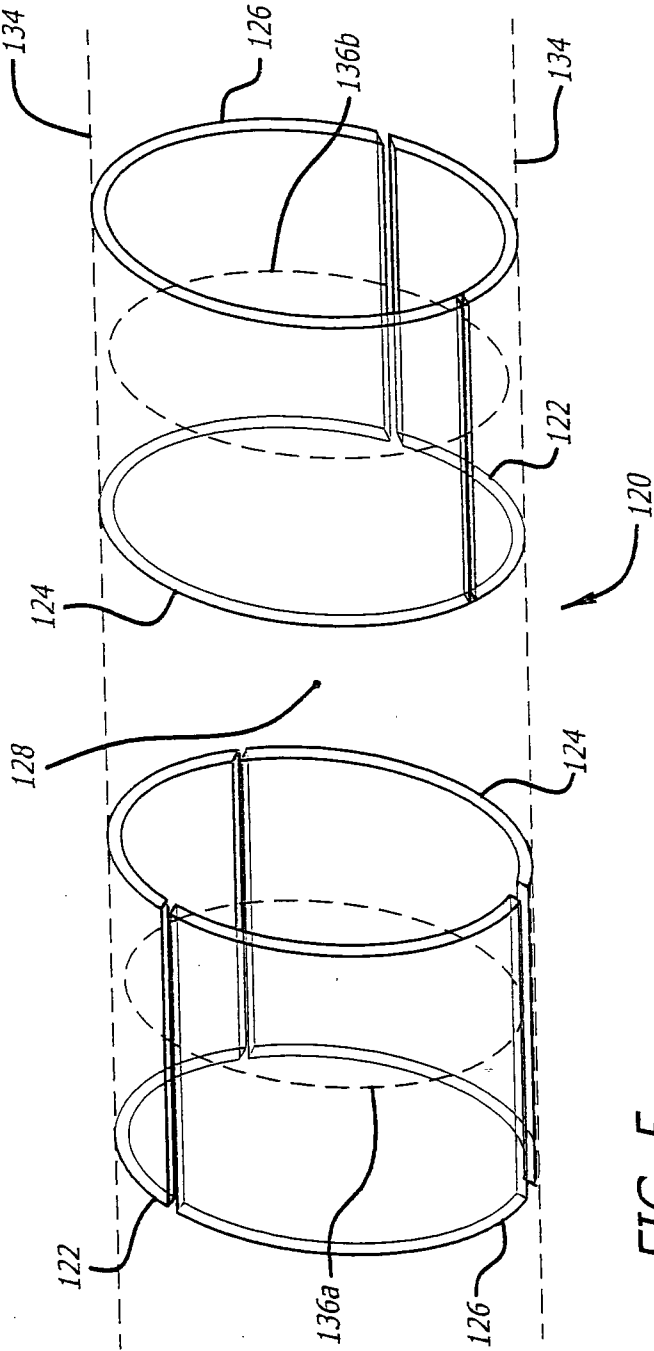
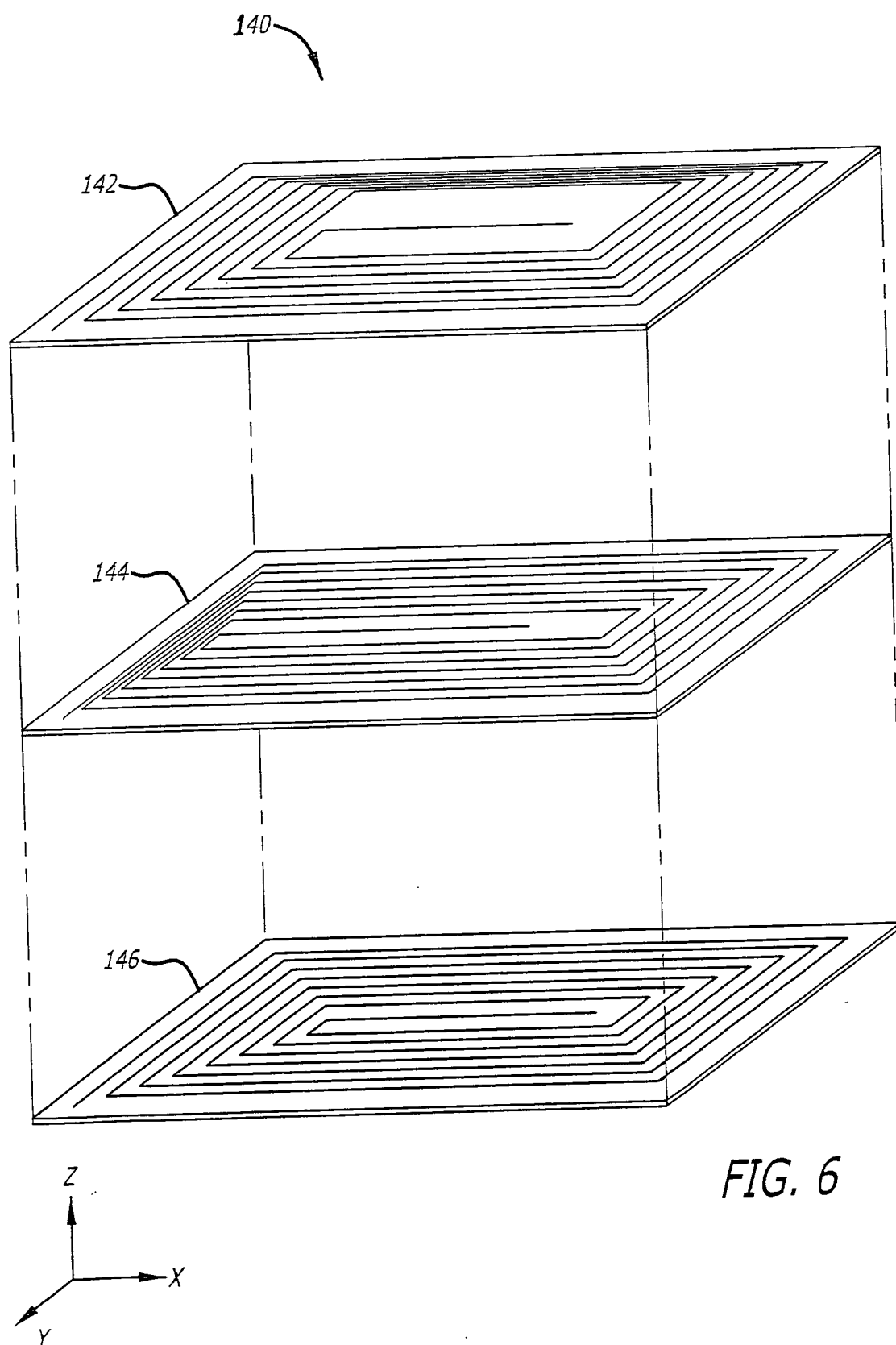
