



US 20020193880A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**

Fraser

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2002/0193880 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Dec. 19, 2002**

(54) **ANTERIOR LUMBAR INTERBODY FUSION CAGE WITH LOCKING PLATE**

Related U.S. Application Data

(76) Inventor: **Robert Fraser, Myrtle Bank (AU)**

(63) Continuation of application No. 09/449,105, filed on Nov. 24, 1999, now Pat. No. 6,432,106.

Correspondence Address:
**NUTTER MCCLENNEN & FISH LLP
WORLD TRADE CENTER WEST
155 SEAPORT BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MA 02210-2604 (US)**

Publication Classification

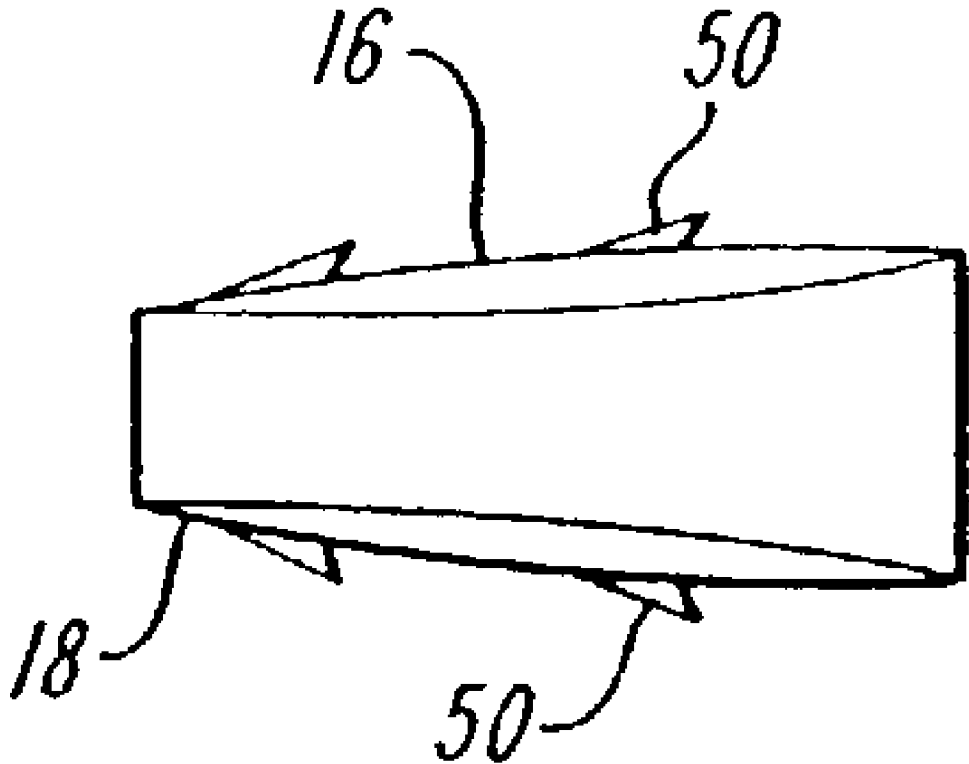
(51) **Int. Cl.⁷ A61F 2/44**
(52) **U.S. Cl. 623/17.11**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A spinal fixation assembly includes a fusion cage to which a plate is mated. The plate is configured to receive, retain and orient bone screws.

