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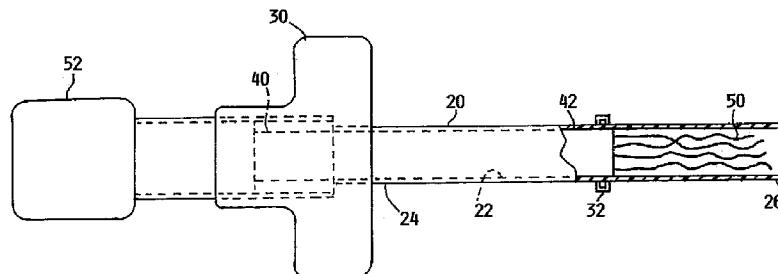


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A radial deployment surgical tool having an inner shaft, an outer shaft and a function head. The radial deployment surgical tool is adapted for performing surgical procedures within narrow regions within a patient.

RADIAL DEPLOYMENT SURGICAL TOOL**REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION**

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application Number 61/349,303, which was filed on May 28, 2010, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] An embodiment of the invention is directed to a surgical tool. More particularly, the invention relates to a radial deployment surgical tool that is adapted for performing surgical procedures within narrow regions within a patient.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] While it is generally desirable to perform surgical procedures where the surgeon can directly see the area where the surgical procedure is being performed, this procedure is generally only suitable for surgical procedures that are close to a person's skin because providing an opening that is sufficiently large to view a surgical location that is located deeper within the person's body could require cutting of additional tissue and other components within the person's body. Such additional cutting raises the potential of the patient experiencing a longer recovery time as well as being subjected to an increased likelihood of complications from the surgery.

[0004] It has been found that the outcome of the surgery can be enhanced by minimizing the cutting of the patient's tissue during the surgical procedure. One such surgical technique that has been developed to reduce the size of incisions formed in the

patient is laparoscopy. While this technique is suitable for use in many applications, laparoscopy is subject to limitations that preclude its use in certain situations.

[0005] There are many joints in a person's body where two surfaces move with respect to each other. Over time, certain persons may experience problems caused by the degradation of the adjacent bones or the tissue that is located between the bones. If untreated, these problems could cause significant pain in the patient, which may limit the patient's ability to perform physical activities that require the use of that joint.

[0006] Two surgical techniques may be used to treat these joint problems. These surgical techniques are placing an implant between the bones and fusing the bones together. The most appropriate technique may depend on a variety of factors. Regardless of which technique is used, it is desirable to minimize the size of the incision that is used to provide access to the area where the surgical technique is being performed. However, the incision must be large enough to enable the surgeon to prepare the bone surfaces and then to insert the implant and/or fixation devices that are used in conjunction with the surgical technique.

[0007] While it may be possible for the surgeon to move the bone surfaces apart from each other when preparing the bone surfaces and inserting the implant and/or fixation device, it is generally desirable to minimize such movement to reduce the potential of damage to the ligaments and/or tendons that surround the joint to reduce the potential of complications and reduce the patient's recovery time.

[0008] Certain surgical procedures generate debris that must be removed from the body as part of the surgical procedure. When the surgical procedure includes forming a relatively large incision in the patient, the surgical debris may be removed using a variety of techniques. For example, a suction may be used to remove the surgical debris from the area where the surgical procedure was done.

[0009] Additionally, when it is possible to perform the surgical procedure through a relatively large incision in the patient, the surgical debris may be left in relatively large pieces to facilitate removing the surgical debris from the patient. These pieces may be grasped to remove them from the area where the surgical procedure is being performed.

[0010] On the other hand, certain surgical procedures are performed in regions of the patient that do not permit forming a relatively large incision or otherwise has restricted access. One such area with limited access and visibility is encountered when cartilage between the sacrum and the ilium is cut up to facilitate removal in preparation for fusion of the sacroiliac joint. Another area with limited access and visibility is encountered when removing an intervertebral nucleus.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] An embodiment of the invention is directed to a radial deployment surgical tool. The radial deployment surgical tool is adapted for performing surgical procedures within narrow regions within a patient.

[0012] A radial deployment surgical tool has an outer shaft, an inner shaft and a functional head. The outer shaft has a distal end and a proximal end. The inner shaft has a distal end and a proximal end. The inner shaft is operably mounted with respect to the outer shaft so that the inner shaft is positioned at least partially in the outer shaft.

[0013] The functional head is operably attached to the distal end of the inner shaft. The functional head is movable between a retracted position substantially within the outer shaft to an extended position where at least a portion of the functional head extends outside of the outer shaft.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] The accompanying drawings are included to provide a further understanding of embodiments and are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification. The drawings illustrate embodiments and together with the description serve to explain principles of embodiments. Other embodiments and many of the intended advantages of embodiments will be readily appreciated as they become better understood by reference to the following detailed description. The elements of the drawings are not necessarily to scale relative to each other. Like reference numerals designate corresponding similar parts.

[0015] Fig. 1 is a sectional view of a radial deployment surgical tool in a retracted position.

[0016] Fig. 2 is a sectional view of the radial deployment surgical tool in an extended position.

[0017] Fig. 3 is a top view of a cleaning head for use with the radial deployment surgical tool where the cleaning head is in a substantially flat configuration.

[0018] Fig. 4 is a top view of an alternative configuration of the cleaning head where the cleaning head is in a substantially flat configuration.

[0019] Fig. 5 is a top perspective view of a die for use in shaping the cleaning head.

[0020] Fig. 6 is a bottom perspective view of a punch for use in shaping the cleaning head.

[0021] Fig. 7 is a top perspective view of the punch positioned adjacent the die.

[0022] Fig. 8 is a side perspective view of the cleaning head.

[0023] Fig. 9 is a top perspective view of the cleaning head.

[0024] Fig. 10 is a side view of the surgical debris removal system with the cleaning head in a retracted position.