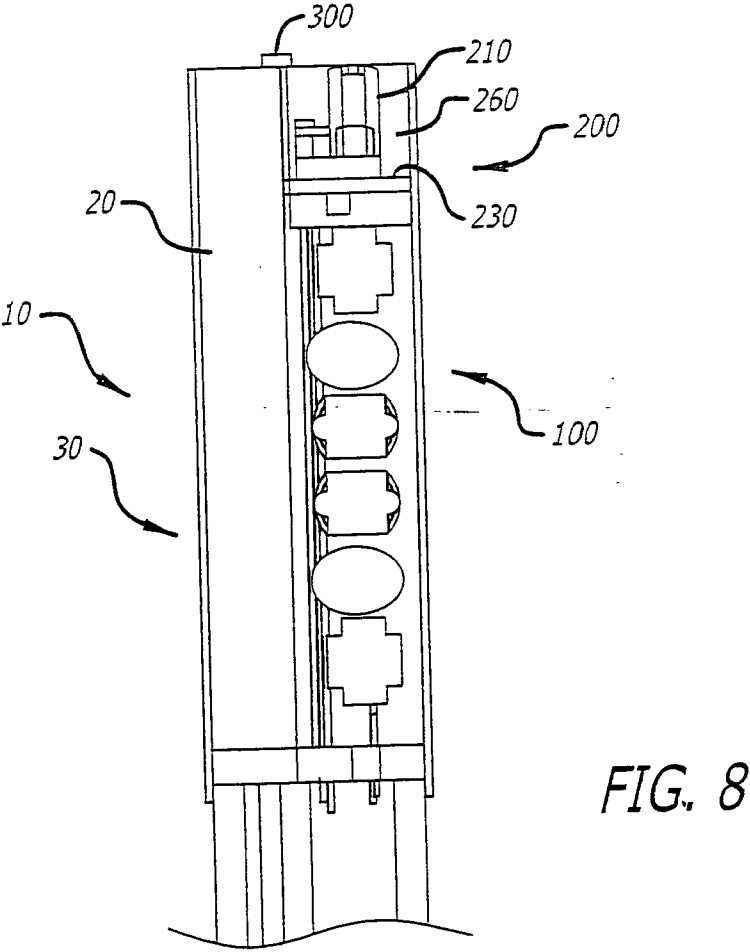
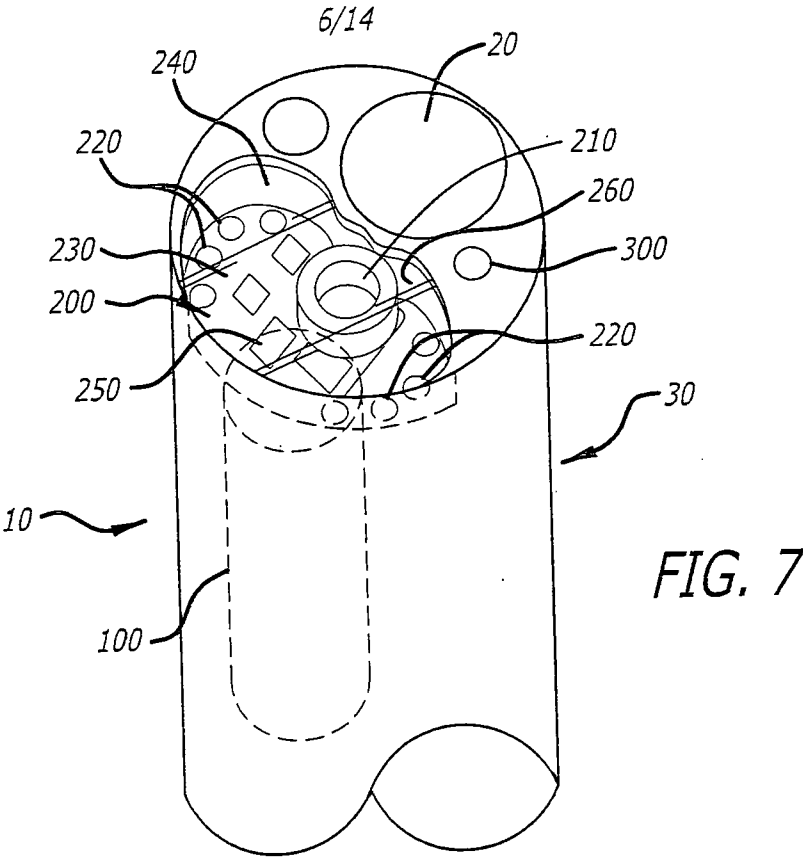
