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(12) **United States Patent**
Suddaby

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,968,379 B2**

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(54) **SUBCUTANEOUS IMPLANTABLE DEVICE FOR GRADUALLY ALIGNING A SPINE AND SUBCUTANEOUS IMPLANTABLE DEVICE FOR GRADUALLY LENGTHENING A BONE**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC A61B 17/7053; A61B 17/8869
See application file for complete search history.

(71) Applicant: **Loubert S. Suddaby**, Orchard Park, NY (US)

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(72) Inventor: **Loubert S. Suddaby**, Orchard Park, NY (US)

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 141 days.

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(21) Appl. No.: **14/995,382**

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(65) **Prior Publication Data**

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Primary Examiner — Ellen C Hammond
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Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 14/244,241, filed on Apr. 3, 2014, now Pat. No. 9,480,519, which (Continued)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

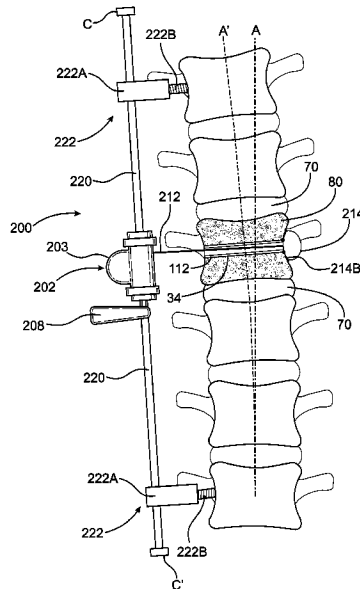
A subcutaneous implantable device for aligning a spine having a plurality of vertebrae including a first brace assembly secured to a first vertebra of the spine, a second brace assembly secured to a second vertebra of the spine, a rod secured by the at least two brace assemblies, the rod arranged for limited sliding movement within the at least two brace assemblies, a gear mechanism attached to the rod, a control means attached to the gear mechanism, and a cable fixedly secured to a third vertebra of the spine by an anchor. The third vertebra is located between the first and second vertebrae, and the cable is arranged for pulling the third vertebra towards the rod. A subcutaneous implantable device for gradually lengthening a bone.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
A61B 17/70 (2006.01)
A61B 17/66 (2006.01)

(Continued)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **A61B 17/7053** (2013.01); **A61B 17/66** (2013.01); **A61B 17/683** (2013.01); **A61B 17/686** (2013.01); **A61B 17/7059** (2013.01); **A61B 17/7216** (2013.01); **A61B 17/8685** (2013.01); **A61B 17/8855** (2013.01); **A61B 17/8869** (2013.01); **A61B 2017/00004** (2013.01); **A61B 2017/565** (2013.01)

22 Claims, 38 Drawing Sheets



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is a continuation-in-part of application No. 13/644,365, filed on Oct. 4, 2012, now Pat. No. 8,764,803.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

A61B 17/68 (2006.01)
A61B 17/86 (2006.01)
A61B 17/88 (2006.01)
A61B 17/72 (2006.01)
A61B 17/00 (2006.01)
A61B 17/56 (2006.01)

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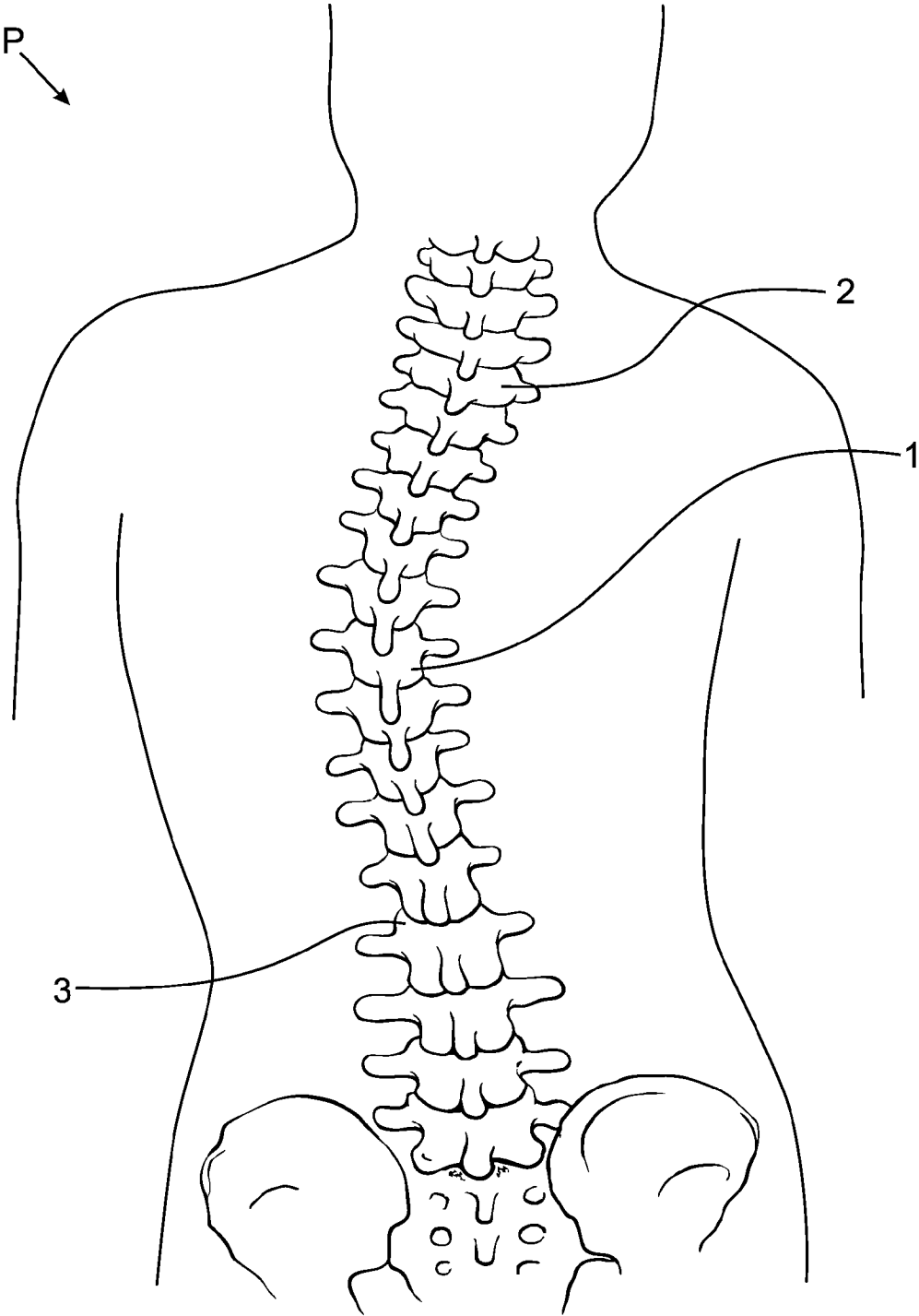