[0025] Fig. 11 is a side view of the surgical debris removal system with the cleaning head in a partially extended position

[0026] Fig. 12 is a side view of the of the surgical debris removal system with the cleaning head in an extended position.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0027] An embodiment of the invention is directed to a radial deployment surgical tool. The radial deployment surgical tool enables surgical procedures to be performed in relatively narrow spaces. As used herein, the term relatively narrow means spaces having a width of less than about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch. In certain embodiments, the width of the space is less than about $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch.

[0028] The radial deployment surgical tool may be used in a variety of surgical settings. To facilitate using the radial deployment surgical tool in the variety of surgical settings, the radial deployment surgical tool may include a functional head attached to a distal end thereof.

[0029] One such suitable surgical setting is forming an opening between two bones that are located proximate each other. In an example of one such suitable surgical procedure is a minimally invasive orthopedic procedure. In this configuration, the functional head may be a cutting head that is attached to a distal end of the radial deployment surgical tool.

[0030] In other embodiment, the radial deployment surgical tool may be used for removing materials from between two adjacent bones. This material may have been previously cut or otherwise transformed into relatively small pieces to facilitate removal using the radial deployment surgical tool. A person of skill in the art will appreciate that different devices may be attached to the radial deployment surgical tool depending on the intended use of the radial deployment surgical tool.

[0031] An embodiment of the surgical debris removal system, as illustrated at 10 in the figures appended hereto. The surgical debris removal system 10 may be used for removing surgical debris that is generated in conjunction with performing certain surgical techniques within a human body. For example, surgical debris is created when the cartilage between the sacrum and ilium is removed and the surfaces of the sacrum and the ilium are prepared for fusion of the sacroiliac joint.

[0032] The surgical debris needs to be removed from between the sacrum and the ilium to facilitate bone growth between the sacrum and the ilium to produce fusion of the sacroiliac joint. Because of the relatively small distance between the sacrum and the ilium and the location of the sacroiliac joint within the human body, there may be challenges in removing the surgical debris.

[0033] A person of skill in the art will appreciate that it is possible to use the surgical debris removal system in conjunction with performing other surgical techniques performed in locations having obstructed access that prevents the use of more direct techniques to remove the surgical debris. A non-limiting example of an application in which the surgical debris removal system may be used is removing an intervertebral nucleus.

[0034] The surgical debris removal system 10 may generally include an inner shaft 20 that is operably mounted with respect to an outer shaft 22. The outer shaft 22 has a proximal end 24 and a distal end 26. In certain embodiments, the outer shaft 22 is formed with a length that is sufficiently long to facilitate the proximal end 24 to be positioned outside of a patient while the distal end 26 is positioned within the patient proximate to where the surgical debris is to be removed. In certain embodiments, the outer shaft 22 has a length of between about 5 and 30 centimeters.

[0035] The outer shaft 22 is formed with a length that enables the outer shaft 22 to be extended through an opening that provides access to the region in which the surgical debris is

located. In certain embodiments, the opening can be substantially cylindrical. For example, the opening may have been formed using a drill.

[0036] To minimize the trauma to the patient and thereby reduce the patient's recovery time after the surgical procedure is completed, it is generally desired to form the opening to be as small as possible. In certain embodiments, the opening has a diameter of less than about 1 centimeter. In other embodiments, the opening has a diameter of between about 5 and 10 millimeters.

[0037] While in certain embodiments the outer shaft 22 is substantially rigid, it is also possible for the outer shaft 22 to be bendable. In embodiments where the outer shaft 22 is bendable, the outer shaft 22 may retain the shape after being bent. Alternatively, the outer shaft 22 may return to the initial shape such as where the outer shaft 22 is substantially straight.

[0038] The outer shaft 22 has a central aperture extending therethrough that is adapted to receive the inner shaft 20, as is discussed in more detail below. Proximate the proximal end 24, the outer shaft 22 may have a first gripping mechanism 30 extending therefrom. The first gripping mechanism 30 enhances the ability of a person using the surgical debris removal system 10 to maintain the outer shaft 22 in a desired configuration. The first gripping mechanism 30 may take a variety of configurations. For example, the first gripping mechanism 30 may be substantially cylindrical with a diameter that is greater than a diameter of the outer shaft 22.

[0039] Intermediate the proximal end 24 and the distal end 26, a stop mechanism 32 may be provided on an outer surface of the outer shaft 22. The stop mechanism 32 limits a distance in which the outer shaft 22 may be inserted into the opening in the patient.

[0040] In certain embodiments, where a cannula is inserted into the opening in the patient, the stop mechanism 32 may engage the cannula to limit a distance at which the outer shaft 22 may be inserted into the patient.

[0041] The inner shaft 20 has a proximal end 40 and a distal end 42. The inner shaft 20 may be formed with a length that is greater than a length of the outer shaft 22 such that the proximal end 40 of the inner shaft 20 extends beyond the proximal end 24 of the outer shaft 22 when the distal end 42 of the inner shaft 20 extends beyond the distal end 26 of the outer shaft 22.

[0042] This configuration enables a cleaning head 50 that is operably attached to the distal end 42 of the inner shaft 20 to be extended beyond the distal end 26 of the outer shaft 22 to be moved using the proximal end 40 of the inner shaft 20 for collecting surgical debris, as is described in more detail below.

[0043] A second gripping mechanism 52 may be attached to the proximal end 40 of the inner shaft 20 to enhance the ability of a person to control the movement of the cleaning head 50. The second gripping mechanism 52 facilitates the person using the surgical debris removal system 10 rotating the inner shaft 20 during the debris collection process.

[0044] The second gripping mechanism 52 may have a variety of configurations using the concepts of the invention. For example, the second gripping mechanism 52 may be substantially cylindrical with a diameter that is greater than a diameter of the inner shaft 20.

[0045] The cleaning head 50 may include a cleaning head hub 60 from which a plurality of cleaning head arms 62 extend. The hub 60 may have a generally circular shape with an aperture 64 formed therein to facilitate attaching the cleaning head 50 to the inner shaft 20. One technique that may be used to attach the cleaning head 50 to the inner shaft 20 is a screw (not shown).

