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(54) Title: SURGICAL ACCESS SYSTEM AND RELATED METHODS

(57) Abstract: A surgical access system including a tissue distraction assembly 40 and a tissue retraction assembly 10, both of which may be equipped with one or more electrodes 23 for use in detecting the existence of (and optionally the distance and/or direction to) neural structures before, during, and after the establishment of an operative corridor 15 to a surgical target site. The tissue retraction assembly 10 has a plurality of blades 12, 16, 18 which may be introduced while in a closed configuration, after which point they may be opened to create an operation corridor 15 to the surgical target site, including pivoting at least one blade 12, 16, 18 to expand the operative corridor 15 adjacent to the operative site.



WO 2006/042241 A3

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US05/36454

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 IPC: **A61B 1/32(2006.01)**

USPC. 600/201,219,220,221
 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)
 U.S. : 600/201,219,220,221

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

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

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X --- Y	US 6,206,826 B1 (Mathews et al.) 27 March 2001 (27.03.2001), see entire document.	1-4,9-10,16-20,24-27,29-33 ----- 5-8,11-15,21-23,28,34-36
Y	US 2001/0056280 A1 (Underwood et al.) 27 December 2001 (27.12.2001), see entire document.	5-8,11-14,28
Y	US 4,226,228 A (Shin) 07 October 1980 (07.10.1980). see entire document	11
Y	US 6,273,905 B1 (Streeter) 14 August 2001 (14.08.2001), see entire document.	13
Y	US 4,836,186 A (Scholz) 06 June 1989 (06.06.1989), see entire document.	15

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

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"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
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International application No.
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C. (Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 6,139,493 (Koros et al.) 31 October 2000 (31.10.2000), see entire document.	21-23,34-36