Fig. 1

Prior Art

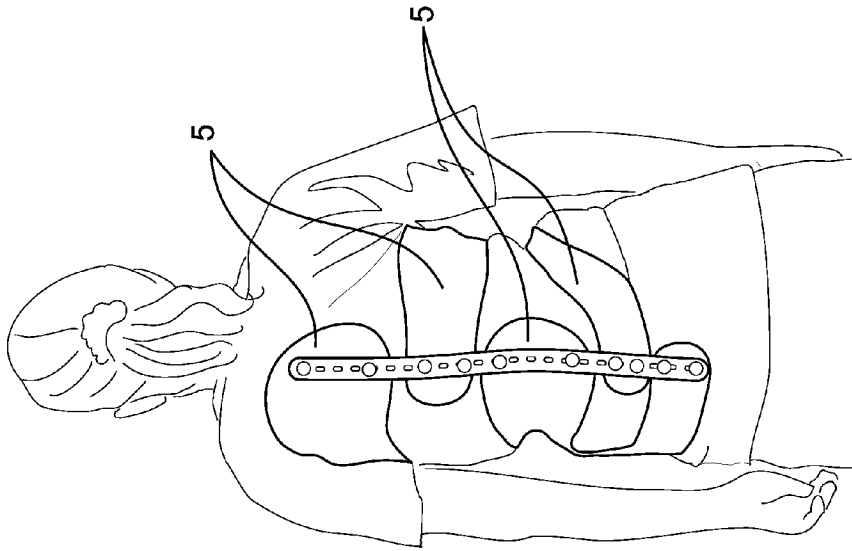


Fig. 2B

Prior Art

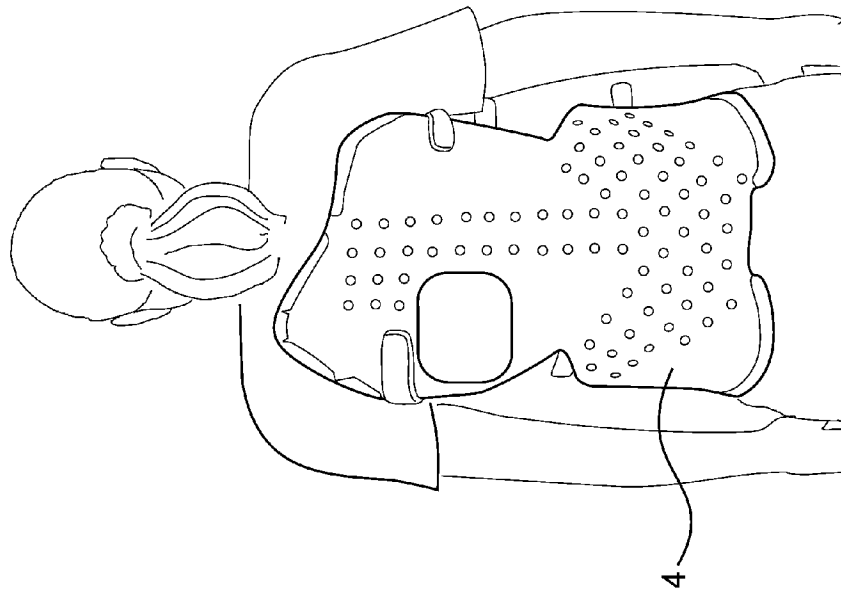


Fig. 2A

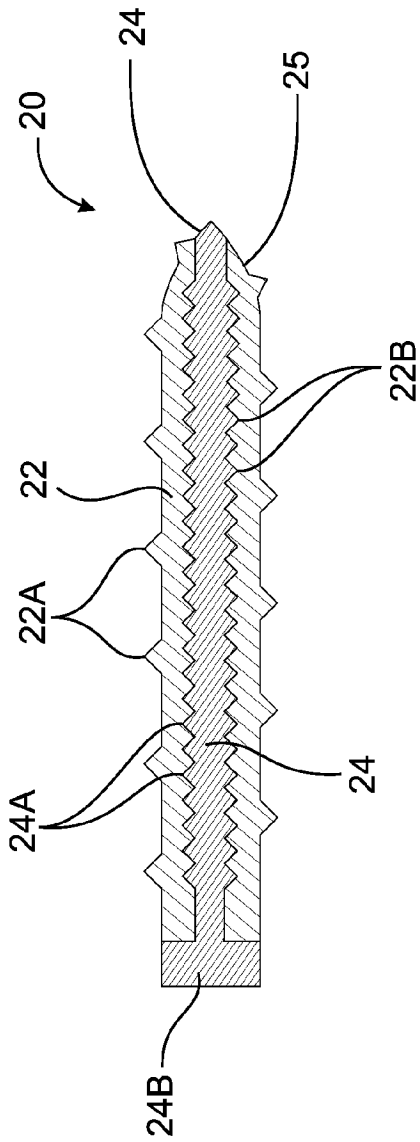