[0046] In certain embodiments, the cleaning head 50 may be removably attached to the inner shaft 22 so that the cleaning head 50 may be detached from the inner shaft 20 such as when the cleaning head 50 needs to be replaced or when it is desired to use a cleaning head 50 having a different configuration in conjunction with the surgical debris removal system 10.

[0047] In certain embodiments, one cleaning head 50 is attached to the inner shaft 20. In other embodiments, a plurality of cleaning heads 50 may be attached to the inner shaft 20. The plurality of cleaning heads 50 may each be formed with a similar shape or may be formed with different shapes. Additionally or alternatively, the cleaning heads 50 may be mounted in different orientations to enhance the ability of the cleaning head 50 to latch on to debris.

[0048] The cleaning head arms 62 may have a variety of configurations. An important criterion in shaping the cleaning head arms 62 is that an end of the cleaning head arms 62 opposite the cleaning head hub 60 is curved to facilitate surgical debris being snagged by the cleaning head arms 62. Two suitable configurations for the cleaning head arms 62 are set forth in Figs. 2 and 3.

[0049] Ends of the cleaning head arms 62 illustrated in Fig. 3 are curved so that an angle between a main portion 66 of the cleaning head arms 62 and the end portion 68 of the cleaning head arms 62 is less than about 90 degrees forming a hook-like feature.

[0050] The end portions 68 of the cleaning head arms 62 may also be tapered to a point. The cleaning head arms 62 in Fig 4 are curved so that an angle between a main portion 66 of the cleaning head arms 62 and the end portion 70 of the cleaning head arm 62 is greater than 90 degrees, but generally less than 180 degrees.

[0051] The cleaning head arms 62 illustrated in Fig. 4 each include at least two pointed tips 70, 72. One of the pointed tips 70 is located proximate an end of the cleaning

head arm 62 and the other pointed tip 72 is located at an intermediate location on the cleaning head arm 62. While the tips 70, 72 are illustrated as both being oriented in the same direction, it is possible that the tips 70, 72 can be oriented in different directions.

[0052] The different directions may be generally oriented in the same plane as the other portions of the cleaning head arm 62. Alternatively or additionally, the tips 70, 72 may be oriented in directions that are not generally aligned with the plane of the other portions of the cleaning head arm 62.

[0053] The number of cleaning head arms 62 provided on each of the cleaning heads 50 may be up to about 30. In certain embodiments, there are between about 10 and 20 cleaning head arms 62 on each of the cleaning heads 50.

[0054] The cleaning head arms 62 may be formed with a width that is sufficiently wide so that the cleaning head arms 62 resist bending axially such as in response to rotation of the cleaning head 50. The cleaning head arms 62 may be flexible to permit bending of the cleaning head arms 62 between a retracted position within the outer shaft 22, as illustrated in Fig. 1, and an extended position, as illustrated in Fig. 2.

[0055] The cleaning head 50 may be fabricated from a relatively strong yet flexible material that provides the cleaning head 50 with the preceding characteristics. One such suitable material for fabricating the cleaning head 50 is nitinol.

[0056] In certain embodiments, the cleaning head 50 is fabricated by cutting a piece such as illustrated in Figs. 3 and 4 from a sheet of material. The cleaning head arms 62 may then be formed into a curved configuration using a stamping process.

[0057] An advantage of using the stamping process is that the stamping process produces cleaning heads 50 with consistent shapes. Another advantage of the stamping process is that it can be automated to facilitate fabricating the cleaning head 50 in a cost-effective manner.

[0058] At least one die 80 and at least one punch 82, such as is illustrated in Figs. 5-7, may be used in forming the cleaning head 50 into a desired shape with the stamping process. In certain embodiments, a plurality of stamping steps may be used. As illustrated in Fig. 5, the die 80 may include a series of differently shaped recesses 84, 86, 88 and 90.

[0059] Each of the recesses 84, 86, 88, 90 may be used in conjunction with a punch having a complementary shape. Fig. 6 illustrates a punch 82 that is used in conjunction with recess 90. A person of skill in the art will appreciate that other punches may be used in conjunction with the other recesses 84, 86 and 90. Fig. 7 illustrates the punch 82 positioned at least partially in the recess 90 in the die 80.

[0060] After the forming process, the cleaning head 50 is shaped as is illustrated in Figs. 8 and 9. These figures illustrate the curvature of the cleaning head arms 62. The curvature of the cleaning head arms 62 facilitates positioning the cleaning head arms 62 in a retracted position for insertion of the device as well as gradual extension of the cleaning head arms 62 within the narrow region such as is present between the sacrum and the ilium.

[0061] The inner shaft 20 is rotated to cause the surgical debris to be caught in the cleaning head arms 62. In certain embodiments, the inner shaft 20 may be rotated in both a clockwise and a counterclockwise motion to catch the surgical debris.

[0062] Once the collection process is completed or the cleaning head 50 has collected near its capacity of surgical debris, the inner shaft 20 is urged towards its proximal end using the second gripping mechanism 52 until the cleaning head arms 62 are urged towards each other as the cleaning head 50 is drawn within the outer shaft 22. Once the cleaning head 50 is substantially within the outer shaft 22, the outer shaft 22 may be withdrawn from the opening in the patient.

[0063] In certain embodiments, the surgical debris removal system 10 is used in a disposable manner such that after the cleaning head 50 is used to remove surgical debris from the surgical site, the surgical debris removal system 10 is disposed of.

[0064] Alternatively, the surgical debris removal system 10 may be configured to be cleaned after use. The cleaning process could be conducted during a single surgical procedure such that the surgical debris removal system 10 is withdrawn from the patient and then processed to remove the surgical debris.

[0065] The surgical debris removal system 10 may be configured to be at least partially disposable. In such a configuration, the surgical debris removal system 10 may include a combination of some disposable components and some components that are cleaned and reused.

