



(57) **Abrégé(suite)/Abstract(continued):**

the bone healing surface 34 has a coating 18 which includes a therapeutic agent, a polymeric carrier, and a buffer medium to stimulate bone growth and/or promote fracture healing. A kit is also disclosed which includes one or more of the spacers 16, at least one bone plate 12, and optionally one or more bone screws 24 for securing the bone plate 12 to bone 14. A method for promoting fracture healing in bone 14 is further disclosed which includes securely situating a coated portion of the spacer 16 adjacent bone 14.

**ABSTRACT**

The present invention relates to a spacer 16, such as a polymeric spacer, for use with an implant device 12, e.g., a bone plate, for splinting a fracture of a bone 14. The spacer 16 includes a body 26 defining a bone healing surface 34, wherein at least a portion of the bone healing surface 34 has a coating 18 which includes a therapeutic agent, a polymeric carrier, and a buffer medium to stimulate bone growth and/or promote fracture healing. A kit is also disclosed which includes one or more of the spacers 16, at least one bone plate 12, and optionally one or more bone screws 24 for securing the bone plate 12 to bone 14. A method for promoting fracture healing in bone 14 is further disclosed which includes securely situating a coated portion of the spacer 16 adjacent bone 14.

## **SPACER WITH A COATING THEREON FOR USE WITH AN IMPLANT DEVICE**

### **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

**[0001]** The present invention generally relates to a spacer for use with implant devices, e.g., bone plates, and, more specifically, to spacers having a coating thereon, wherein the coating includes a therapeutic healing agent(s) such as to stimulate bone growth and/or promote fracture healing.

### **BACKGROUND**

**[0002]** Implant devices, such as bone plates, can be implanted in the body for the splinting of a fracture at a bone. To that end, the bone plate may be provided with one or more holes and accompanied by one or more securing means, e.g., bone screws, as well as spacer devices. The spacer device, or spacer, can be shaped to fit within the hole in the bone plate and accommodate the screw. The spacer, thus, may be inserted within a corresponding hole of the bone plate, then the screw inserted through both the hole and spacer. The screw may be screwed into bone to fix the bone plate thereto for splinting of a fracture, with the spacer being situated between the bone screw and the bone plate in the direction towards the fracture upon implantation. The spacer, which may be polymeric and elastic in nature, functions to improve bone fracture healing by acting as a cushion between the bone plate and the bone screw and by decreasing the area of contact between bone and the bone plate thereby permitting a restricted displacement in compression stressing of the bone.

**[0003]** It would be desirable to provide an improved spacer for use with an implant device, e.g., a bone plate, which further stimulates bone growth and/or promotes fracture healing.

### **SUMMARY**

**[0004]** Certain exemplary aspects of the invention are set forth below. It should be understood that these aspects are presented merely to provide the reader with a brief summary of certain forms the invention might take and that these aspects are not

intended to limit the scope of the invention. Indeed, the invention may encompass a variety of aspects that may not be explicitly set forth below.

**[0005]** In an embodiment of the present invention, a device defining a spacer, e.g., a polymeric spacer, is provided for use with an implant device, e.g., a bone plate, for splinting a fracture of a bone. The spacer includes a body defining a bone healing surface, wherein at least a portion of the bone healing surface has a coating thereon which includes a therapeutic agent, a polymeric carrier, and a buffer medium to stimulate bone growth and/or promote fracture healing.

**[0006]** In another embodiment, a kit is provided which includes one or more spacers, at least one bone plate, and optionally one or more bone screws for securing the bone plate to bone. At least one spacer includes a body defining a bone-healing surface. At least a portion of the bone-healing surface includes a coating having a therapeutic agent, a polymeric carrier, and a buffer medium to stimulate bone growth and/or promote fracture healing.

**[0007]** In another embodiment, a method for healing bone is provided which includes securely situating a bone plate adjacent a bone wherein the bone plate includes a spacer having a coating on at least a portion thereof. The coating is in contact with the bone and includes a therapeutic agent, a polymeric carrier, and a buffer medium for healing bone. In one example, the coating is placed on at least the portion of the spacer prior to securely situating the bone plate. In another example, the therapeutic agent, the polymeric carrier, and the buffer medium, which define the coating, are mixed prior to placing the coating on at least the portion.