(21) Appl. No.: **10/212,506**

(22) Filed: **Aug. 5, 2002**



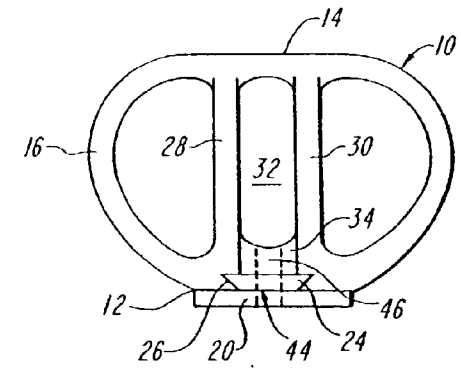


FIG. 1

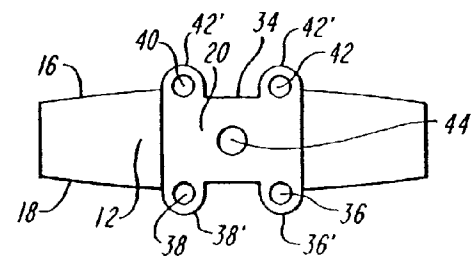


FIG. 2

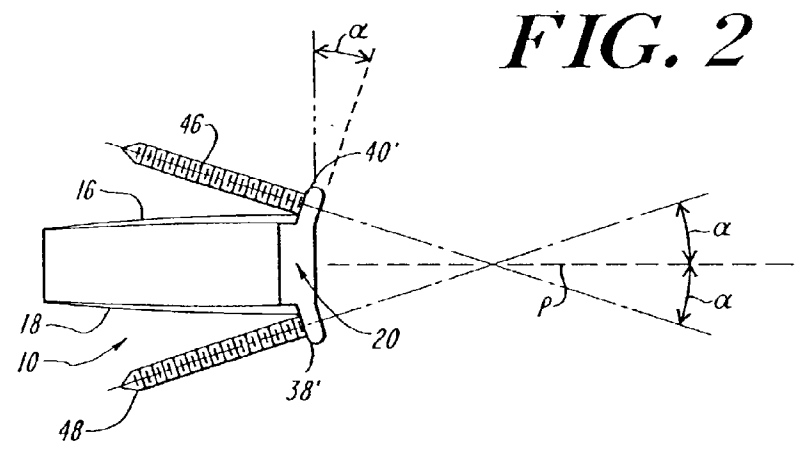


FIG. 3

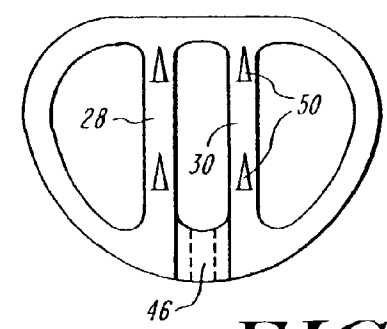


FIG. 4

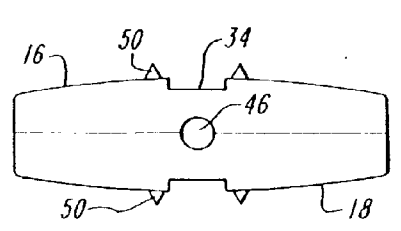


FIG. 5

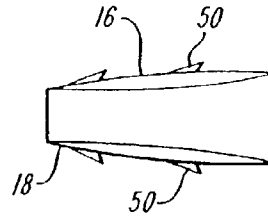


FIG. 6

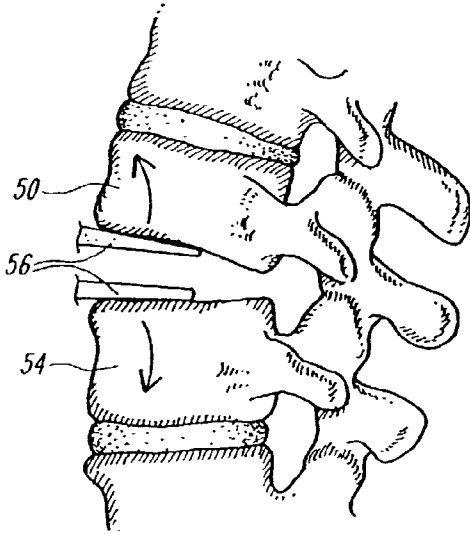


FIG. 7

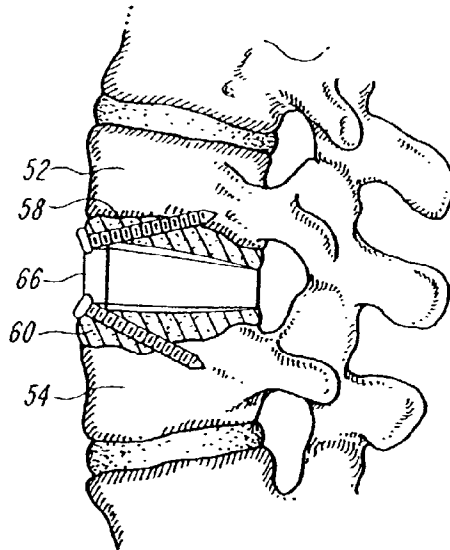


FIG. 8

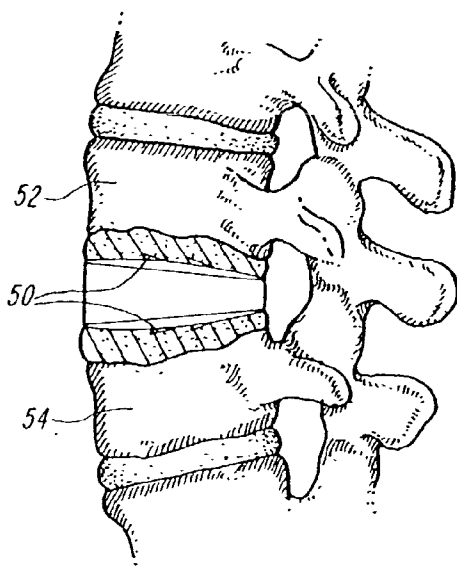


FIG. 9

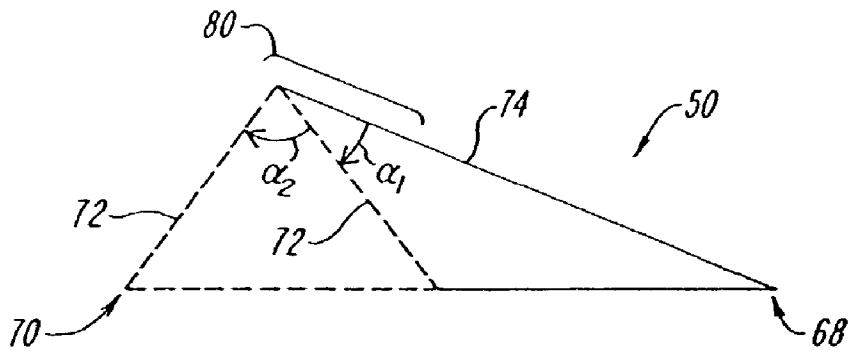


FIG. 10

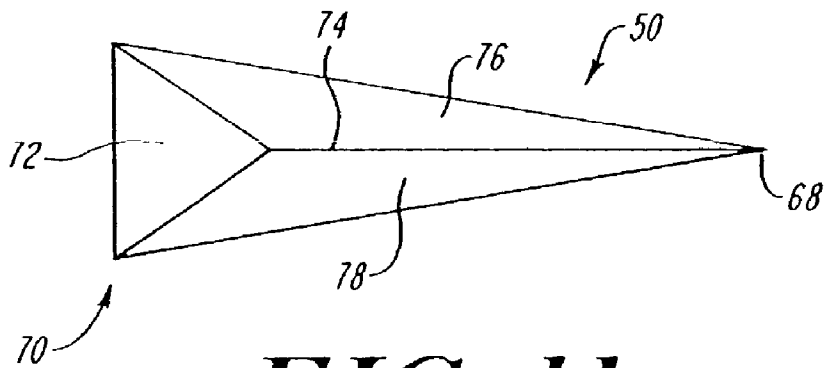


FIG. 11

ANTERIOR LUMBAR INTERBODY FUSION CAGE WITH LOCKING PLATE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/449,105, filed on Nov. 24, 1999, entitled "Anterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion Cage With Locking Plate," which is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to medical devices, and more particularly to an implantable structure for promoting fusion of adjacent vertebral bodies.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Advancing age, as well as injury, can lead to changes in the bones, disks, joints, and ligaments of the spine producing pain from nerve root compression. Under certain circumstances, alleviation of pain can be provided by performing a spinal fusion. This is a procedure that involves joining two or more adjacent vertebrae so that they no longer are able to move relative to each other.

[0004] Many prosthetic devices are known for promoting fusion of the spinal vertebrae, and the devices can be classified, in part, based upon the approach to the spine that will be taken by the surgeon (anterior, posterior, lateral, etc.). None of the known devices is completely satisfactory, and improvements are desirable.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention improves upon known spinal fusion devices, especially those devices intended for an anterior approach to the spine. In an exemplary embodiment, a spinal fixation assembly includes a fusion cage to which a plate is mated. The plate is configured to receive, retain and orient bone screws, thereby holding the fusion cage and adjacent vertebral bodies in a stable relationship to promote fusion.