[0066] A variety of techniques may be used to separate the surgical debris from the cleaning head 50. An example of one suitable technique uses a compressed gas such as air. A flow of high pressure air could separate a sufficient amount of surgical debris such that the cleaning head 50 could be reinserted into the patient to remove additional surgical debris. It is also possible to use a liquid such as sterile water to separate the debris from the cleaning head 50.

[0067] Since the surgical debris removal system 10 will be reused with the same patient with this process, it is not required that all of the surgical debris be separated from the cleaning head 50. It is also not necessary that the cleaning head 50 be sterilized between uses as long as the compressed gas or liquid used to clean the cleaning head 50 is free from contaminants.

[0068] It is also possible that the surgical debris removal system 10 could be cleaned after use on a particular patient and then sterilized so that the surgical debris removal system 10 could be reused on other patients.

[0069] Each of the components of the surgical debris removal system 10 could be fabricated from a sterilizable material such as metal. To ensure that the components are cleaned and then sterilized, it is also possible for the inner shaft 20 to be separated from the outer shaft 22 during the cleaning and sterilization process.

[0070] The components of the surgical debris removal system 10 may be adapted to cause advancement or retraction of the cleaning head 50 as the handle 30 is rotated with respect to the shaft 20. In certain configurations, a right-handed thread may be used in this mechanism so that rotating the handle 30 to the right with respect to the shaft 20 will cause advancement of the cleaning head 50. Conversely, rotation of the handle 30 to the left with respect to the shaft 20 will cause retraction of the cleaning head 50.

[0071] The operation of the surgical debris removal system 10 is illustrated in Figs. 10-12. The surgical debris removal system 10 is in an initial position where the cleaning head 50 is retracted within the shaft 20, as illustrated in Fig. 10.

[0072] Rotation of the handle 30 with respect to the shaft 20 cause the cleaning head 50 to begin extending from the shaft 20, as illustrated in Fig. 11. The ends of the cleaning head arms 62 are immediately directed outward in response to contact with a first surface spaced the relatively small distance from the end of the shaft 20.

[0073] As the rotation of the handle 30 is continued, the ends of the cleaning head arms 62 are deflected away from the first surface, as illustrated in Fig. 12. While not shown in Fig. 12, the ends would contact a second surface that is mounted spaced apart from the first surface. A distance between the first surface and the second surface may be less than about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch and, in certain embodiment, may be less than about 1/8 of an inch.

[0074] The surgical debris removal system 10 may be rotated either as the cleaning head arms 62 are being extended or after the cleaning head arms 62 are extended to cause the

cleaning head arms 62 to scrape over the first surface and the second surface. This movement causes the debris to be caught by the cleaning head arms 62.

[0075] After the debris collection process is completed or after the surgical debris removal system 10 has collected its capacity of debris, the cleaning head 50 is retracted into the shaft 20 so that the surgical debris removal system 10 may be removed from the patient.

[0076] In the preceding detailed description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings, which form a part hereof, and in which is shown by way of illustration specific embodiments in which the invention may be practiced. In this regard, directional terminology, such as "top," "bottom," "front," "back," "leading," "trailing," etc., is used with reference to the orientation of the Figure(s) being described. Because components of embodiments can be positioned in a number of different orientations, the directional terminology is used for purposes of illustration and is in no way limiting. It is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and structural or logical changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention. The preceding detailed description, therefore, is not to be taken in a limiting sense, and the scope of the present invention is defined by the appended claims.

[0077] It is contemplated that features disclosed in this application, as well as those described in the above applications incorporated by reference, can be mixed and matched to suit particular circumstances. Various other modifications and changes will be apparent to those of ordinary skill.

CLAIMS

1. A radial deployment surgical tool comprising:
 - an outer shaft having a distal end and a proximal end;
 - an inner shaft having a distal end and a proximal end, wherein the inner shaft is operably mounted with respect to the outer shaft so that the inner shaft is positioned at least partially in the outer shaft; and
 - a functional head operably attached to the distal end of the inner shaft, wherein the functional head is movable between a retracted position substantially within the outer shaft to an extended position where at least a portion of the functional head extends outside of the outer shaft.
2. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 1, wherein the functional head moves between the retracted position to the extended position in a spacing of less than $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch between the distal end of the outer shaft and a surgical obstacle and wherein at least a portion of the functional head has a diameter that is greater than an outer diameter of the outer shaft when in the extended position.
3. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 1, wherein the functional head comprises a cleaning head having a cleaning head hub and a plurality of cleaning head arms extending therefrom.
4. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 3, wherein there are between about 10 and 20 cleaning head arms extending from the cleaning head hub.
5. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 3, wherein the cleaning head arms resist axial bending as the cleaning head is rotated while being bendable between a retracted position and an extended position.

6. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 3, wherein an end of each cleaning head arm opposite the cleaning head hub is curved so that an angle between a main portion of the cleaning head arm and the end of the cleaning head arm is less than about 90 degrees.
7. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 3, wherein each of the cleaning head arms includes at least two tips extending therefrom.
8. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 3, wherein a plurality of cleaning heads is simultaneously attached to the distal end of the inner shaft.
9. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 1, wherein the outer shaft has a bore extending therethrough and wherein the inner shaft is positionable at least partially within the bore.
10. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 1, and further comprising a first gripping mechanism attached to the outer shaft proximate the proximal end thereof.
11. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 1, and further comprising a stop mechanism mounted with respect to the outer shaft intermediate the proximal and distal ends thereof, wherein the stop mechanism limits a distance to which the outer shaft may be inserted into a patient.
12. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 11, and further comprising a cannula that is used in conjunction with the radial deployment surgical tool, wherein the stop mechanism engages the cannula.
13. The radial deployment surgical tool of claim 1, and further comprising a second gripping mechanism attached to the inner shaft proximate the proximal end thereof.
14. A method of using a radial deployment surgical tool comprising:
 - providing an outer shaft having a distal end and a proximal end;
 - providing an inner shaft having a distal end and a proximal end;
 - attaching a functional head operably attached to the distal end of the inner shaft; and

inserting at least a portion of an inner shaft in the outer shaft, wherein the functional head is movable between a retracted position substantially within the outer shaft to an extended position where at least a portion of the functional head extends outside of the outer shaft.