Fig. 3

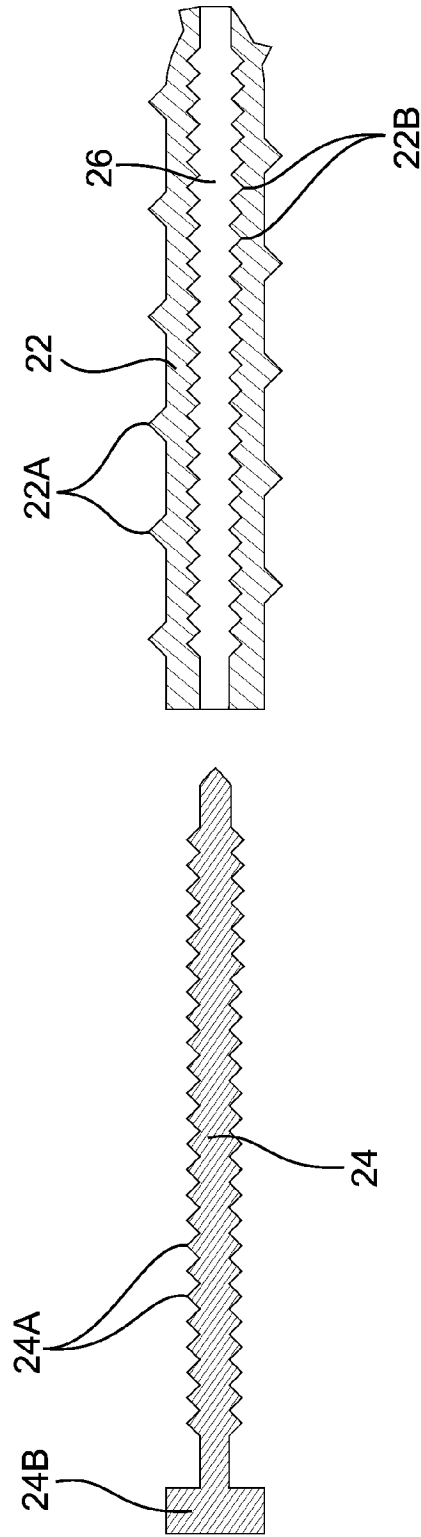


Fig. 4

Fig. 4A

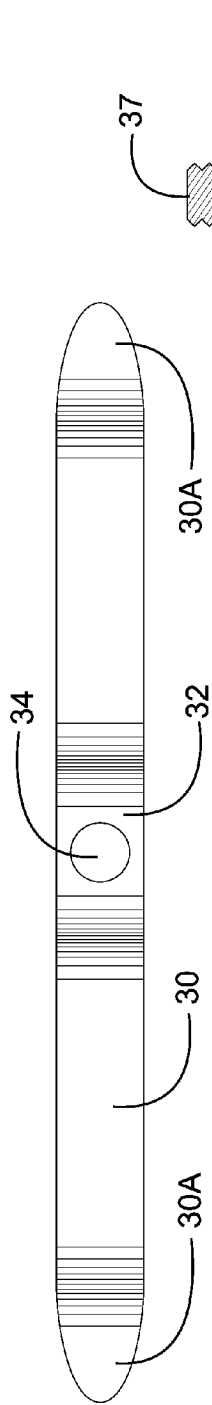


Fig. 5A

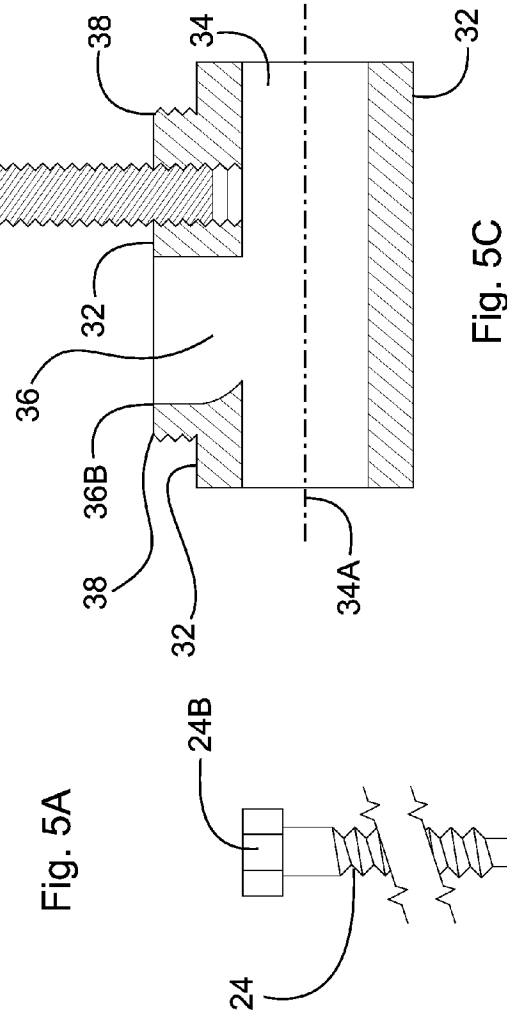


Fig. 5B