[0006] Additional features of the assembly can include a plate mated to the fusion cage so as to be slidable therewith, and joining them with a mortise and a tenon. The plate can include extensions or tabs through which bone screws are passed and retained on one or both of the superior and inferior sides of the fusion cage. The tabs can be angled to orient the screws as desired.

[0007] The fusion cage can include convex superior and inferior surfaces, and it can be tapered from the anterior face to the posterior face. Both the fusion cage and the plate can include insertion tool guide and engagement features, such as bores and notches. Fins can be provided at one or more points on the inferior and superior faces of the fusion cage.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] The invention will be more fully understood from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0009] **FIG. 1** is a plan view of a fusion cage in accordance with the present invention;

[0010] **FIG. 2** is a view of the anterior face of the fusion cage of **FIG. 1**;

[0011] **FIG. 3** is a side view of the fusion cage of **FIG. 1** with bone screws;

[0012] **FIG. 4** is a plan view of an embodiment of a fusion cage in accordance with the invention having fins on the superior face of the cage;

[0013] **FIG. 5** is a view of the anterior face of the fusion cage of **FIG. 4**;

[0014] **FIG. 6** is a side view of the fusion cage of **FIG. 4**;

[0015] **FIG. 7** illustrates adjacent vertebral bodies being separated in preparation for insertion of a fusion cage;

[0016] **FIG. 8** depicts a portion of the spine following placement of the fusion cage of **FIG. 1**;

[0017] **FIG. 9** depicts a portion of the spine following placement of the fusion cage of **FIG. 4**;

[0018] **FIG. 10** is a side elevation view of a bone engagement fin in accordance with the invention; and

[0019] **FIG. 11** is a top view of an exemplary bone engagement fin.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020] **FIG. 1** is a plan view of a fusion cage in accordance with the present invention. The cage includes a body **10** that approximates the shape and size of the annulus portion of a disk which normally separates two vertebral bodies. The body **10** includes faces that are named in relation to their orientation with respect to a patient. Specifically, the body **10** includes an anterior face **12**, a posterior face **14**, a superior face **16**, and an inferior face **18** (visible in **FIG. 2**). Except where specifically noted, as used herein, "face" is not intended to connote the outwardmost surface ("face surface" is used) or a specific geometry (e.g., planar). Rather, "face" refers to a general region on different sides of the body **10**. A carbon fiber composite or other radiolucent material is well suited for fabrication of the body.

[0021] The cage further includes a plate **20** that is matable with the body **10**. Titanium or carbon fiber composites are suitable materials for the plate **20**. As shown in **FIGS. 1, 2, and 3**, the plate **20** is mated with the anterior face **12** of the body **10** for an anterior approach to the spine. However, other embodiments of the fusion cage are configured for mating the plate **20** to the body **10** at locations other than the anterior face **12** as required for an anterolateral or lateral approach to the spine.

[0022] Although the plate **20** can be bonded firmly to the body **10** so that the plate and body cannot move with respect to each other, they can also be mated to allow movement with respect to each other. For example, in the illustrated embodiment, the plate **20** includes a tenon **24** that is disposed within a mortise **26** defined by the body **10**, wherein the tenon can slide in a superior/inferior direction within the mortise.

[0023] Continuing to refer to **FIG. 1**, the fusion cage can also be provided with first and second transverse elements **28** and **30**, respectively, that join the posterior face **14** to the anterior face **12**. The transverse elements **28** and **30** enhance the structural integrity of the body **10** and provide additional

load bearing surface. The transverse elements **28** and **30** can also be configured to provide a guide path for a fusion cage insertion tool. For example, the guide path in the illustrated embodiment is between the transverse elements in the space numbered **32**. The guide path can further include a notch or depression **34** in one or both of the superior face **16** or inferior face **18** of the body or defined by the plate **20** as shown in **FIG. 2**. In an exemplary embodiment, the guide path is about 8 mm wide and recessed about 1 mm to 2 mm below the superior/inferior face surface.

[0024] Referring now to **FIG. 2**, an embodiment of the plate **20** is shown mated to the anterior face **12**. In this illustration, four bone screw holes **36**, **38**, **40** and **42** are visible as is a guide bore or hole **44**. The guide hole **44** is aligned with a bore **46** (shown in **FIG. 1**) in the body **10**. Both the guide hole **44** and the bore **46** are configured to receive a portion of an insertion tool (not shown), and both the guide hole and bore can be provided with tool engagement features such as threads. As shown, the bone screw holes **36**, **38**, **40** and **42** can be disposed in or defined by plate extensions or tabs **36'**, **38'**, **40'** and **42'**, wherein the tabs and the remainder of the plate **20** can all lie in the same plane, or one or more of the tabs can be angled with respect to the remainder of the plate or one or more of the other tabs.