15. The method of claim 14, and further comprising positioning the distal end of the outer shaft less than about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch away from a surgical obstacle, wherein at least a portion of the functional head has a diameter that is greater than an outer diameter of the outer shaft when in the extended position.

16. The method of claim 14, and further comprising extending the distal end of the outer shaft through an opening in a patient prior to moving the functional head between the retracted position and the extended position, wherein the opening has a diameter of less than about 1 centimeter.

17. The method of claim 16, and further comprising attaching a stop mechanism to the outer shaft intermediate the proximal and distal ends thereof, wherein the stop mechanism limits a distance to which the outer shaft may be inserted into the opening.

18. The method of claim 18, and further comprising providing a cannula that at least partially receives the outer shaft, wherein the stop mechanism engages the cannula.

19. The method of claim 14, wherein the functional head is a cleaning head that is cut from a sheet of material, wherein the cleaning head comprises a plurality of cleaning head arms and wherein the cleaning head arms are stamped to a curved configuration.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein there are between about 10 and 20 cleaning head arms on the cleaning head.

21. The method of claim 19, and further comprising axially rotating the cleaning head, wherein the cleaning head arms resist axial bending as the cleaning head is rotated while being bendable between a retracted position and an extended position.

22. The method of claim 19, wherein an end of each cleaning head arm is curved so that an angle between a main portion of the cleaning head arm and the end of the cleaning head arm is less than about 90 degrees.

23. The method of claim 19, and further comprising forming each of the cleaning head arms with at least two tips extending therefrom.

24. The method of claim 19, and further comprising simultaneously attaching a plurality of the cleaning heads to the distal end of the inner shaft.

25. The method of claim 19, and further comprising rotating the inner shaft with respect to the outer shaft to cause debris to engage the cleaning head and be retained therein.

26. The method of claim 19, and further comprising:

moving the inner shaft with respect to the outer shaft to position the cleaning head in the retracted position;

removing the outer shaft from the patient;

moving the inner shaft with respect to the outer shaft to position the cleaning head in the extended position; and

removing the debris from the cleaning head.

27. The method of claim 14, wherein the outer shaft has a bore extending therethrough and wherein the inner shaft is positionable at least partially within the bore.

28. The method of claim 14, and further comprising attaching a first gripping mechanism to the outer shaft proximate the proximal end thereof.

29. The method of claim 14, and further comprising attaching a second gripping mechanism to the inner shaft proximate the proximal end thereof.

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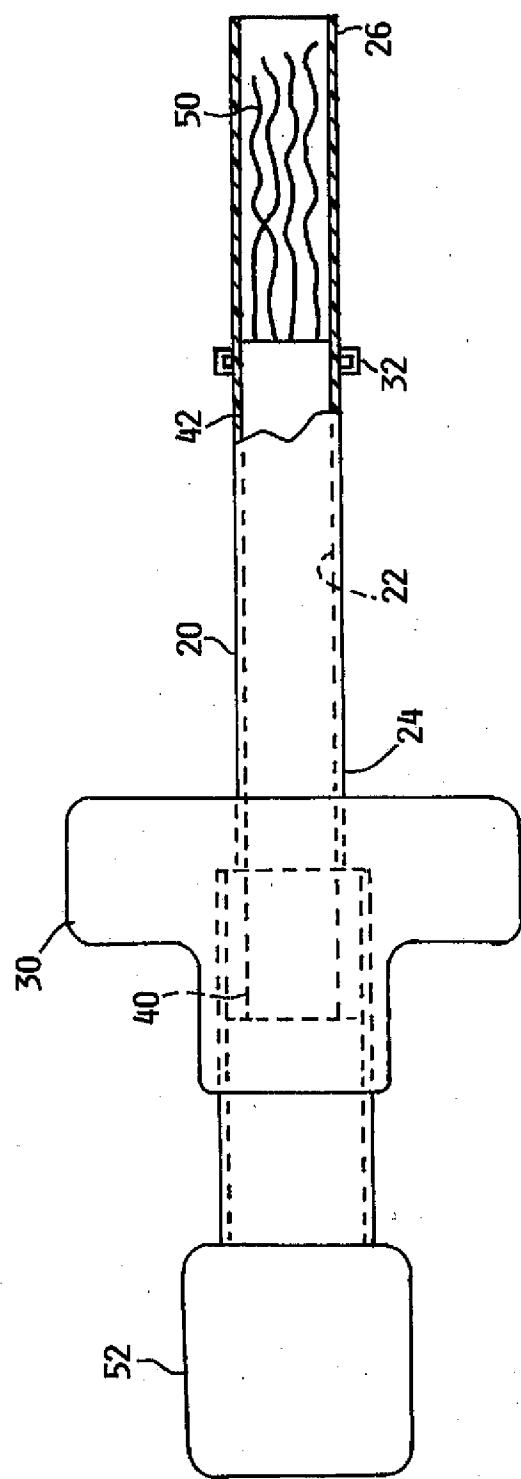