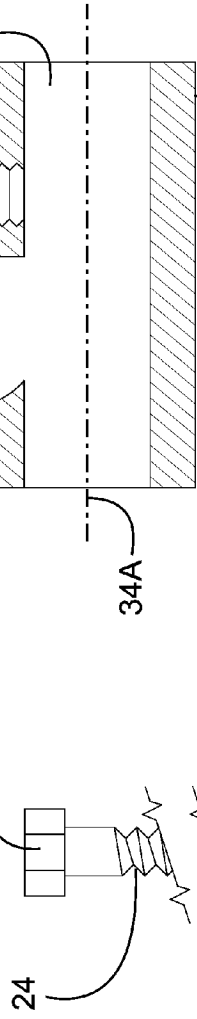


Fig. 5C

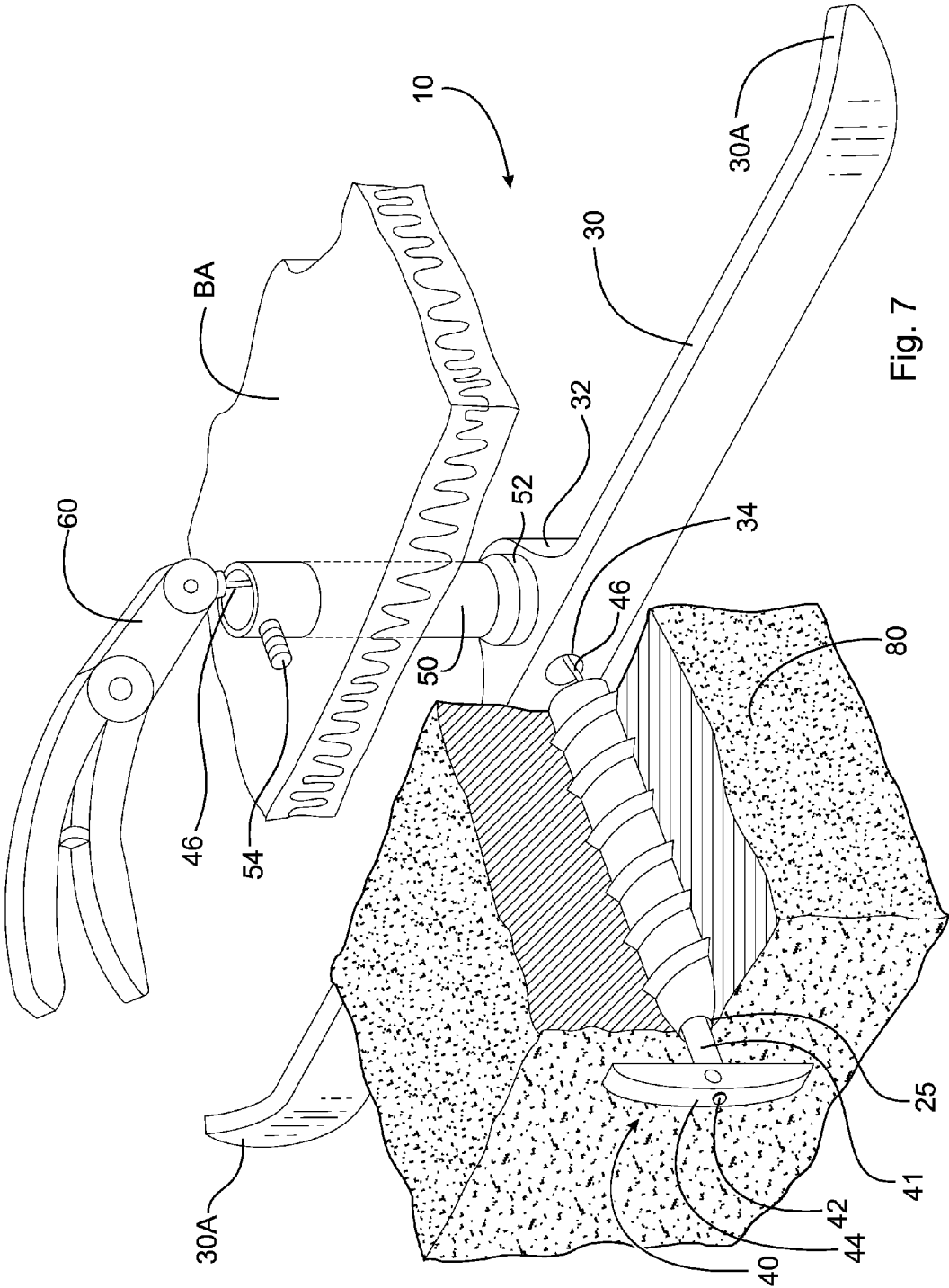


Fig. 7

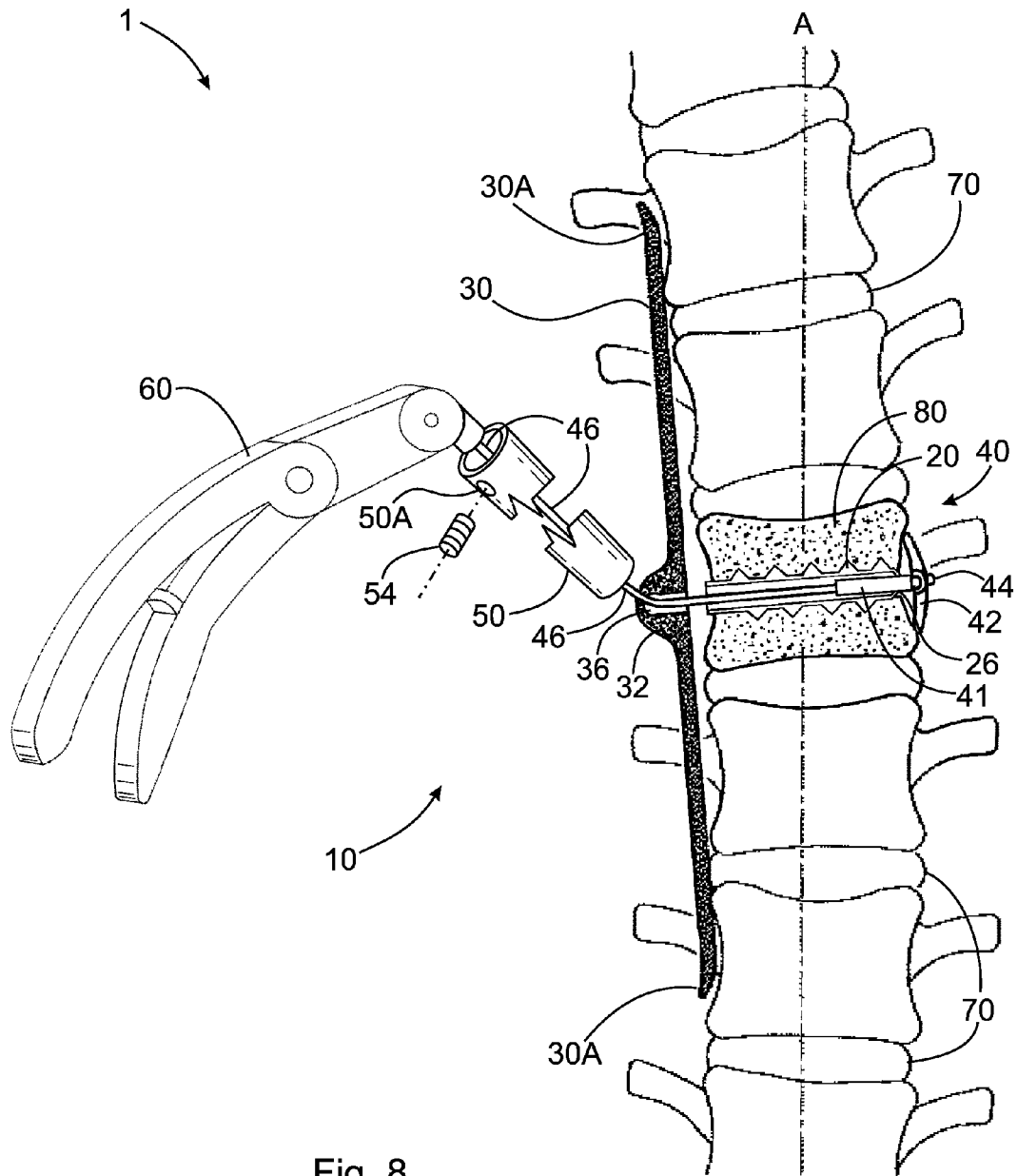


Fig. 8

