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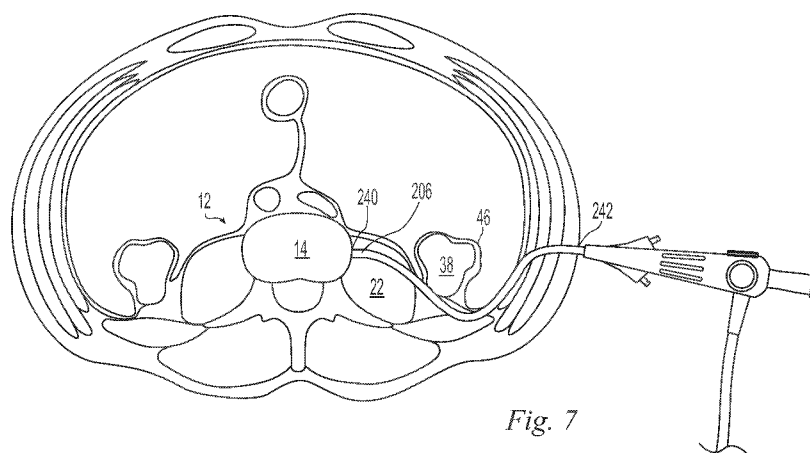


Fig. 7

(57) Abstract: There is disclosed a method of gaining access to a lateral side of a spinal column for a spinal fusion procedure at a surgical site. In an embodiment, the method includes inserting a distal end of a shaft through skin at an entry point into a patient; steering the shaft toward a surgical site using a visualization device to avoid damage to structures between the entry point and the surgical site; and retracting tissue between the entry point and the surgical site to define a pathway for access to the lateral side of the spinal column for a spinal fusion procedure. Other embodiments are also disclosed.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2008/080014**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER****A61B 17/56(2006.01)i, A61F 5/00(2006.01)i**

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC A61B, A61F

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

Korean Utility models and applications for Utility models since 1975
Japanese Utility models and applications for Utility models since 1975

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

eKIPASS(KPA, PAJ, FPD, USPATFULL) in KIPO, CA online, google & keywords: spine, vertebra, surgery, incision, scope, visualization and retract

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2006-0206118 A1 (KIM et al.) 14 September 2006 See the abstract; paragraphs [0010],[0051],[0062],[0153]; claims 1, 8-19	35
X	US 2007-0005018 A1 (TEKBUCHAVA) 04 January 2007 See the abstract; paragraphs [0015],[0033],[0034],[0044],[0050],[0051]; figures 1, 2, 5A, 5B, 7; claims 1, 19	35
A	US 05480440 A (KAMBIN et al.) 02 January 1996 See the abstract; column 4, lines 21-34; claim 1	35
A	WO 95-26776 A1 (FAXON et al.) 12 October 1995 See the abstract; claim 10 and 11	35
A	US 05443484 A (KIRSCH et al.) 22 August 1995 See the abstract; cloumn 4, lines 14-21, column 8, lines 10-19; figure 3; claims 9, 10	35
A	US 2006-0241648 A1 (BLEICH et al.) 26 October 2006 See the abstract; paragraph [0087]; figure 44; claim 1	35
A	US 06726684 B1 (WOLOSZKO et al.) 27 April 2004 See the abstract; column 50, lines 11-51; claims 1, 2, 14	35

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

* Special categories of cited documents:

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

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

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

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"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US2008/080014**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.: 1-34
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
Claims 1-34 pertain to methods for treatment of human by surgery or therapy, and thus relate to a subject matter which this International Searching Authority is not required, under Article 17(2)(a)(i) of the PCT and Rule 39.1(iv) of the Regulations under the PCT, to search.
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 fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
4. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

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.

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