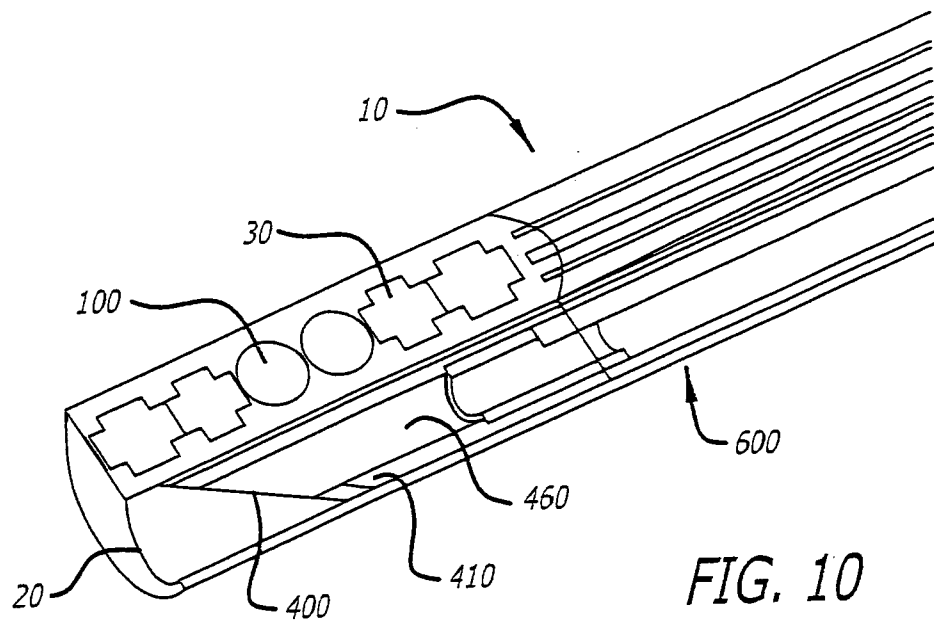
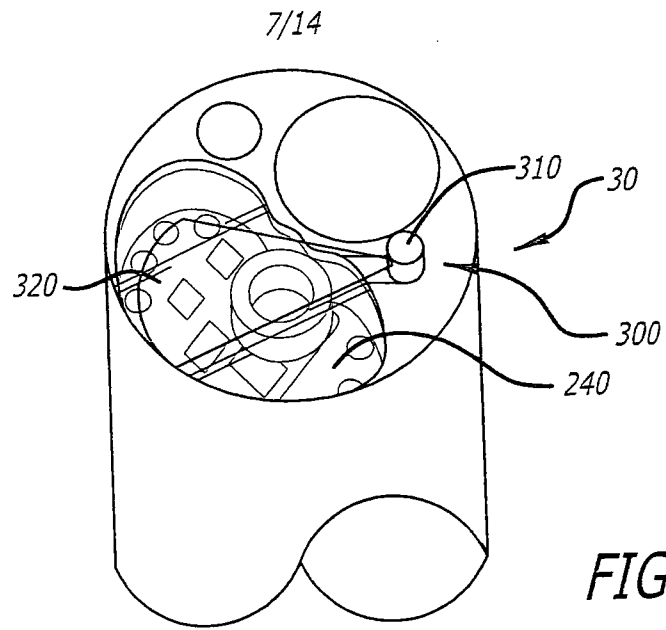