**[0008]** Concerning the coating, the therapeutic agent can include a drug, a biological factor, or mixtures thereof; the polymeric carrier can include a bioresorbable or water-soluble polymer, a hydrogel-forming polymer, a polyelectrolyte, or mixtures thereof; and the buffer medium can include deionized water, phosphate buffer saline, normal saline, serum, whole blood, or mixtures thereof.

**[0009]** Various features discussed below in relation to one or more of the exemplary embodiments may be incorporated into any of the above-described aspects of the present invention alone or in any combination. Again, the brief summary presented

above is intended only to familiarize the reader with certain aspects and contexts of the present invention without limitation to the claimed subject matter.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

**[0010]** Various features, aspects, and advantages of the present invention will become better understood when the following detailed description is read with reference to the accompanying figures in which like characters represent like parts throughout the figures, wherein:

**[0011]** Figure 1 is a perspective view of a section of bone plate secured to bone by a first bone screw, and a spacer positioned in a hole of the bone plate receiving a corresponding second bone screw.

**[0012]** Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the bone plate of figure 1 taken along line 2-2; and

**[0013]** Figure 3 is a perspective view of the spacer of Fig. 1.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

**[0014]** One or more specific embodiments of the present invention will be described below. In an effort to provide a concise description of these embodiments, all features of an actual implementation may not be described in the specification. It should be appreciated that in the development of any such actual implementation, as in any engineering or design project, numerous implementation-specific decisions must be made to achieve the developers' specific goals, such as compliance with system-related and business-related constraints, which may vary from one implementation to another. Moreover, it should be appreciated that such a development effort might be complex and time consuming, but would nevertheless be a routine undertaking of design, fabrication, and manufacture for those of ordinary skill having the benefit of this disclosure.

**[0015]** When introducing elements of the present invention (E.G., the exemplary embodiments(s) thereof), the articles "a", "an", "the" and "said" are intended to mean that there are one or more of the elements. The terms "comprising", "including" and "having"

are intended to be inclusive and mean that there may be additional elements other than the listed elements.

[0016] Figs. 1-3 show an embodiment of the present invention including a medical device 10 including an implant device 12, e.g., a bone plate (shown in partial), for splinting a fracture of a bone 14 and a spacer 16, such as a polymeric spacer, with a coating 18 thereon used in combination with the bone plate 12 to stimulate bone growth and/or promote fracture healing.

[0017] With reference to Figs. 1 and 2, the bone plate 12 includes two holes 22 with each 22 hole receiving a corresponding polymeric spacer 16 and a corresponding bone screw 24. The bone plate 12 may be composed of metals and metal alloys, such as titanium or titanium alloys, tantalum or tantalum alloys (e.g., Ti6Al4V or Protosul<sup>TM</sup>), stainless steel or alloys thereof, cobalt-based alloys, cobalt-chromium alloys, cobalt-chromium-molybdenum alloys, niobium alloys, zirconium alloys, as well as shape memory alloys such as NiTiNOL. The bone plate 12 may define, for example, a compression bone plate (e.g. an axially compressive bone plate) or locking bone plate as are known in the art.

[0018] The polymeric spacer 16, as best shown in Fig. 3, includes a generally circular-shaped body 26 having an aperture 28 therethrough so as to receive a correspondingly-shaped screw 24 and further includes a protrusion 32 extending generally perpendicularly away from the body 26 to help retain the polymeric spacer 16 within the hole 22, as generally discussed further below. The polymeric spacer 16 functions to improve bone fracture healing by acting as a cushion between the bone plate 12 and bone screw 24 and by decreasing the area of contact between bone 14 and the bone plate 12 thereby permitting a restricted displacement in compression stressing of the bone 14. And, although shown as being generally circular-shaped and having the protrusion 32 therefrom, it should be understood by one having ordinary skill in the art that various spacer 16 configurations may be provided for cooperation with differently shaped and sized holes 22 and/or screws 24.