FIG. 1

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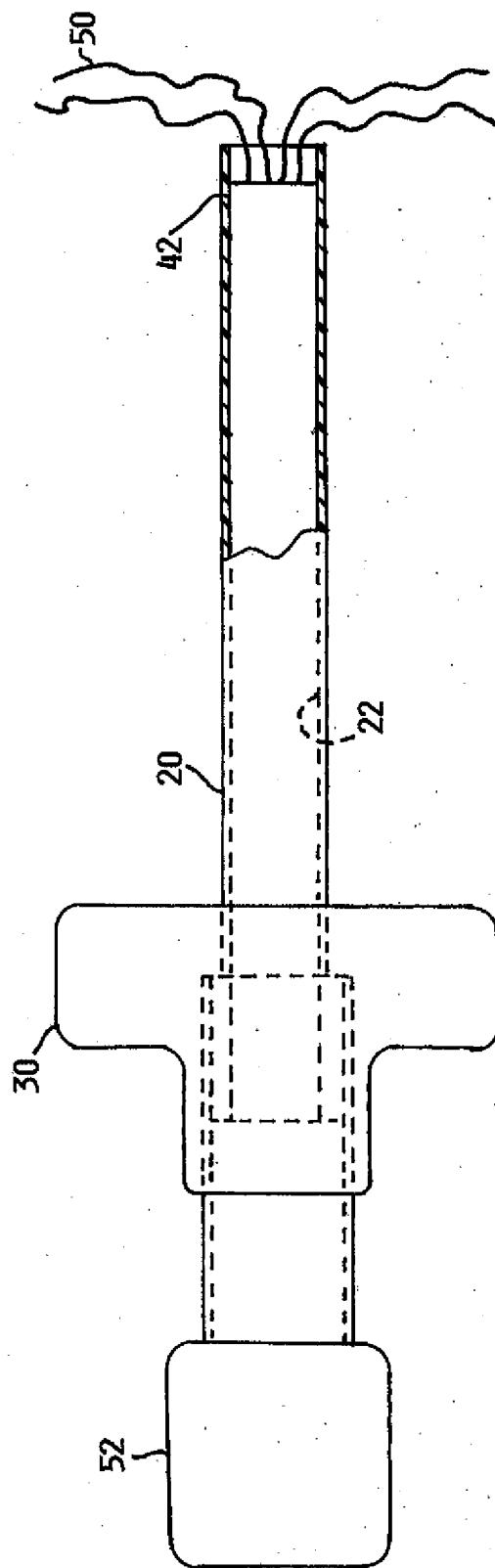


FIG. 2

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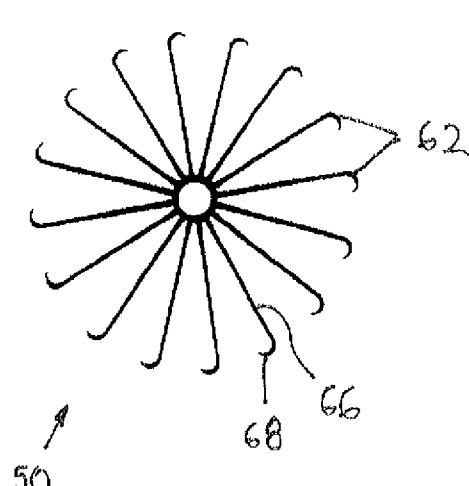


Fig. 3

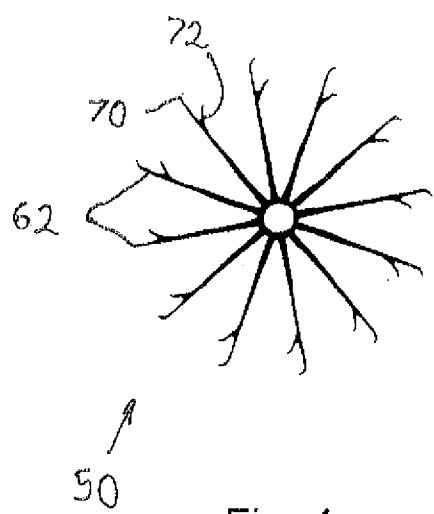
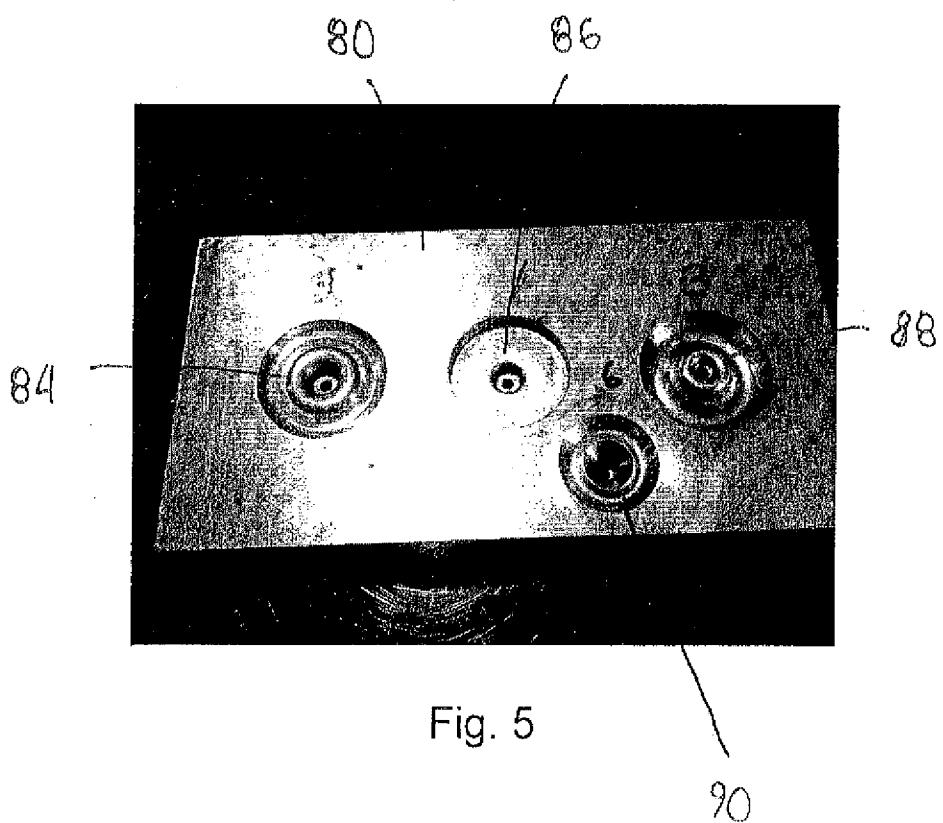