FIG. 5

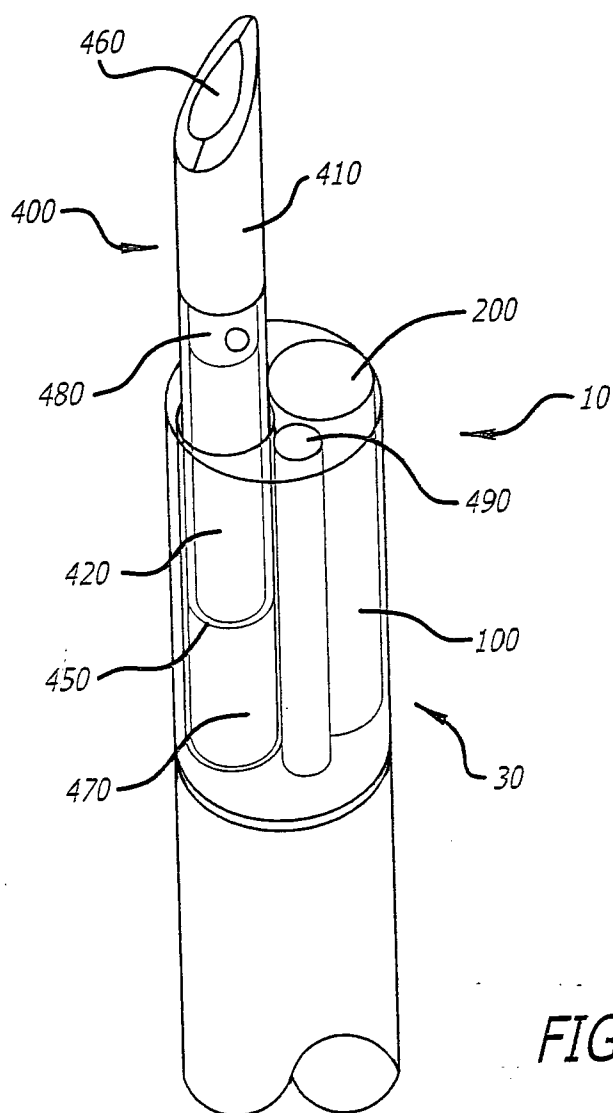
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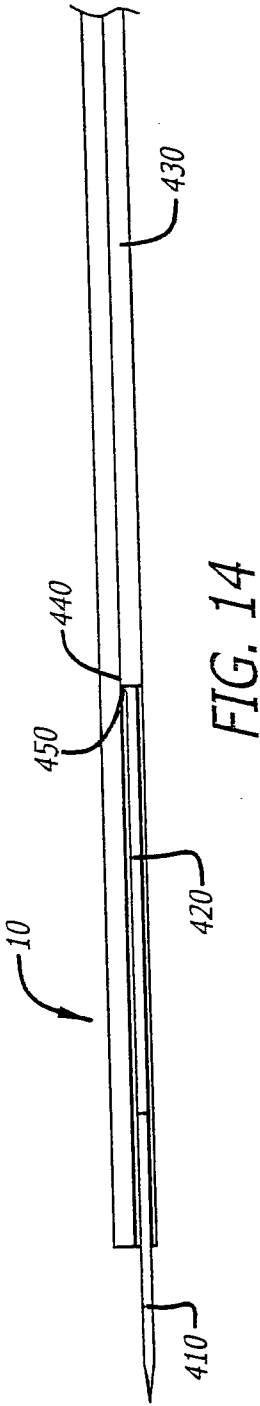
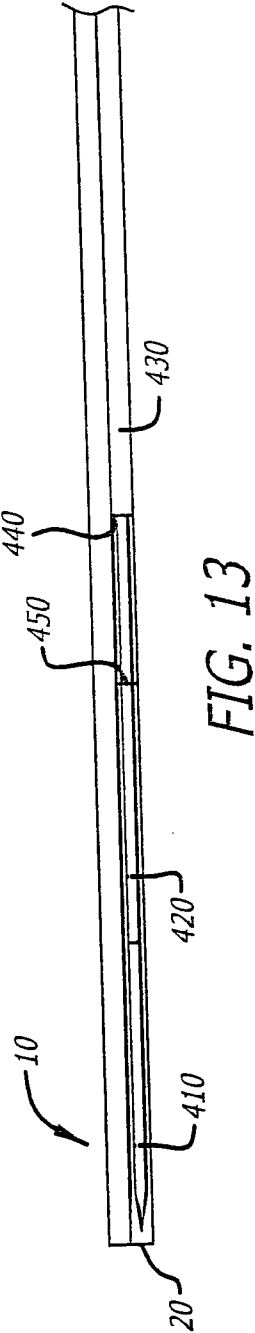
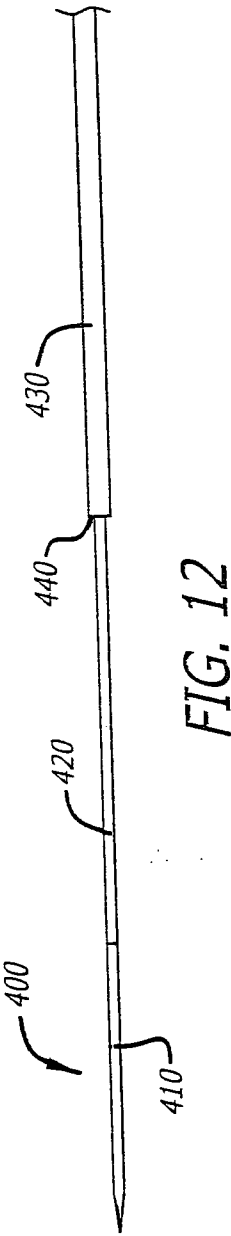