[0019] The coating 18 on spacer 16 includes a therapeutic healing agent, a polymeric carrier, and a buffer medium. The coating 18 is applied to a bottom, or bone-healing,

surface 34 of the spacer 16, and contacts the bone 14 (or bony tissue) when the bone plate 12 is implanted. Such coating 18 helps mitigate the development of stress shielding and further promotes bone growth and/or fracture healing. One such suitable bone plate 12 (with screws 24) and polymeric spacer 16, which may receive the coating 18 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention, are disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 6,540,746 to Buhler et al. entitled "Bone Plate for Splinting a Fracture at a Bone with a Plurality of Bone Screws", which is expressly incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

[0020] As best shown in Figs. 1 and 2, the bone plate 12 is attached to the bone 14 using each bone screw 24. Prior to positioning the screws 24 within corresponding holes 22, a corresponding polymeric spacer 16 first is positioned in each hole 22. To position the polymeric spacer 16, the polymeric spacer 16 may be pressed into the hole 22 from the underside 38 of the bone plate 12, which lies adjacent to the bone 14 when implanted. The polymeric spacer 16 is held in place within the hole 22 by a snap or friction-type fit and is oriented so that the coating 18 on the polymeric spacer 16 contacts bone 14 when the bone plate 12 is implanted. The bone screws 24 then are inserted through the corresponding hole 22 and spacer 16, and ultimately anchored in the bone 14 and braced thereagainst via contact surface 40. The screw head 42, which is sunk within the bone plate 12, has in its upper region a shoulder 44 that lies in contact with a ring-shaped ledge 46 in the hole 22 of the bone plate 12 and limits the plate's upward movement in the direction of a screw axis 48. The contact surface 40 of the bone screw 24 projects beyond the underside 38 of the bone plate 12, which is at least so large that the underside 38 does not lie in contact with the bone 14. The distance is chosen to be greater than about 0.2 mm in order that the underside 38 of the bone plate 12 reliably lies spaced apart from the bone 14 between the bone screws 24.

[0021] The polymeric spacer 16 likewise projects beyond the underside 38 of the bone plate 12 at its bone-healing surface 34 by a distance, which can be smaller than the distance for the contact surface 40 of the screw 24, in order that the bone plate 12 is braced with only a limited force between the polymeric spacer 16 and the shoulder 44. A compression of the bone 14 and a moving back is possible insofar as the polymeric

spacer 16 and the friction between the shoulder 44 and the ledge 46, which is produced by the bias force, permit. Because the material for the polymeric spacer 16 may be bioresorbable, the deflections of micro-movements can be controlled temporally in such a manner that pressure peaks, which become ever greater but still remain tractable during backward movement, are permitted at the fracture. The bone 14 can thus take over its carrying function in accordance with the healing process, which has a very positive effect on bone forming.

[0022] The polymeric spacer 16, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention, may be composed of a bioresorbable or biostable polymer and includes a desired elasticity. The bioresorbable polymer can include a poly-D, L-lactide (PDLLA), which may be resorbed through hydrolysis in approximately 30 weeks. A suitable PDLLA is Resomer R208 available from the Boehringer Company of Ingelheim, Germany. The bioresorbable polymer can also include poly (L) lactide (PLLA), a copolymer of PLLA and PDLLA, polyglycolide (PGA), and copolymers of PGA and polylactide with different molecular weights (or inherent viscosity). Biostable polymers can include poly(methylmethacrylate), poly (ether ether ketone), ultrahigh molecular weight polyethylene, and polyurethane, for example.

[0023] As best shown in Fig. 2, the bottom, or bone-healing, surface 34 of the polymeric spacer 16 is coated with coating 18, which is in contact with the bone 14. That coating 18, as disclosed above, includes a therapeutic healing agent, a polymeric carrier, and a buffer medium. The therapeutic agent is such that it promotes bone growth and/or fracture healing. The coating is applied at a thickness that allows delivery of a desired amount of the therapeutic agent over a desired period of time.