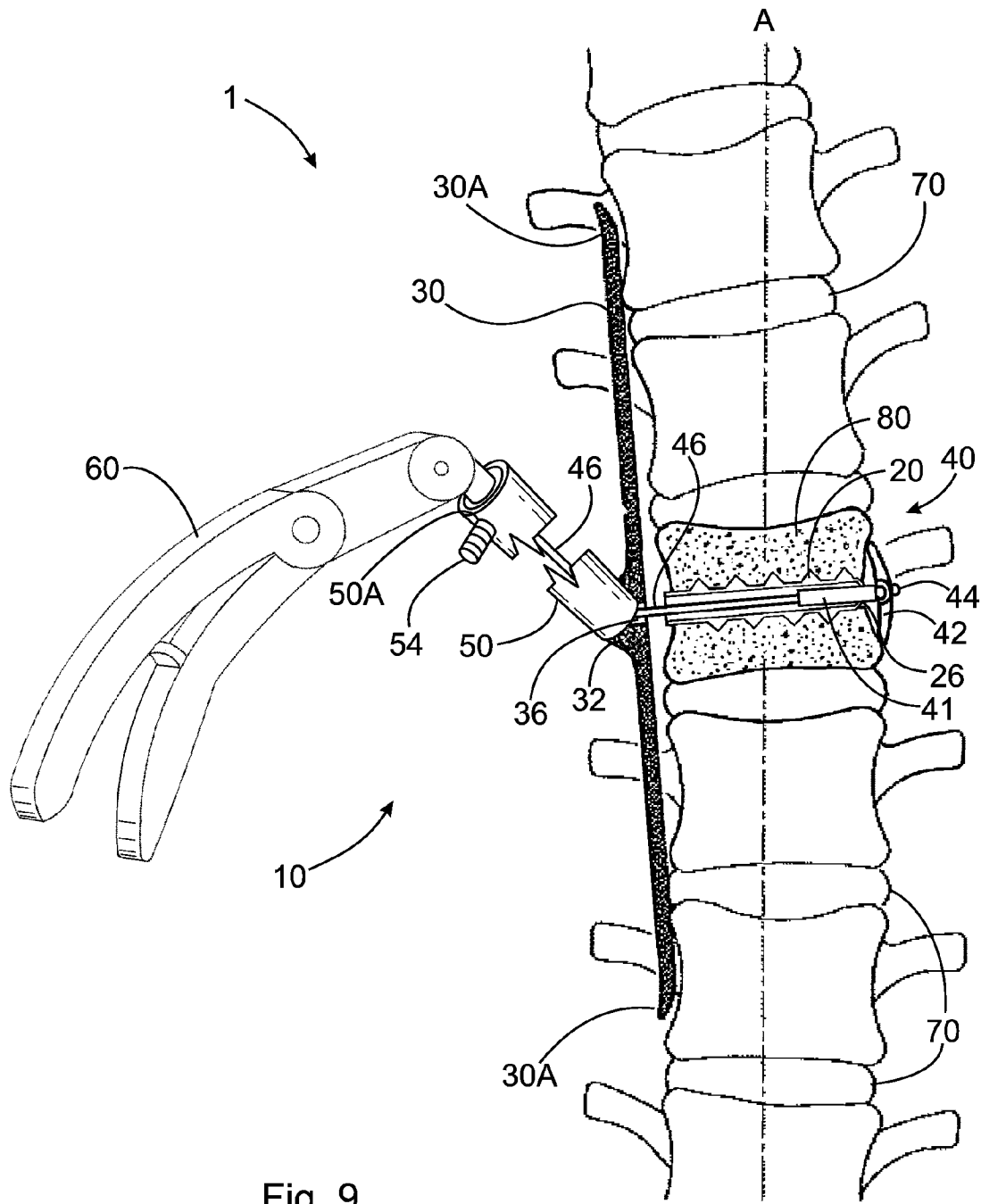


Fig. 9

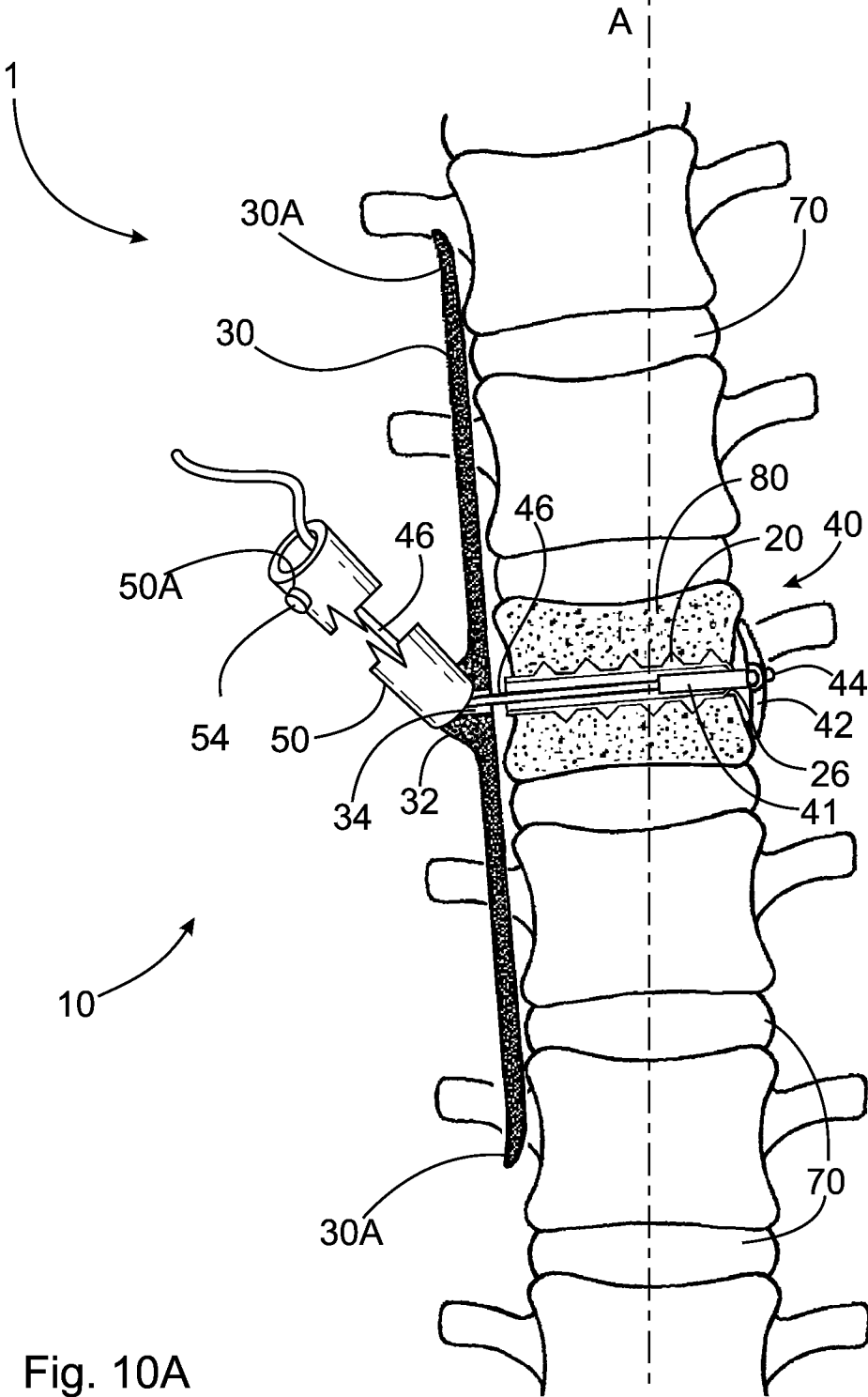


Fig. 10A

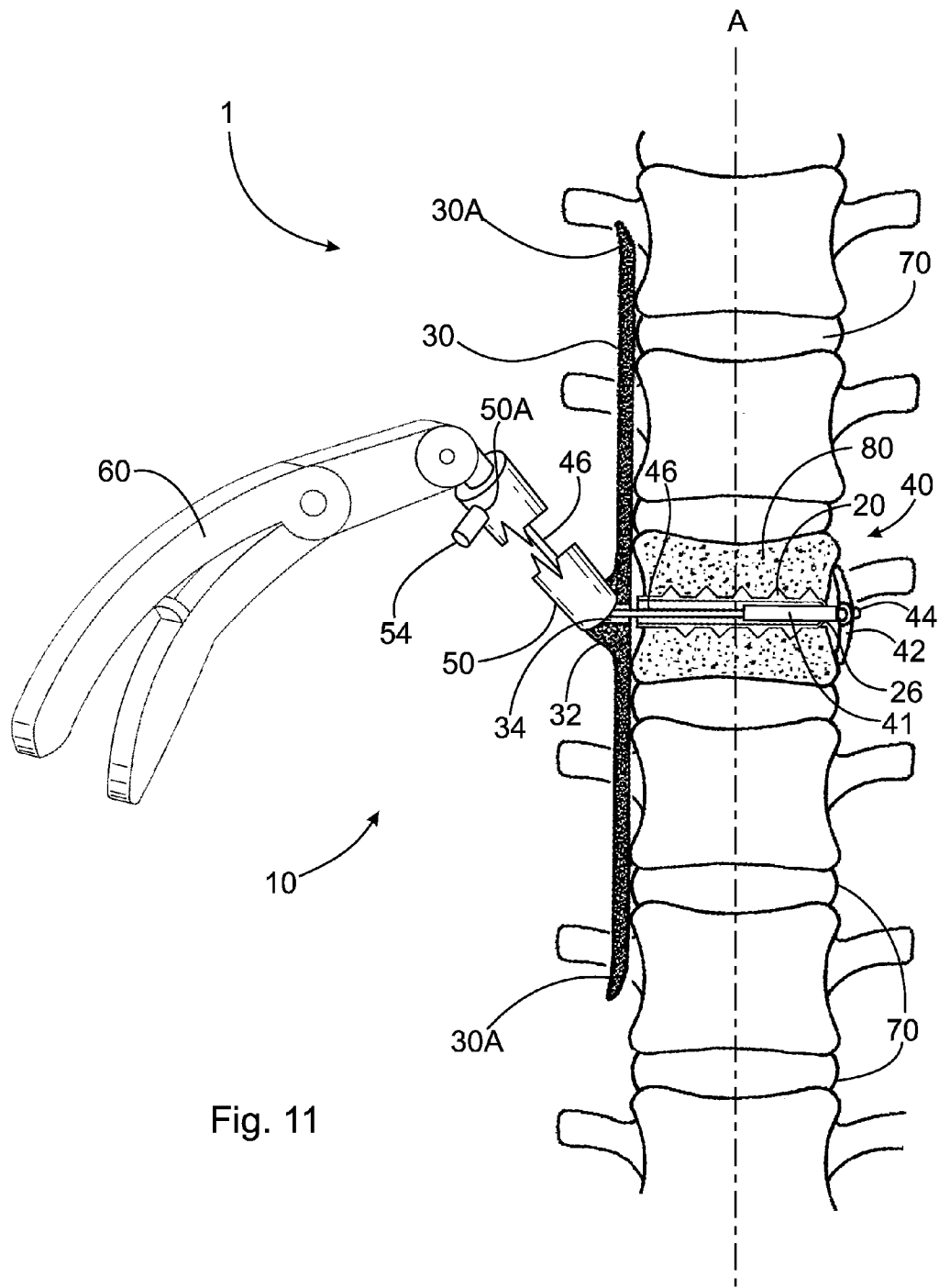
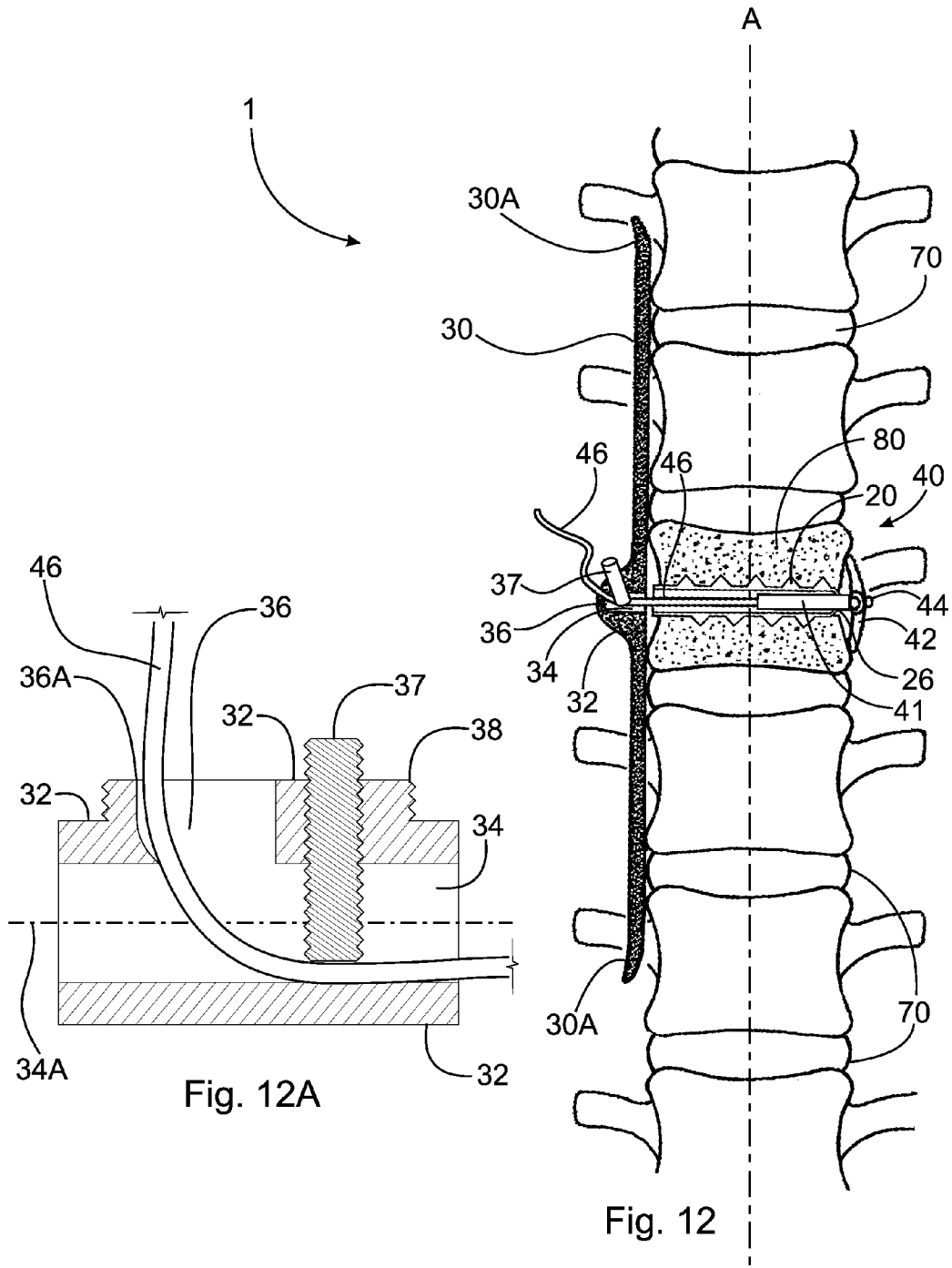