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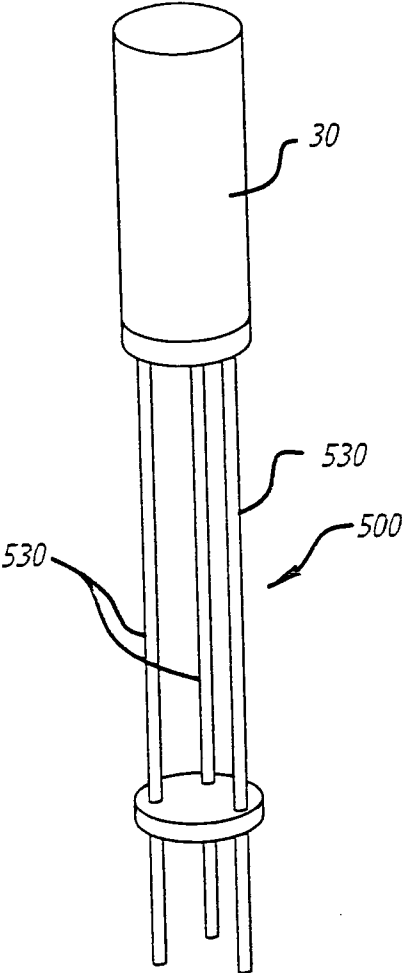
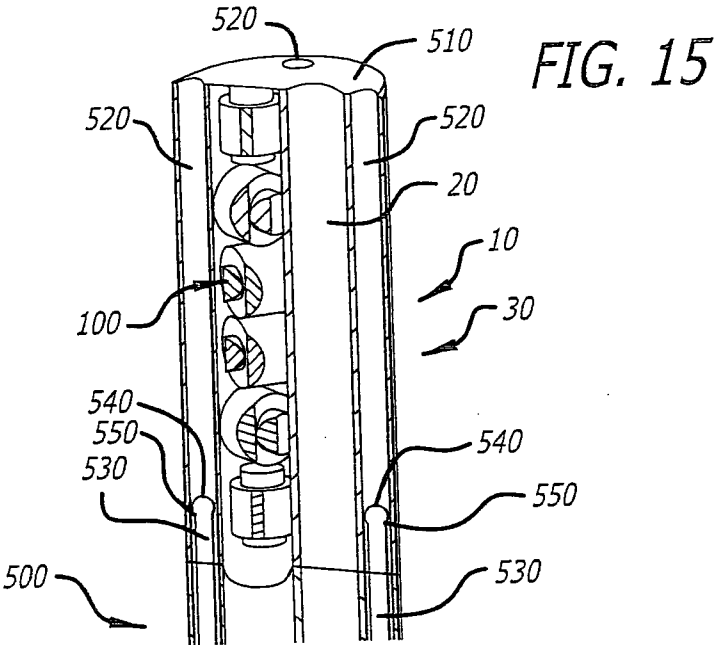
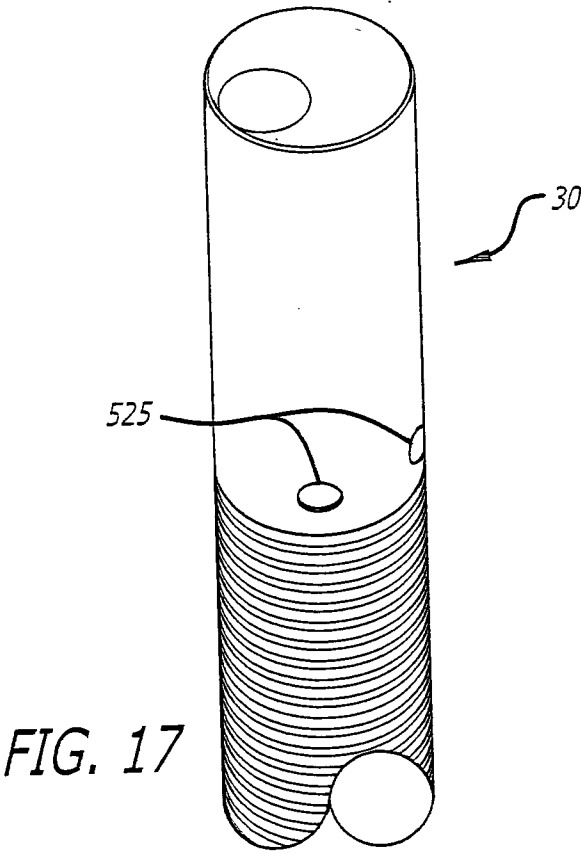