Fig. 4



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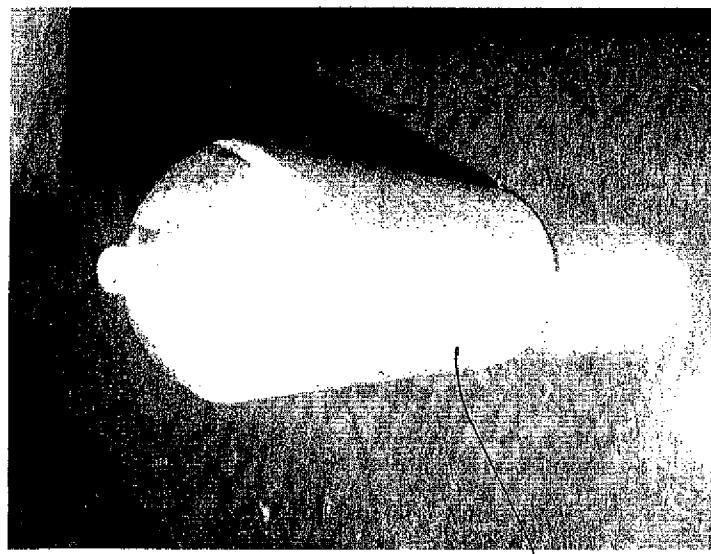


Fig. 6 82

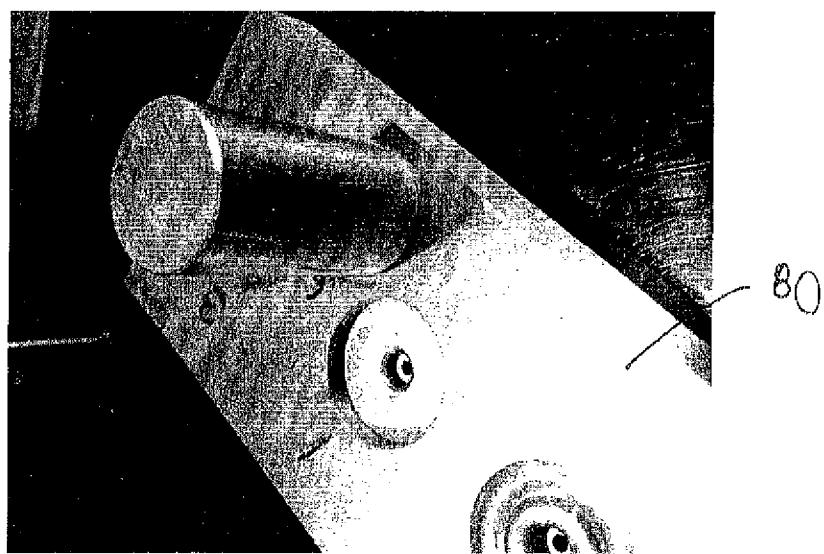


Fig. 7 80

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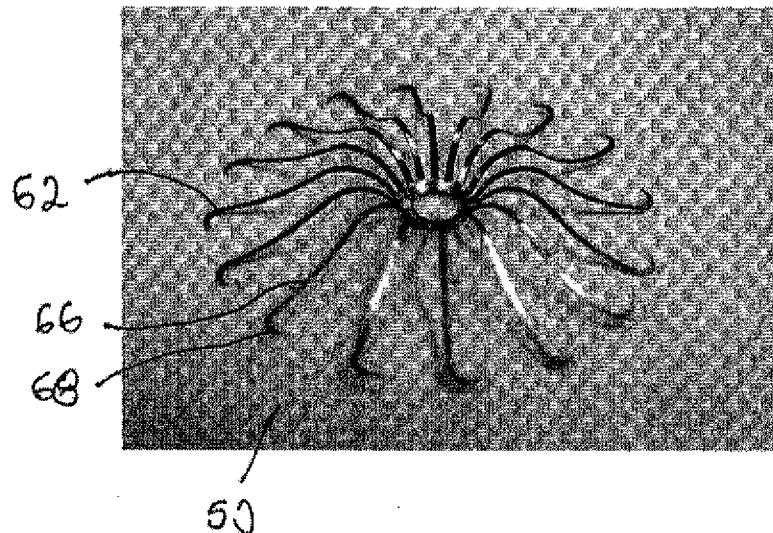