[0024] The therapeutic healing agent of the coating 18 can include, for example, a drug or biological factor, such as an osteogenic agent, an osteoinductive agent, or mixture thereof, which can promote bone growth and/or healing, thus, enhancing the overall healing characteristics of the medical device. Such osteogenic and osteoinductive agents can include, for example, members of the families of Bone Morphogenetic Proteins (BMPs), Osteoprotegerin or any of the other osteoclastogenesis inhibitors, Connective Tissue Growth Factors (CTGFs), Vascular Endothelial Growth Factors

(VEGFs), Transforming Growth Factor-betas (TGF- $\beta$ s), Growth Differentiation Factors (GDFs), Cartilage Derived Morphogenic Proteins (CDMPs), and Lim Mineralization Proteins (LMPs). Osteoconductive agents may optionally be provided in the coating 18 along with the osteogenic and/or osteoinductive agents.

[0025] BMPs are a class of proteins thought to have osteoinductive or growth-promoting activities on endogenous bone tissue, or function as pro-collagen precursors. Known members of the BMP family that may be utilized as osteoinductive agents in tissue attachment formulations include BMP-1, BMP-2, BMP-3, BMP-4, BMP-5, BMP-6, BMP-7, BMP-8, BMP-9, BMP-10, BMP-11, BMP-12, BMP-13, BMP-15, BMP-16, BMP-17, and BMP-18 polynucleotides and polypeptides, as well as mature polypeptides and polynucleotides encoding the same. The BMPs may be included in the coating 18 as full length BMPs or fragments thereof, or combinations or mixtures thereof, or as polypeptides or polynucleotides encoding the polypeptide fragments of all of the recited BMPs. (Termaat et al., J Bone Joint Surg Am., 87:1367-138, 2005).

[0026] Osteoclastogenesis inhibitors inhibit bone resorption by osteoclasts of the bone tissue surrounding the site of implantation. Osteoclast and Osteoclastogenesis inhibitors include osteoprotegerin polynucleotides and polypeptides, as well as mature Osteoprotegerin polypeptides and polynucleotides encoding the same. The Osteoprotegerin protein specifically binds to its ligand, osteoprotegerin ligand (TNFSF11/OPGL), both of which are key extracellular regulators of osteoclast development. Osteoclastogenesis inhibitors further include chemical compounds such as bisphosphonates (e.g., alendronate, clodronate, etidronate, ibandronate, (3-amino-1-hydroxypropylidene)-1,1-bisphosphonate (APD), dichloromethylene bisphosphonate, aminobisphosphonatezoledronate, zoledronic acid, and pamidronate) (Morris et al., J Bone Joint Surf Am., 87: 1609-1618, 2005), 5-lipoxygenase inhibitors such as those described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,534,524 and 6,455,541 (herein incorporated by reference), heterocyclic compounds such as those described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,658,935 (herein incorporated by reference), 2,4-dioxoimidazolidine and imidazolidine derivative compounds such as those described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,397,796 and 5,554,594 (herein incorporated by reference), sulfonamide derivatives such as those described in U.S. Pat.

No. 6,313,119 (herein incorporated by reference), and acylguanidine compounds such as those described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,492,356 (herein incorporated by reference).

[0027] CTGFs are a class of proteins thought to have growth-promoting activities on connective tissues. Known members of the CTGF family include CTGF-1, CTGF-2, and CTGF-4, any of which may be incorporated into the coating 18, in addition to polypeptides and polynucleotides encoding the same.

[0028] VEGFs are a class of proteins thought to have growth-promoting activities on vascular tissues. Known members of the VEGF family include VEGF-A, VEGF-B, VEGF-C, VEGF-D and VEGF-E, any of which may be incorporated into the coating 18, in addition to polypeptides and polynucleotides encoding the same.

[0029] TGF- $\beta$ s are a class of proteins thought to have growth-promoting activities on a range of tissues, including connective tissues. Known members of the TGF- $\beta$  family include TGF- $\beta$ -1, TGF- $\beta$ -2, and TGF- $\beta$ -3, any of which may be incorporated into the coating 18, in addition to polypeptides and polynucleotides encoding the same.