FIG. 16



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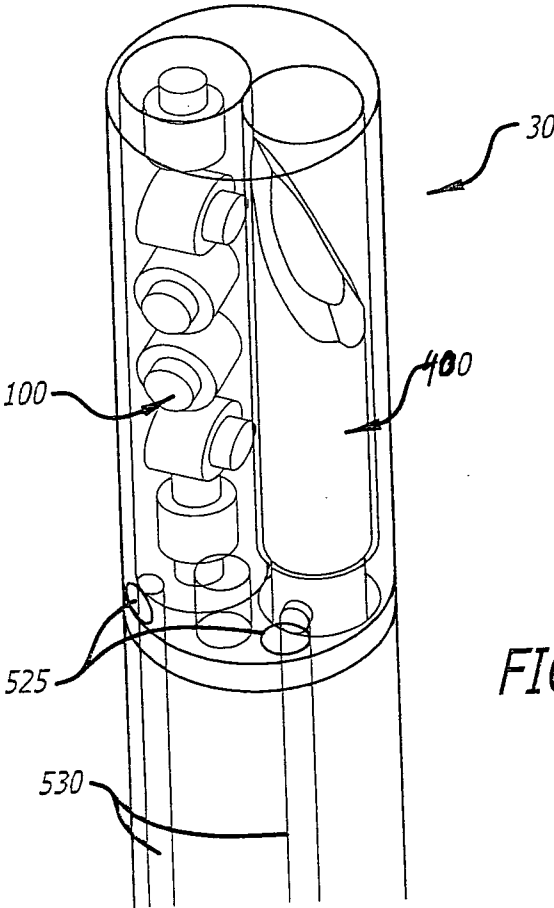


FIG. 18

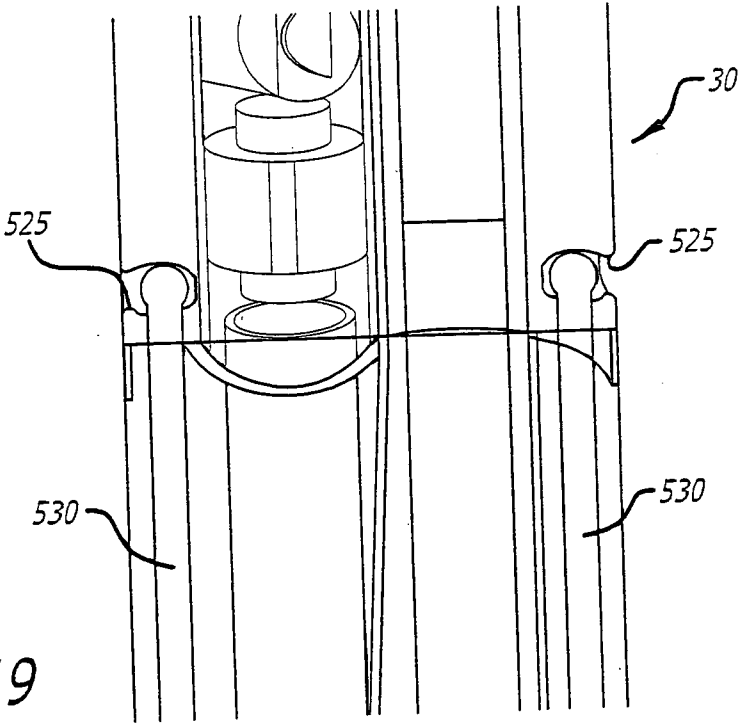


FIG. 19

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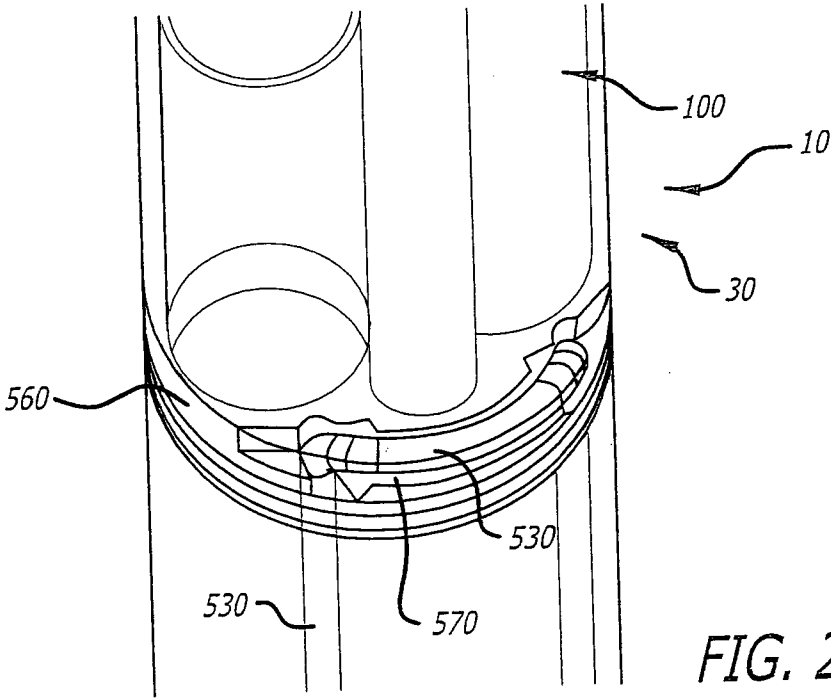