[0025] Turning to **FIG. 3**, bone screws **46** and **48**, each having a head and a shank are shown disposed through the holes in tabs **40'** and **38'**, respectively, such that the head of each screw engages the respective tab to inhibit passage of the head through the aperture in the tab. In an exemplary embodiment, the screws are about 3.6 mm in diameter and about 22 mm in length. The screws are of the "locking" type, so that they cannot "back out" of the holes in the plate.

[0026] Continuing to refer to **FIG. 3**, tabs **38'** and **40'** are shown angled with respect to the remainder of the plate **20** so that screws **46** and **48** are angled with respect to the medial plane "P" of the body **10**. The angle formed by the tab(s) and plate, as well as by the screw(s) and medial plane, is designated as " α " and is determined by a particular situation and a patient's anatomy. Although the angle " α " can range from 15° to 60°, for most applications the angle " α " is about 20°. However, in other embodiments, the tabs are flexible or readily bent with respect to the remainder of the plate **20**.

[0027] Also shown in **FIG. 3** are other advantageous features of the fusion cage, such as flat to slightly convex inferior and superior face surfaces **18** and **16**, respectively, and a slightly tapered (about 10°) or wedge profile, wherein the body **10** is thicker at the anterior face **12** than at the posterior face **14**.

[0028] Referring now to **FIG. 4**, a fusion cage is shown with sharp fins **50** on the superior face of the transverse elements **28** and **30**. As shown in **FIGS. 5** and **6**, fins **50** can also be provided on the inferior face of the transverse elements **28** and **30**. Exemplary fins are about 1 mm to 2 mm in height. **FIGS. 10** and **11** illustrate exemplary fins in greater detail. As shown in **FIG. 10**, an exemplary fin **50** has a first end **68** and a second end **70**, and as illustrated in **FIG. 4**, each fin is oriented in a generally anterior/posterior so that the first end is closer to the posterior face **14** of the fusion cage and the second end is closer to the anterior face **12**. One or more fins can be tapered so that the second end **70** is taller than the first end **68** which merges flush with the face of the

cage on which it is formed or mounted. Also, as shown in **FIGS. 4** and **11**, the second end **70** can be wider than the first end **68** which comes to a point.

[0029] Continuing to refer to **FIG. 10**, a posterior face **72** can be angled during manufacture to provide a range of fin configurations. When an angle defined by the posterior face **72** and a line **74** formed by the intersection of opposing fin sides **76** and **78** is small (e.g., α_1) a top fin portion **80** forms a "spike" that readily will dig into bone if the fin is moved toward the second end **70**. If, as shown by dotted lines in **FIG. 10**, and from above in **FIG. 11**, the angle defined by the posterior face **72** and a line **74** formed by the intersection of opposing fin sides **76** and **78** is larger (e.g., α_2) a top fin portion **80** forms a "spike" that readily will dig into bone when the fin and bone are pressed toward each, as when the fusion cage is compressed between two vertebral bodies.

[0030] The fusion cage of **FIGS. 4**, **5** and **6** does not include a plate **20**, but it does include a bore **46** for engaging an insertion tool, as well as a guide path or groove. Additional advantages of the present invention are evident when the invention is viewed in context.

[0031] **FIG. 7** is a lateral view of adjacent vertebral bodies **52** and **54** being distracted or separated with a surgical implement **56**, of which only the distal portion is visible, in preparation for insertion of a fusion cage in accordance with the invention, the disk having been removed and the implant area prepared.

[0032] **FIG. 8** depicts the fusion cage described above with respect to **FIGS. 1**, **2** and **3** after it has been implanted. In this view, portions of the vertebral bodies are shown cut-away to illustrate the penetration of the bone screws **58** and **60** into the bodies. It is important to note that screw heads **62** and **64** are flush or sub-flush with the anterior face surface **66** of the fusion cage, thus minimizing the likelihood that major blood vessels running along the spine will be injured.