[0030] Known GDFs include GDF-1, GDF-2, GDF-3, GDF-7, GDF-10, GDF-11, and GDF-15. GDF-1 polynucleotides and polypeptides generally correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers M62302, AAA58501, and AAB94786; GDF-2 polynucleotides and polypeptides correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers BC069643, BC074921, Q9UK05, AAH69643, and AAH74921; GDF-3 polynucleotides and polypeptides correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers AF263538, BC030959, AAF91389, AAQ89234, and Q9NR23; GDF-7 polynucleotides and polypeptides correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers AB158468, AF522369, AAP97720, and Q7Z4P5; GDF-10 polynucleotides and polypeptides correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers BC028237 and AAH28237; GDF-11 polynucleotides and polypeptides correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers AF100907, NP005802 and 095390; and GDF-15 polynucleotides and polypeptides correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers BC008962, BC000529, AAH00529, and NP004855.

[0031] Known CDMPs and LMPs include CDMP-1, CDMP-2, LMP-1, LMP-2, and LMP-3. CDMP-1 polynucleotides and polypeptides generally correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers NM000557, U13660, NP000548 and P43026; CDMP-2 polypeptides

correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers and P55106; LMP-1 polynucleotides and polypeptides correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers AF345904 and AAK30567; LMP-2 polynucleotides and polypeptides correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers AF345905 and AAK30568; and LMP-3 polynucleotides and polypeptides correspond to GenBank Accession Numbers AF345906 and AAK30569.

**[0032]** Additional osteoinductive and osteoconductive agents, factors, and compounds such as hydroxyapatite (HA), tricalcium phosphate (TCP), collagen, fibronectin (FN), osteonectin (ON), endothelial cell growth factor (ECGF), cementum attachment extracts (CAE), ketanserin, human growth hormone (HGH), animal growth hormones, parathyroid hormone (PTH) (Aleksyniene and Hvid, *Medicina (Kaunas)*, 40, 842-849, 2004), epidermal growth factor (EGF), interleukin-1 (IL-1), human alpha thrombin, insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1), platelet derived growth factors (PDGF), fibroblast growth factors (FGF,  $\beta$ FGF, etc.), and Wnt proteins, and derivatives thereof also can be included as therapeutic agents.

**[0033]** Other examples of therapeutic healing agents can include glycogen synthase kinase 3 (GSK-3) inhibitors, biocidal/biostatic sugars such as dextran and glucose, vitamins, cartilage fragments, natural extracts, genetically engineered living cells, or otherwise modified living cells, permeation enhancers such as fatty acid esters including laureate, myristate, and stearate monoesters of polyethylene glycol, salts such as strontium salt, fluoride salt, magnesium salt, and sodium salt, bone marrow aspirate, bone marrow concentrate, and mixtures and combinations thereof.

**[0034]** Therapeutic agents that are full-length proteins or fragments may be conjugated to polyethylene glycol (PEG) moieties to increase their half-life in vivo (also known as pegylation). Methods of pegylating polypeptides are well known in the art. In addition, the biological factor(s) may be delivered by gene therapy vectors harboring the polynucleotides encoding the biological factor of interest. The vector may be, for example, a phage, plasmid, viral, or retroviral vector. Such gene therapy and delivery techniques are known in the art. Gene therapy vectors further comprise suitable adenoviral vectors. Suitable gene therapy vectors include gene therapy vectors that do not integrate into the host genome and gene therapy vectors that integrate into the host

genome. A desired polynucleotide also may be delivered in plasmid formulations. Plasmid DNA or RNA formulations refer to polynucleotide sequences encoding osteoinductive polypeptides that are free from any delivery vehicle that acts to assist, promote, or facilitate entry into the cell, including viral sequences, viral particles, liposome formulations, lipofectin or precipitating agents and the like.

[0035] The biological factors also may be available as heterodimers or homodimers, as well as multimers or combinations thereof. Recombinantly expressed proteins may be in native forms, truncated analogs, muteins, fusion proteins (e.g., fusion proteins with the FC portion of human IgG), and other constructed forms capable of inducing bone, cartilage, or other types of tissue formation as demonstrated by in vitro and ex vivo bioassays and in vivo implantation in mammals, including humans. Examples of fusion proteins include ligand fusions between mature osteoinductive polypeptides and the FC portion of human Immunoglobulin G (IgG). Methods of making fusion proteins and constructs encoding the same are known in the art.