Fig. 11



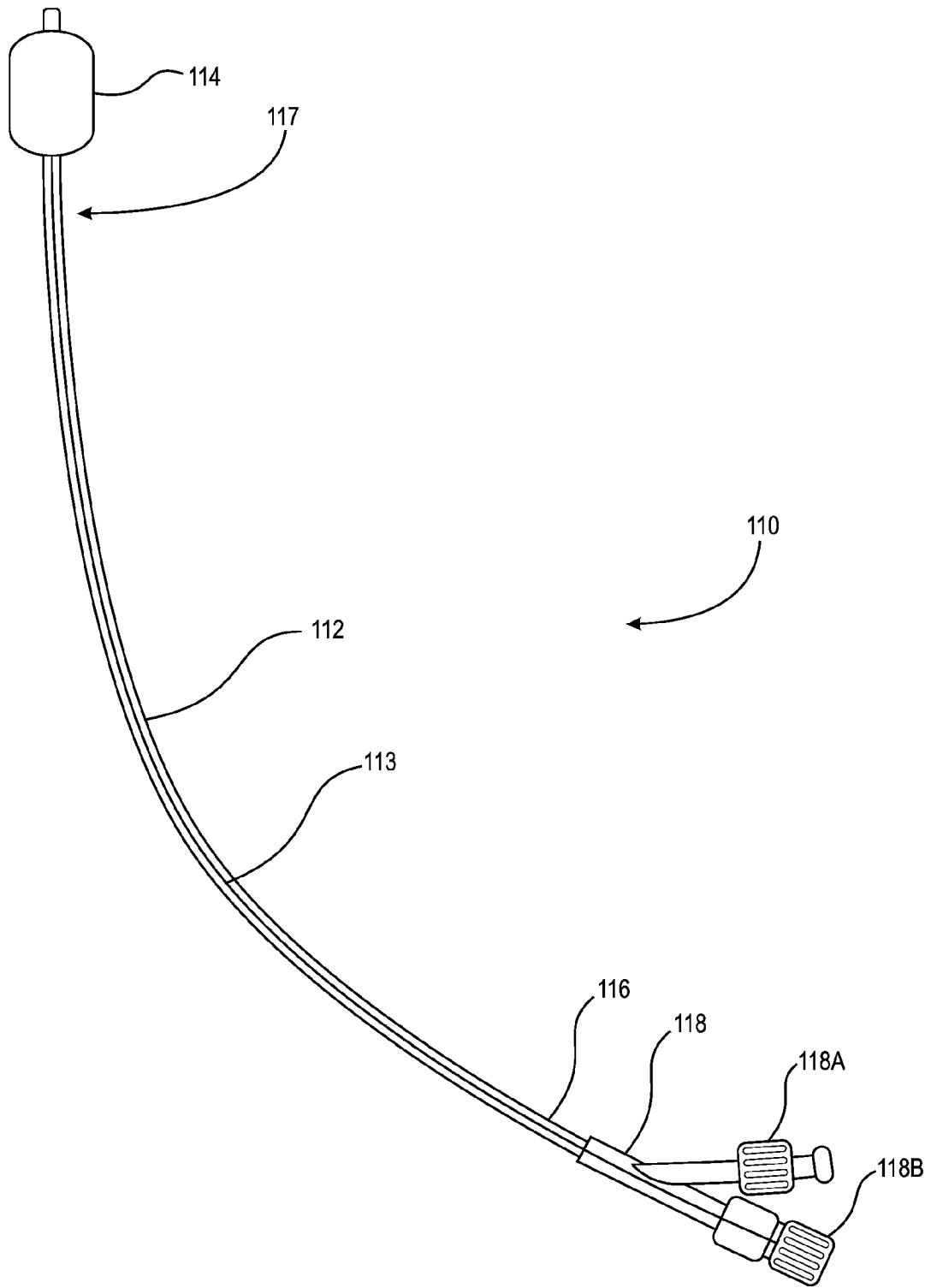


Fig. 13

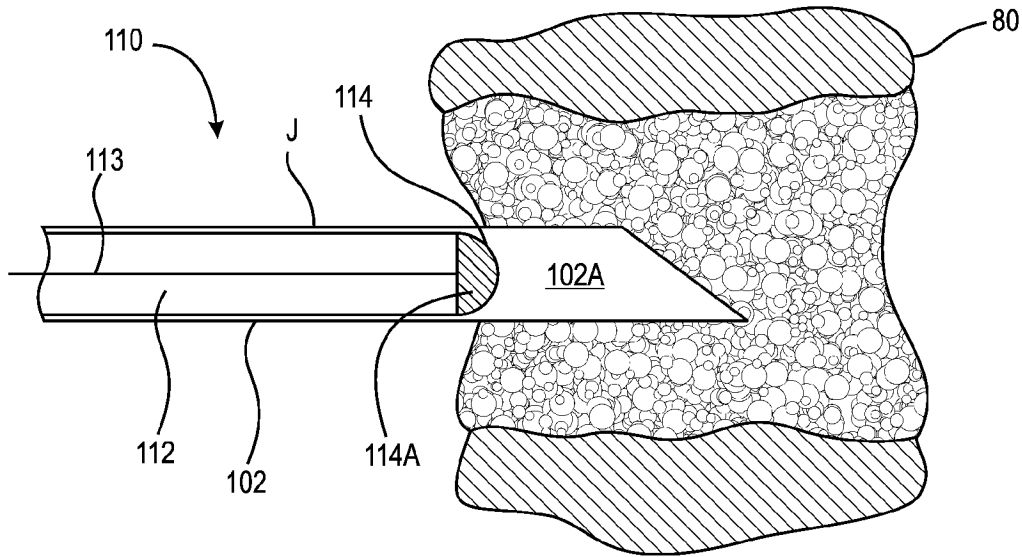


Fig. 14A

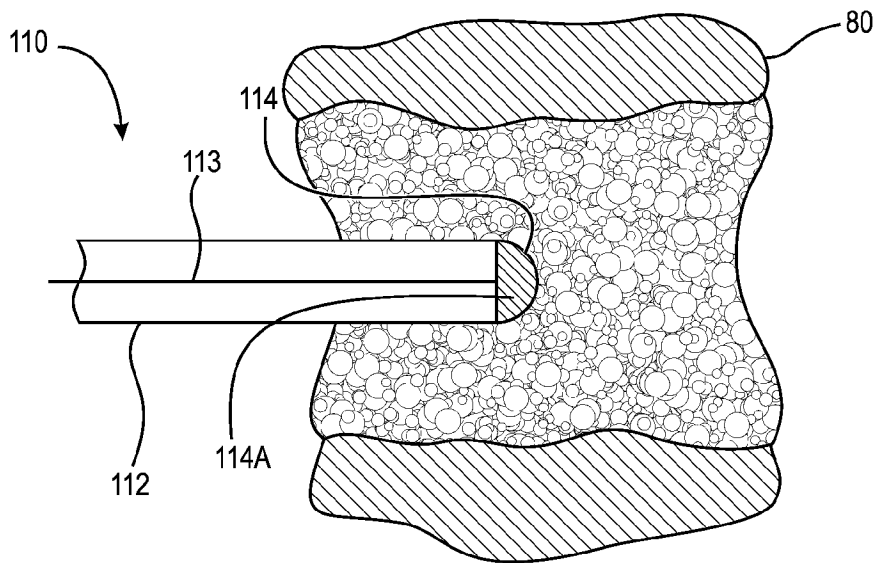


Fig. 14B

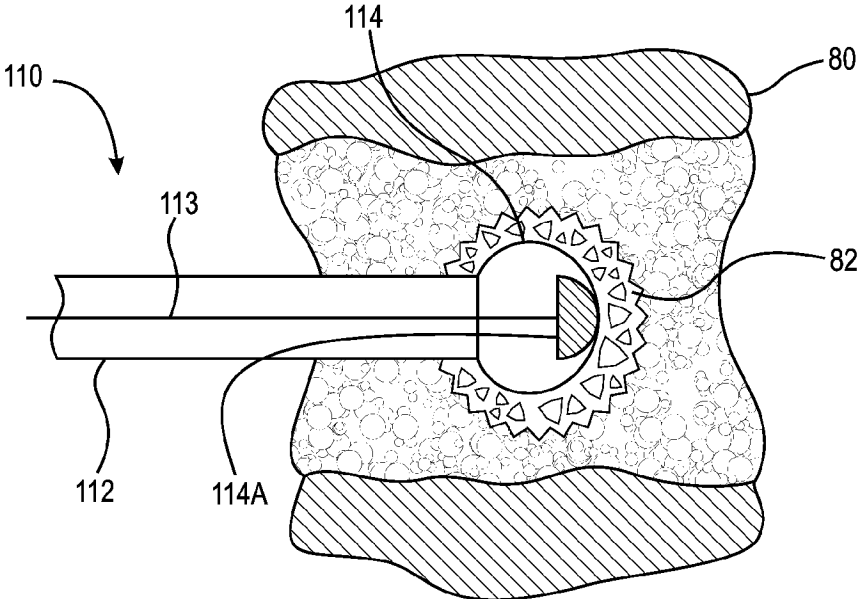