[0033] **FIG. 9** illustrates the fusion cage described above with respect to **FIGS. 4**, **5** and **6** after it has been implanted. In this view, portions of the vertebral bodies are shown cut-away to illustrate the penetration of the fins **50** into the vertebral bodies **52** and **54**. It should be noted that because the fins **50** can be tapered both in height and width. Thus, the tapering, in combination with the anterior/posterior orientation of the fins, allows the fusion cage to be inserted between the vertebral bodies with minimal resistance due to the fins, thereby minimizing necessary distraction distance between vertebral bodies. Also, the raised second end of the fins significantly inhibits anterior movement of the fusion cage once it has been positioned between vertebral bodies, as it "digs-in" to the vertebral bone if the fusion cage is urged in an anterior direction. In other words, the fins enhance purchase and provide expulsion protection.

[0034] Prior to inserting a fusion cage between vertebral bodies, the space bounded by the body **10** and transverse elements **28** and **30** (if included) can be filled with autograft or allograft bone, or demineralized bone matrix (DBM) to promote fusion. Over a period of about three months the vertebral bodies fuse.

[0035] As should be readily apparent from the preceding description, the present invention provides many advantages. For example, the fusion cage is sufficiently broad and

thick so that only a single cage is needed to replace an excised disk. The profile and slightly bowed or convex superior and inferior surfaces of the fusion cage body closely approximate the shape of a natural disk and provide an excellent, stable, load-bearing surface. The plate, when included, ensures that the body will not become dislodged from the spine, yet is readily accessible with an anterior approach. Further, the plate allows bone screws to be deeply embedded into the vertebral bodies without piercing or otherwise damaging the hard, load-bearing, cortical bone. Also, both the plate and the body include features that allow for relatively easy manipulation and insertion with appropriately configured surgical tools.

[0036] Of course, one skilled in the art will appreciate further features and advantages of the invention based on the above-described embodiments. Accordingly, the invention is not to be limited by what has been particularly shown and described, except as indicated by the appended claims. All publications and references cited herein are expressly incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

What is claimed is:

1. A spinal fixation assembly comprising:
 - a fusion cage having
 - a posterior face,
 - an anterior face,
 - a superior face, and
 - an inferior face;
 - a plate mated to the fusion cage, the plate defining an aperture for receiving a bone screw; and
 - a bone screw having a head and a shank, the shank being dimensioned to pass through the aperture in the plate, and the head being dimensioned to engage the plate to inhibit passage of the head through the aperture in the plate.
2. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 1, wherein the plate is mated to the anterior face of the fusion cage.
3. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 1, wherein the plate is slidably engaged with the fusion cage so as to be movable in a superior/inferior direction.
4. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 1, wherein the plate and the fusion cage are joined with a mortise and a tenon.
5. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 1, wherein the fusion cage includes a medial plane that separates the

inferior face from the superior face to define an inferior side and a superior side, and wherein the plate defines a first aperture on the inferior side of the fusion cage and a second aperture on the superior side of the fusion cage.

6. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 5, wherein the plate further includes a first tab that defines the first aperture and a second tab that defines the second aperture.

7. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 6, wherein the first tab and the second tab are flexible.

8. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 6, wherein one of the first tab and the second tab is angled with respect to the plate at an angle between 15° and 60°.

9. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 6, wherein one of the first tab and the second tab is angled with respect to the plate at an angle of about 20°.

10. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 1, wherein one of the superior face and the inferior face is convex.

11. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 1, wherein the fusion cage is thicker at the anterior face than at the posterior face.

12. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 11, wherein the fusion cage tapers at about 10° from the anterior face to the posterior face.

13. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 11, wherein the fusion cage defines an annulus with a first transverse element and a second transverse element.

14. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 13, wherein the first and second transverse elements extend from the anterior face to the posterior face.

15. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 14, wherein the first transverse element is substantially parallel to the second transverse element.

16. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 5, wherein the fusion cage defines a bore centered on the medial plane and open at the anterior face.

17. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 16, wherein the plate defines a bore therethrough that is aligned with the bore defined by the fusion cage.

18. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 1, further including a plurality of fins extending outward from the fusion cage on one of the superior face and the anterior face.

19. The spinal fixation assembly of claim 1, further including a notch on one of the superior face and inferior face that extends from the anterior face toward the posterior face.

* * * * *