[0036] Examples of suitable drugs include antitumor agents and chemotherapeutics such as cis-platinum, ifosfamide, methotrexate, and doxorubicin hydrochloride, immunosuppressants, statins, pain killers and anti-inflammatories such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID) like ketorolac tromethamine, lidocaine hydrochloride, bupivacaine hydrochloride, and ibuprofen, antibiotics or other bactericidal agents, and antiretroviral drugs. Bactericidal drugs and antiretroviral drugs may be provided to prevent infection by pathogens that are introduced to the patient during implant surgery. Administration of antibiotics and antiretroviral drugs also may be useful to account for nosocomial infections or other factors specific to the location where implant surgery is conducted. Antibiotics and antiretroviral drugs include aminoglycosides such as tobramycin, amoxicillin, ampicillin, azactam, bacitracin, beta-lactamases, beta-lactam (glycopeptide), biomycin, clindamycin, chloramphenicol, chloromycetin, cefazolin, cephalosporins, ciprofloxacin, erythromycin, fluoroquinolones, gentamicin, macrolides, metronidazole, neomycin, penicillins, polymycin B, quinolones, rapamycin, rifampin, streptomycin, sulfonamide, tetracyclines, trimethoprim, trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole,

vancomycin, and mixtures and combinations thereof. Bactericidal agents include the group of metal ions such as silver and copper.

[0037] The polymeric carrier of coating 18 generally functions as a delivery medium to allow for regulated and sustained release of the therapeutic agent. The polymeric carrier can include natural or synthetic polymers such as bioresorbable or water-soluble polymers, hydrogel-forming polymers, polyelectrolytes, or mixtures thereof. Examples of suitable bioresorbable or water-soluble polymers include anionic biopolymers such as alginate and hyaluronic acid, cationic biopolymers such as chitin and chitosan, amphipathic polymers such as collagen, gelatin and fibrin, and neutral biopolymers such as dextran and agarose. Examples of suitable hydrogel-forming polymers include polyoxyethylene polyoxypropylene block copolymer (e.g. BASF Lutrol F 127), poly(ethylene glycol)-co-poly lactide, poly(ethylene oxide), poly(amino acids), and synthetic polypeptides. Examples of suitable polyelectrolytes include poly(acrylic acid), and poly(acrylic acid) and poly(allyamine hydrochloride) such as to provide multi-layer films (Pavoor et al., *Biomaterials*, 27, 1527-1533, 2006).

[0038] The buffer medium of coating 18 can include, for example, deionized water, phosphate buffer saline, normal saline (e.g., 0.9% weight to volume NaCl solution in deionized water), serum, or whole blood, or mixtures thereof. The buffer medium generally is selected to provide a desirable pH environment for the therapeutic agent. In one embodiment, the buffer medium, in combination with the polymeric carrier, provides a solution for the therapeutic agent having a pH of about 4 to about 9. In another embodiment, the buffer medium/polymeric carrier solution has a pH of about 5 to about 8. In yet another embodiment, the buffer medium/polymeric carrier solution has a pH of about 5.5 to about 7.5.

[0039] Concerning the amounts of each component in the coating 18, the therapeutic healing agent, in one embodiment, is provided in a range of about 0.01 mg/mL to about 50 mg/mL, expressed as weight of therapeutic healing agent(s) per volume of polymeric carrier(s). In another embodiment, the therapeutic healing agent is provided in a range of about 0.3 mg/mL to about 10 mg/mL. In yet another embodiment, the therapeutic healing agent is provided in a range of about 0.5 mg/mL to about 5 mg/mL.

**[0040]** The polymeric carrier, in one embodiment, is provided in the coating 18 in a range of about 1% to about 90% weight per volume of buffer medium. In another embodiment, the polymeric carrier is provided in a range of about 5% to about 50% weight per volume of buffer medium. In yet another embodiment, the polymeric carrier is provided in a range of about 10% to about 30% weight per volume of buffer medium.