Fig. 8

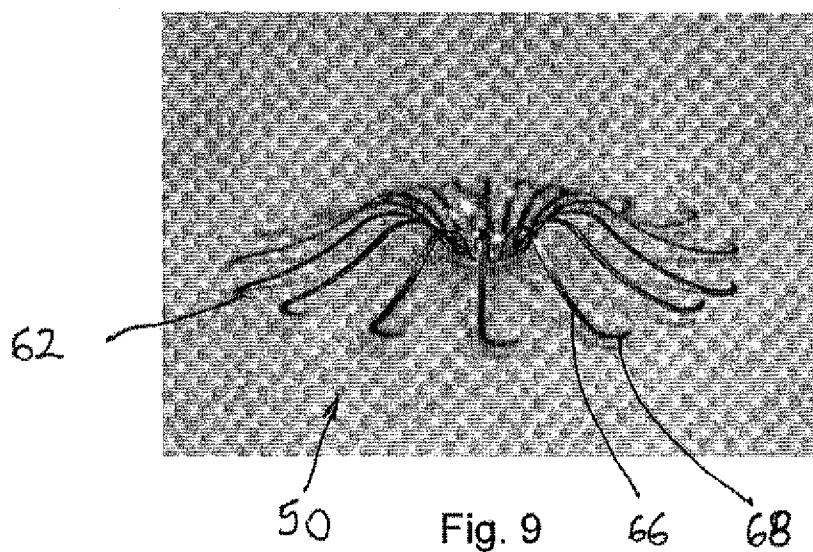


Fig. 9

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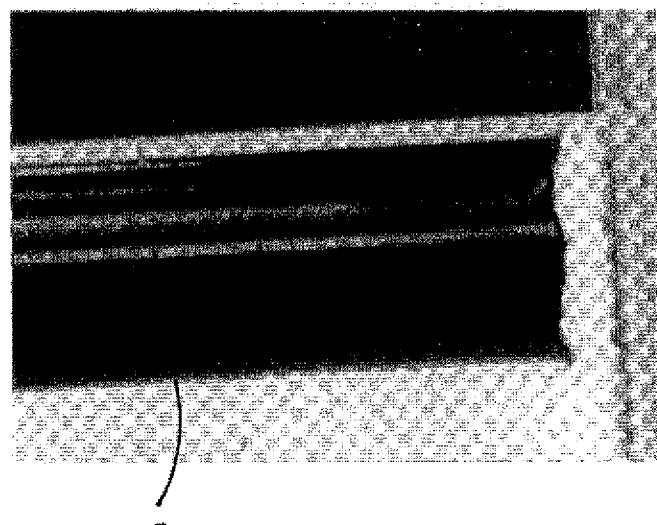


Fig. 10

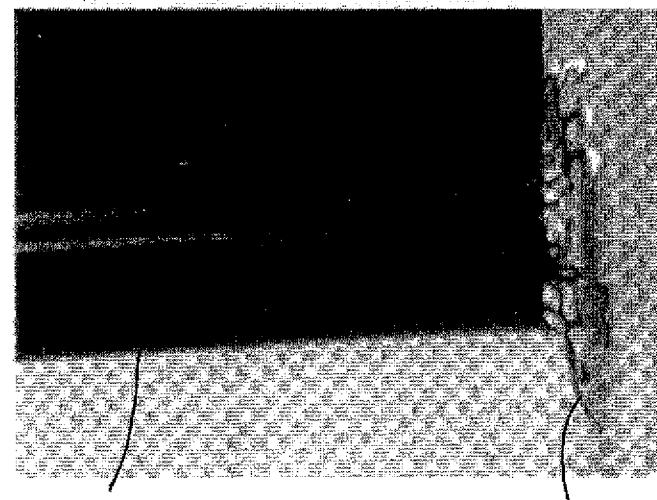


Fig. 11

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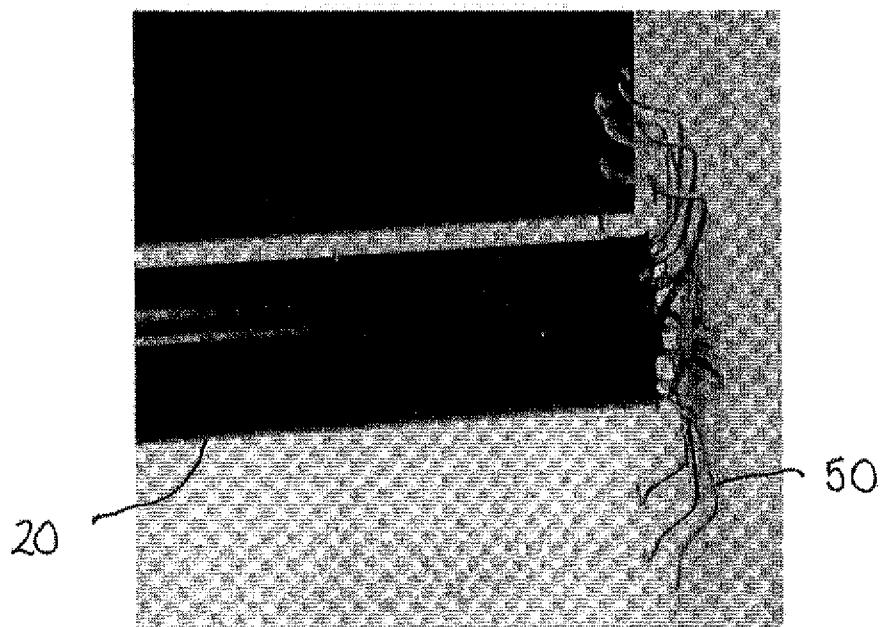


Fig. 12

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application N

PCT/US2011/037724

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

INV. A61B17/16 A61B17/32

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)

A61B

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

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

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 2007/016684 A2 (STEN CORP X [US]; WAY BRYCE [US]; SCHOMER DONALD [US]; SOLSBERG MURRAY) 8 February 2007 (2007-02-08)	1,2, 9-14, 19-25, 27-29
A	page 11, line 22 - page 12, line 33; figures 5-9	3-8
	page 12, line 34 - page 13, line 30; figures 10-14	
	page 15, line 7 - page 17, line 24; figures 20-24	
	page 21, line 30 - page 22, line 33; figures 34-36	

X	WO 2008/103839 A2 (SPINE VIEW INC [US]; CHIN SINGFATT [US]; KIM DANIEL H [US]; TO JOHN T) 28 August 2008 (2008-08-28)	1,2,9-14
	paragraph [0044] - paragraph [0050]; figures 3A-4D	

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 document but published on or after the international filing date

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

- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- "P" document published prior to the international filing date but

"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	Date of mailing of the international search report
29 September 2011	07/10/2011
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 Filali, Salima

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2011/037724

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.: **15-18, 26**
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
Rule 39.1(iv) PCT - Method for treatment of the human or animal body by surgery
2. Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:
3. Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box 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

Information on patent family members

International application No
PCT/US2011/037724

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)			Publication date
WO 2007016684	A2	08-02-2007	NONE		
WO 2008103839	A2	28-08-2008	AU 2008218267 A1	28-08-2008	
			CA 2678595 A1	28-08-2008	
			CN 101687067 A	31-03-2010	
			EP 2155283 A2	24-02-2010	
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			KR 20090125778 A	07-12-2009	
			US 2008208230 A1	28-08-2008	