Fig. 14C

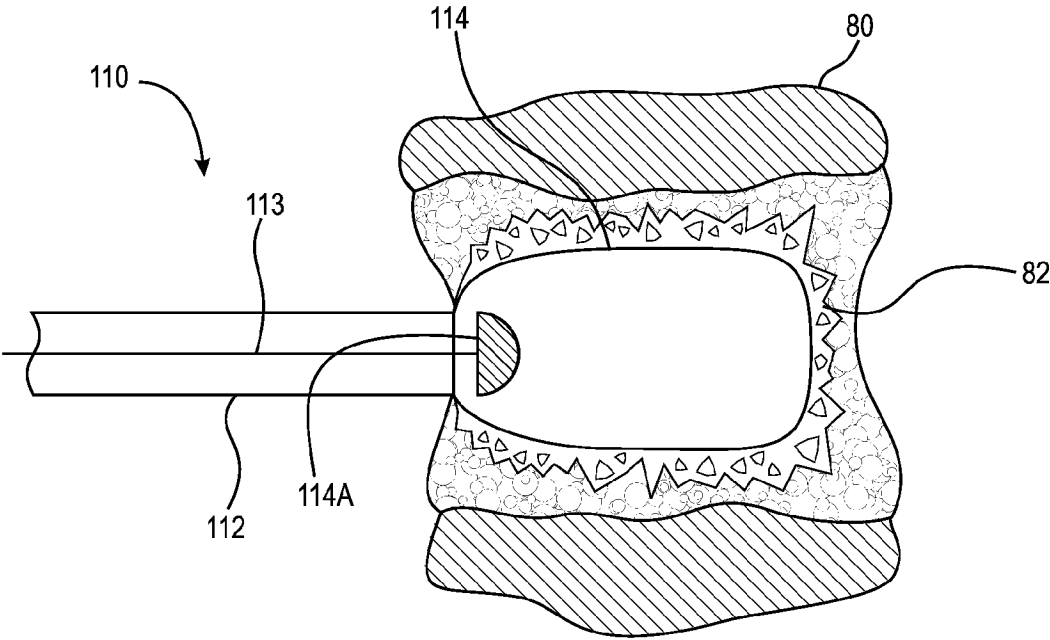


Fig. 14D

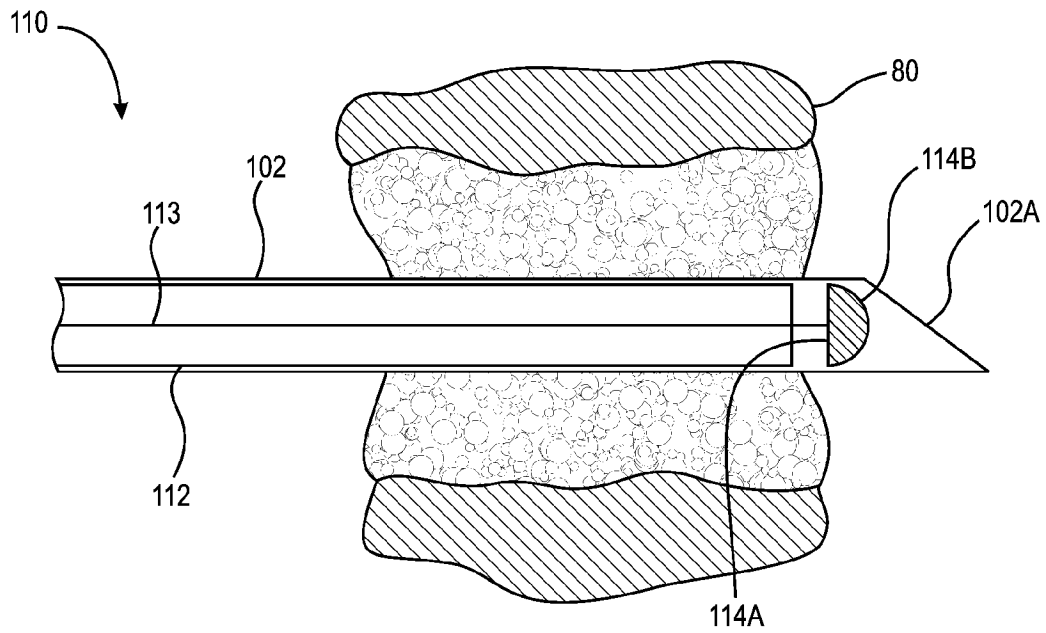


Fig. 15A

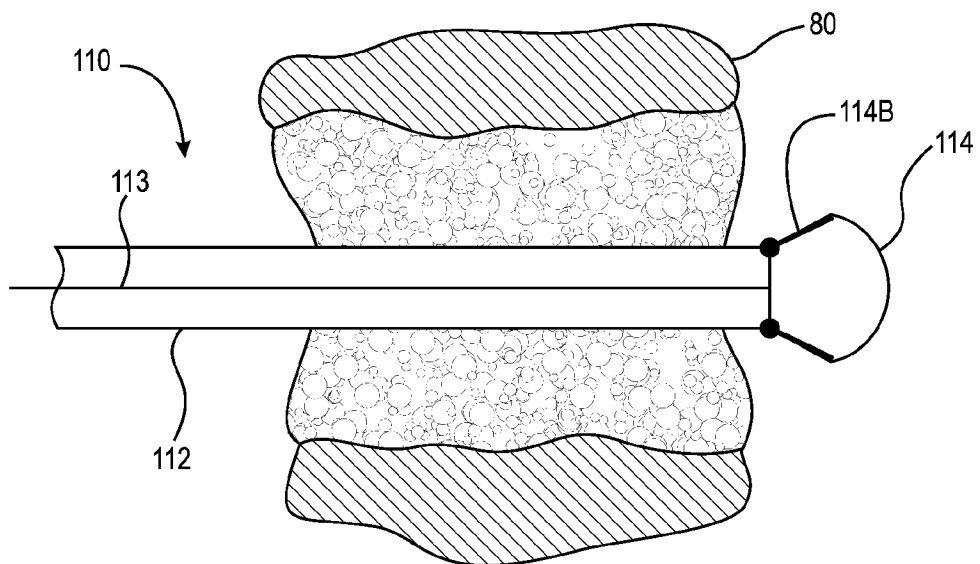


Fig. 15B

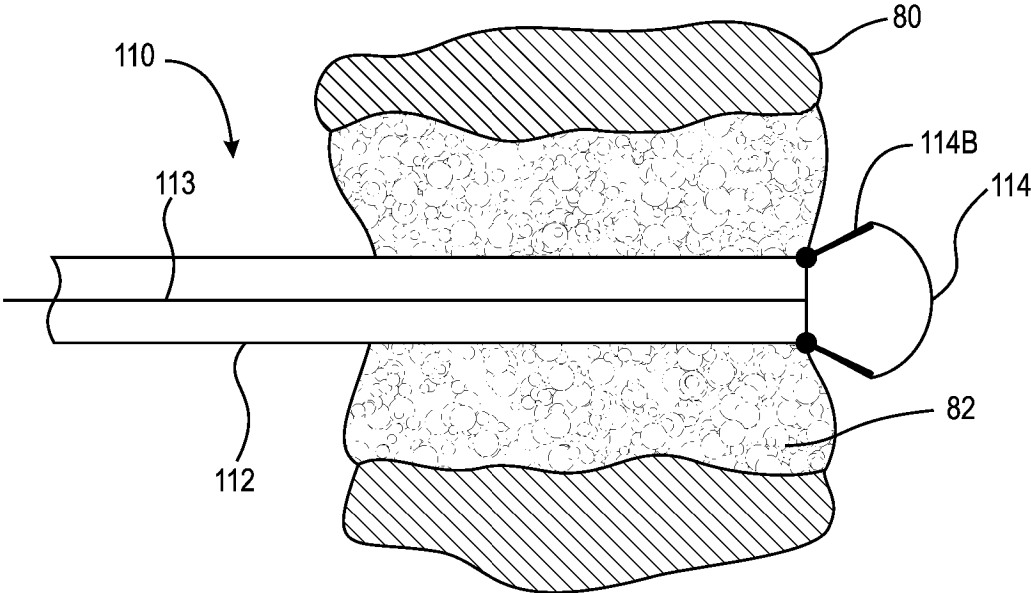


Fig. 15C