**[0041]** In one example, the coating 18 of the present invention includes a growth factor, a hydrogel-forming polymer, and a buffer medium. In another example, the coating 18 includes bone morphogenetic protein (BMP), a polyoxyethylene polyoxypropylene block copolymer, and deionized water. In yet another example, the coating 18 includes 1.5 mg/mL recombinant human bone morphogenetic protein 2 (rhBMP-2) and 20% wt/vol polyoxyethylene polyoxypropylene block copolymer (i.e., BASF Lutrol® F 127) in deionized water.

**[0042]** The coating 18 may be coated onto the bone-healing surface 34 of the spacer 16 at a thickness of about 10 nm to about 1000  $\mu\text{m}$ . In another embodiment, the coating 18 is coated onto the bone-healing surface 34 at a thickness of about 100 nm to about 500  $\mu\text{m}$ . In yet another embodiment, the coating 18 is coated onto the bone-healing surface 34 at a thickness of about 300 nm to about 300  $\mu\text{m}$ . While the bone-healing surface 34 of the spacer 16 is shown as being coated, it should be understood that other areas or portions of the spacer 16 may be coated either alternately or in addition thereto and that less than or more than the entire bone-healing surface 34 may be coated. Generally speaking, a surface (or portion) of the spacer 16 that would normally contact bone 14 (or bony tissue), but for the coating 18, typically is coated so as to maximize promotion of bone growth and/or fracture healing.

**[0043]** The coating 18 can be prepared by generally mixing together the respective components and, more specifically, can include first preparing and weighing each of the therapeutic agent, polymeric carrier, and buffer medium. The therapeutic agent then may be added to the buffer medium and the solution mixed until homogenous. The mixing can be done by mechanical stirring, magnetic stirring, or ultrasonically. The polymeric carrier can be added to the homogenous solution then mixed by mechanical stirring, magnetic stirring, or ultrasonically until a homogenous solution is again achieved.

The resulting homogenous solution defines the coating 18. During mixing steps, the solution may be subject to an elevated temperature of about 25° C to about 80° C. In another example, the temperature is within a range of about 30° C to about 60° C. In another example, the temperature is within a range of about 37° C to about 45° C. The mixing process typically is carried out in a USP clean room (e.g., 10,000 or higher).

**[0044]** Once mixed, the coating 18 may be sealed and packaged for sterilization for later coating, e.g., dip coating, of the spacer 16, such as in an operating room. Alternatively, the just prepared coating 18 may be subsequently applied to the spacer 16 such as to the bone healing surface(s) 34 thereof. Then, the spacer(s) 16 can be packaged alone or as a kit with the bone plate(s) 12 and corresponding bone screw(s) 24, which may be sterilized such as via a gas plasma process. In another embodiment, rather than the coating 18 being premixed or the spacers 16 pre-coated, each component of the coating 18 may be provided separately weighed and packaged for a surgeon. Prior to surgery, the components, i.e., therapeutic agent, polymeric carrier, and buffer medium can be mixed together, as described above, then the coating can be applied, such as via dip coating 18, onto the surface(s) 34 of the spacer 16 that will be in contact with bone 14 (or bony tissue).

**[0045]** Dip coating of the spacer 16 may be performed in such a way that the surface 34 that would be in contact with the bone 14 (or bony tissues), but for the coating 18, is immersed in the coating 18. Alternately, the entire spacer 16 may be dip coated. In one embodiment, the spacer 16 (or portion thereof) can be immersed in the coating 18 for about 5 seconds to about 300 seconds. In another embodiment, the spacer 16 (or portion thereof) can be immersed in the coating 18 for about 10 seconds to about 180 seconds. In yet another embodiment, the spacer 16 (or portion thereof) can be immersed in the coating 18 for about 30 seconds to about 120 seconds. After immersion, the coating 18 is allowed to dry, e.g., air dry.

**[0046]** Multiple coatings 18 may be applied on the spacer 16. Subsequent coatings may include one or more different components. That different component, for example, may be different in chemistry and/or molecular weight. In one example, the subsequent coating(s) may define, for example, a different drug(s) with the same or different release

profile, which may be required to act synergistically in the fracture-healing pathway. Multilayer coatings can modify the profiles of bone resorption and the therapeutic agents release to achieve desirable clinical results.

[0047] As various changes could be made in the above-described aspects and exemplary embodiments without departing from the scope of the invention, it is intended that all matter contained in the above description shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense.