FIG. 20

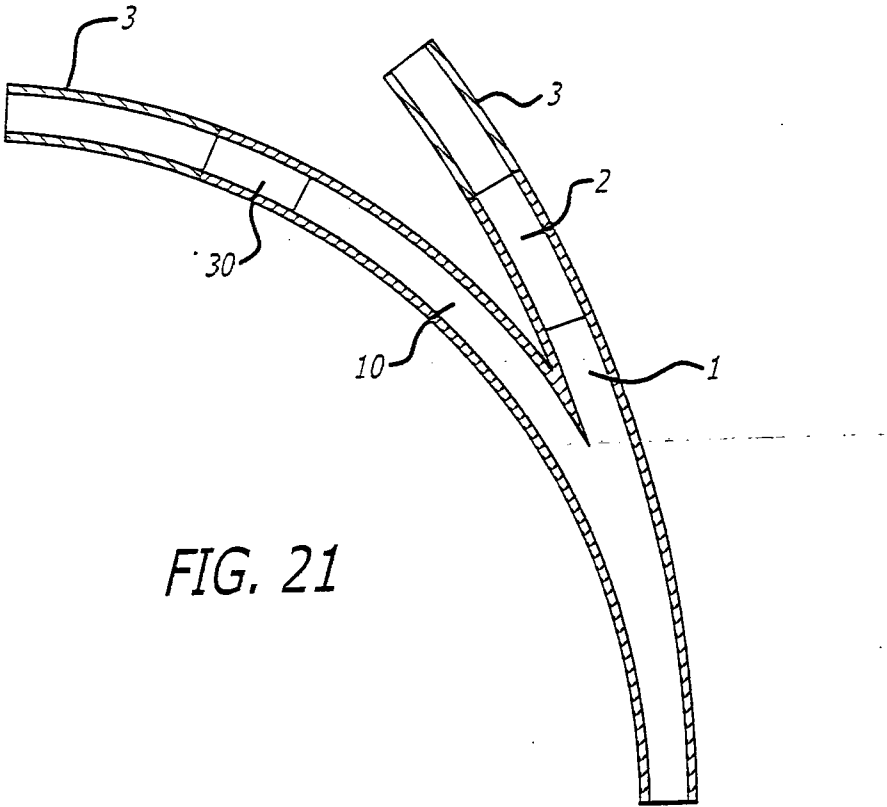


FIG. 21

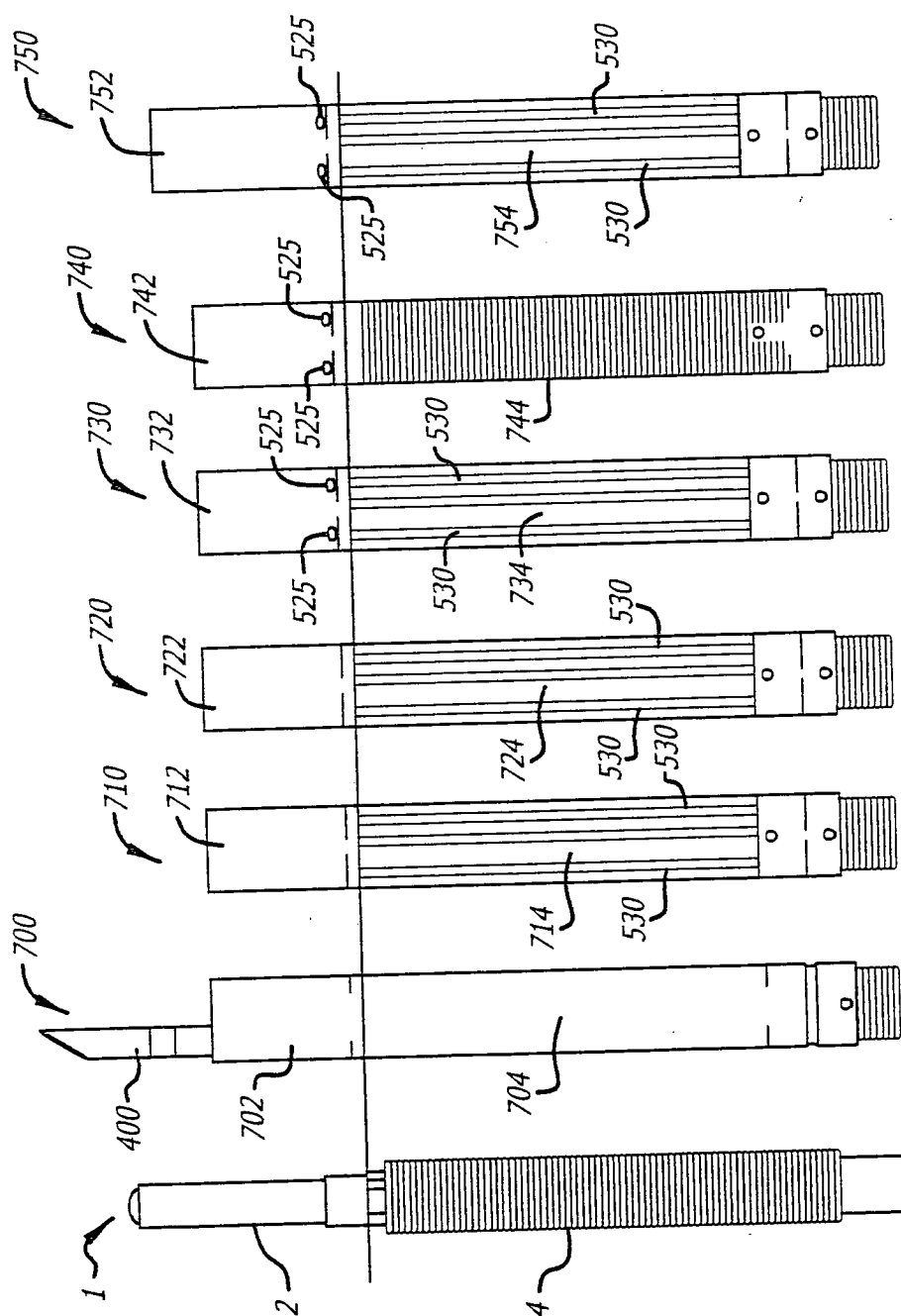


FIG. 22

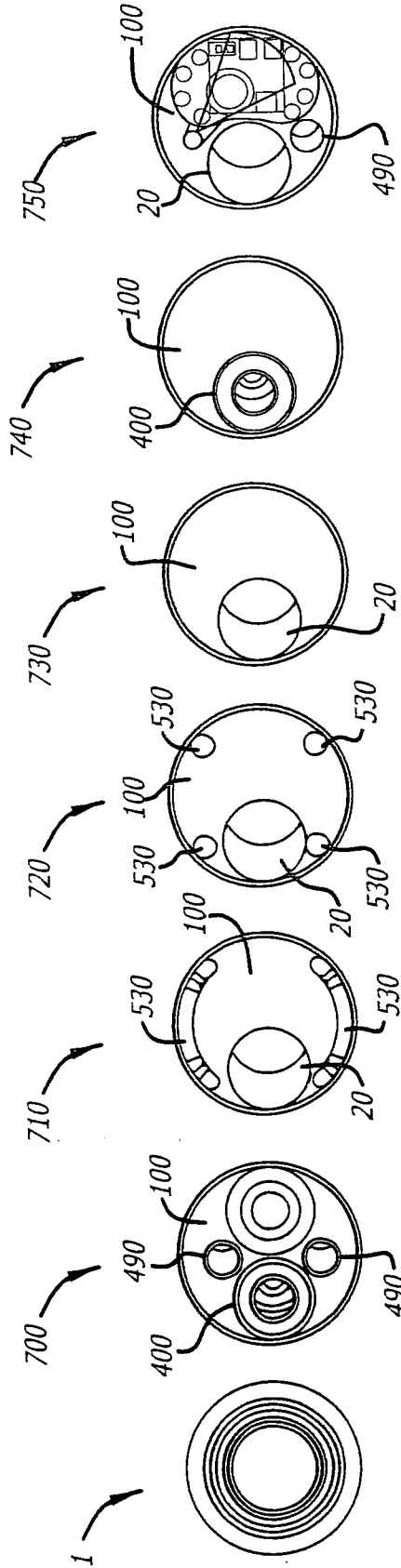


FIG. 23

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/IL 09/00697

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - A61B 1/01 (2009.01)

USPC - 600/117

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)

USPC: 600/117

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
USPC: 600/117, 434 (text searched-see terms below)

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

PubWest (PGPB, USPT, USOC, EPAB, and JPAB); Google Scholar

Search Terms: position, locat\$, orient\$, magnetic\$, coil\$, passive, active, imag\$, optical, fi be, lens, camera, clean\$, fluid, gas, vapor, solution, nozzle, catheter, probe, endoscope, device, channel, lumen, port, opening, tool, degree, and freedom

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 7,233,820 B2 (GILBOA) 19 June 2007 (19.06.2007), entire document, more specifically, Fig 1, 3, and 7, abstract, col 2, ln 15-29, col 2, 43-52, col 3, ln 42-54, col 4, ln 64 to col 5, ln 10, col 6, ln 14-27, col 6, ln 31-36, col 7, ln 64 to col 8, ln 11, col 11, ln 18-44, col 11, ln 62 to col 12, ln 1, col 13, ln 14-17, col 13, ln 36-55, col 14, ln 1-5, col 22, ln 50 to col 23, ln 16, and col 24, ln 30-34	1-67
Y	US 2005/0119527 A1 (BANIK et al.) 02 June 2005 (02.06.2005), entire document, more specifically, Fig 3F, 6A-C, and 7, para[0009], [0069], [0094], [0096], [0132], [0137]-[0141], [0143]-[0147], [0162], and [0226]	1-67
Y	US 2004/0015049 A1 (ZAAR) 22 January 2004 (22.01.2004), Fig 1, para[0004] and [0026]	24 and 59
A	US 5,643,175 A (ADAIR) 01 July 1997 (01.07.1997), entire document	1-67
A	US 5,489,256 A (ADAIR) 06 February 1996 (06.02.1996), entire document	1-67

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

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"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

02 November 2009 (02.11.2009)

Date of mailing of the international search report

12 NOV 2009

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