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A device for use with a bone plate comprising:  
a spacer including a body defining a bone healing surface, at least a portion of the bone healing surface including a coating comprising a therapeutic agent, a polymeric carrier, and a buffer medium.
2. The device of claim 1 wherein the therapeutic agent includes a drug, a biological factor, or mixtures thereof.
3. The device of claim 1 wherein the therapeutic agent includes an osteogenic agent, an osteoinductive agent, or mixtures thereof.
4. The device of claim 1 wherein the therapeutic agent is a bone growth factor.
5. The device of claim 4 wherein the bone growth factor is a bone morphogenetic protein.
6. The device of claim 1 wherein the polymeric carrier includes a bioresorbable or water-soluble polymer, a hydrogel-forming polymer, a polyelectrolyte, or mixtures thereof.
7. The device of claim 1 wherein the buffer medium includes deionized water, phosphate buffer saline, normal saline, serum, whole blood, or mixtures thereof.
8. The device of claim 1 wherein the therapeutic agent includes a growth factor, the polymeric carrier includes a hydrogel-forming polymer, and the buffer medium includes deionized water.

9. The device of claim 8 wherein the growth factor is recombinant human bone morphogenetic protein 2 (rhBMP-2), and the hydrogel-forming polymer is a polyoxyethylene polyoxypropylene block copolymer.
10. The device of claim 1 wherein the therapeutic healing agent is provided in the coating in a range of about 0.01 mg/mL to about 50 mg/mL, expressed as weight of therapeutic healing agent per volume of polymeric carrier, and wherein the polymeric carrier is provided in the coating in a range of about 1% to about 90% weight per volume of buffer medium.
11. The device of claim 1 wherein the spacer is a polymeric spacer.
12. A medical device comprising a bone plate and the device of claim 1.
13. A kit comprising:
  - one or more spacers, at least one spacer including a body defining a bone healing surface, at least a portion of the bone healing surface including a coating comprising a therapeutic agent, a polymeric carrier, and a buffer medium; and
  - at least one bone plate.
14. The kit of claim 13 further comprising one or more bone screws.
15. A method for healing bone comprising:
  - securely situating a bone plate adjacent a bone, the bone plate including a spacer having a coating on at least a portion thereof, the coating being in contact with the bone and comprising a therapeutic agent, a polymeric carrier, and a buffer medium.
16. The method of claim 15 further including prior to securely situating the bone plate, placing the coating on at least the portion of the spacer.

17. The method of claim 16 further comprising prior to placing the coating on at least the portion of the spacer, mixing the therapeutic agent, the polymeric carrier, and the buffer medium to define the coating.
18. The method of claim 15 wherein the therapeutic agent includes a drug, a biological factor, or mixtures thereof.
19. The method of claim 15 wherein the therapeutic agent includes an osteogenic agent, an osteoinductive agent, or mixtures thereof.
20. The method of claim 15 wherein the therapeutic agent is a bone growth factor.
21. The method of claim 20 wherein the bone growth factor is a bone morphogenetic protein.
22. The method of claim 15 wherein the polymeric carrier includes a bioresorbable or water-soluble polymer, a hydrogel-forming polymer, a polyelectrolyte, or mixtures thereof.
23. The method of claim 15 wherein the buffer medium includes deionized water, phosphate buffer saline, normal saline, serum, whole blood, or mixtures thereof.
24. The method of claim 15 wherein the therapeutic agent includes a growth factor, the polymeric carrier includes a hydrogel-forming polymer, and the buffer medium includes deionized water.
25. The method of claim 24 wherein the growth factor is recombinant human bone morphogenetic protein 2 (rhBMP-2), and the hydrogel-forming polymer is a polyoxyethylene polyoxypropylene block copolymer.

26. The method of claim 15 wherein the therapeutic healing agent is provided in the coating in a range of about 0.01 mg/mL to about 50 mg/mL, expressed as weight of therapeutic healing agent per volume of polymeric carrier, and wherein the polymeric carrier is provided in the coating in a range of about 1% to about 90% weight per volume of buffer medium.

27. The method of claim 15 wherein the spacer is a polymeric spacer.