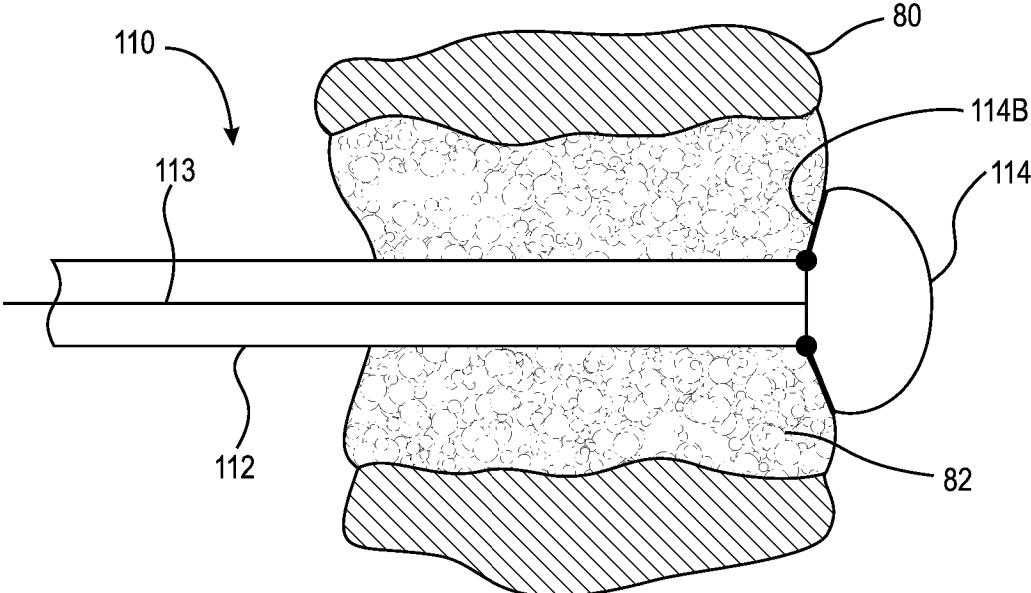


Fig. 15D

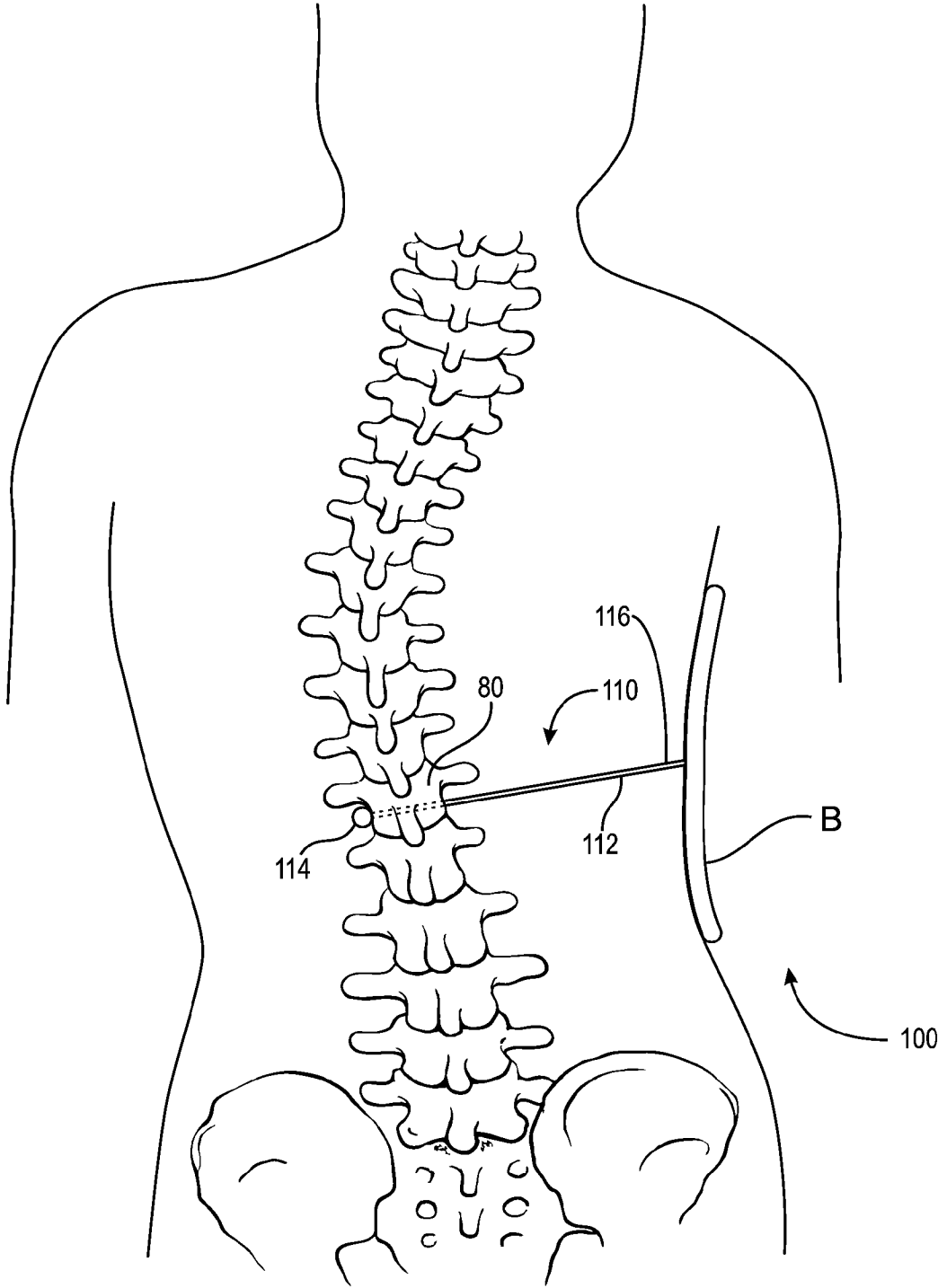


Fig. 16

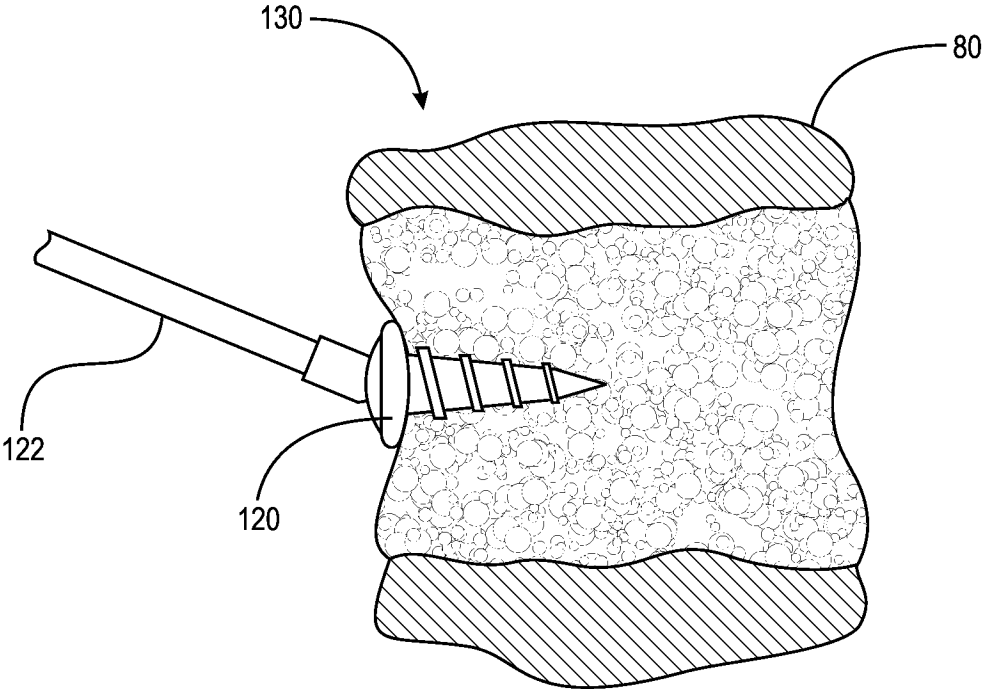


Fig. 17

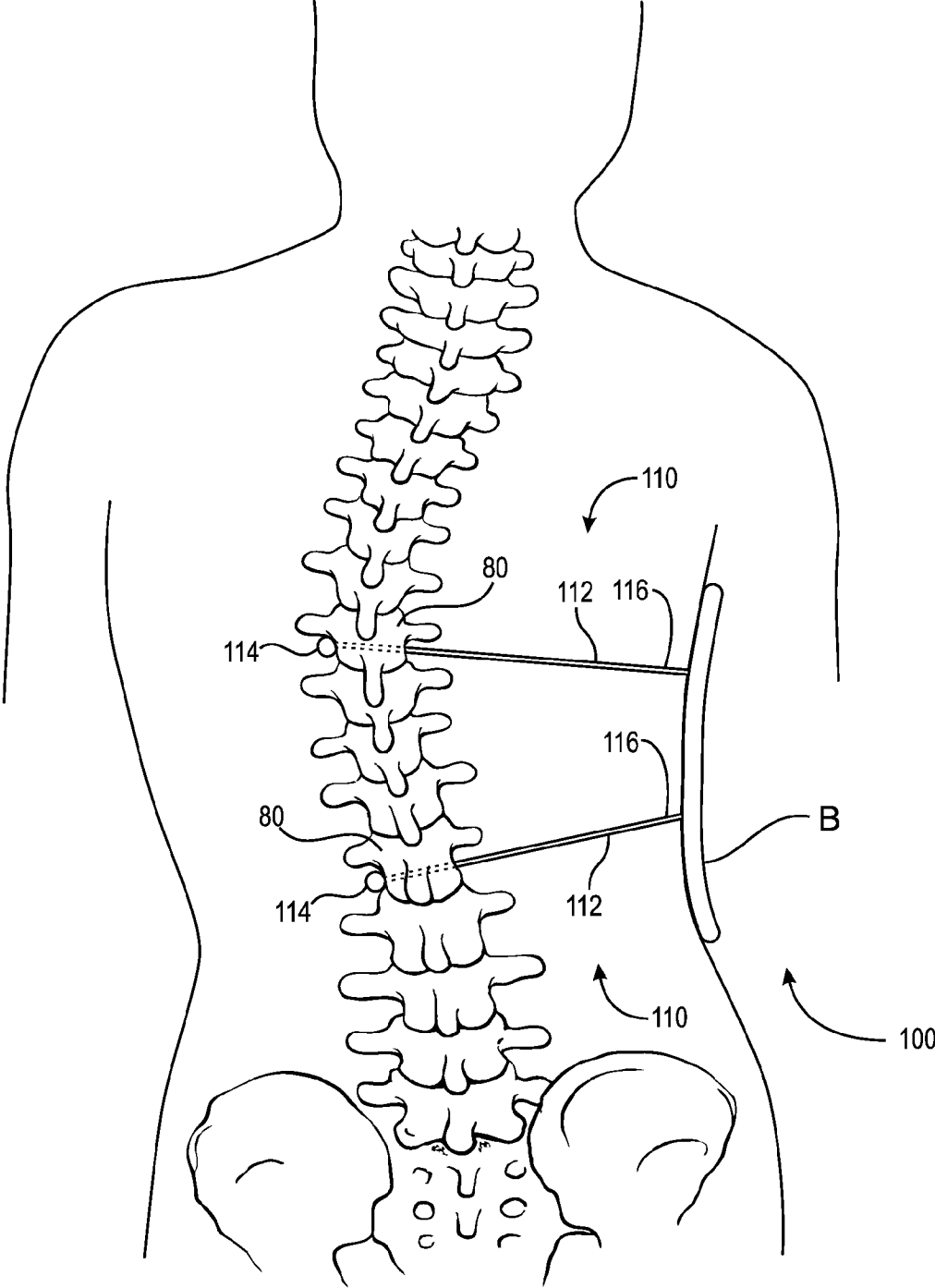


Fig. 18A

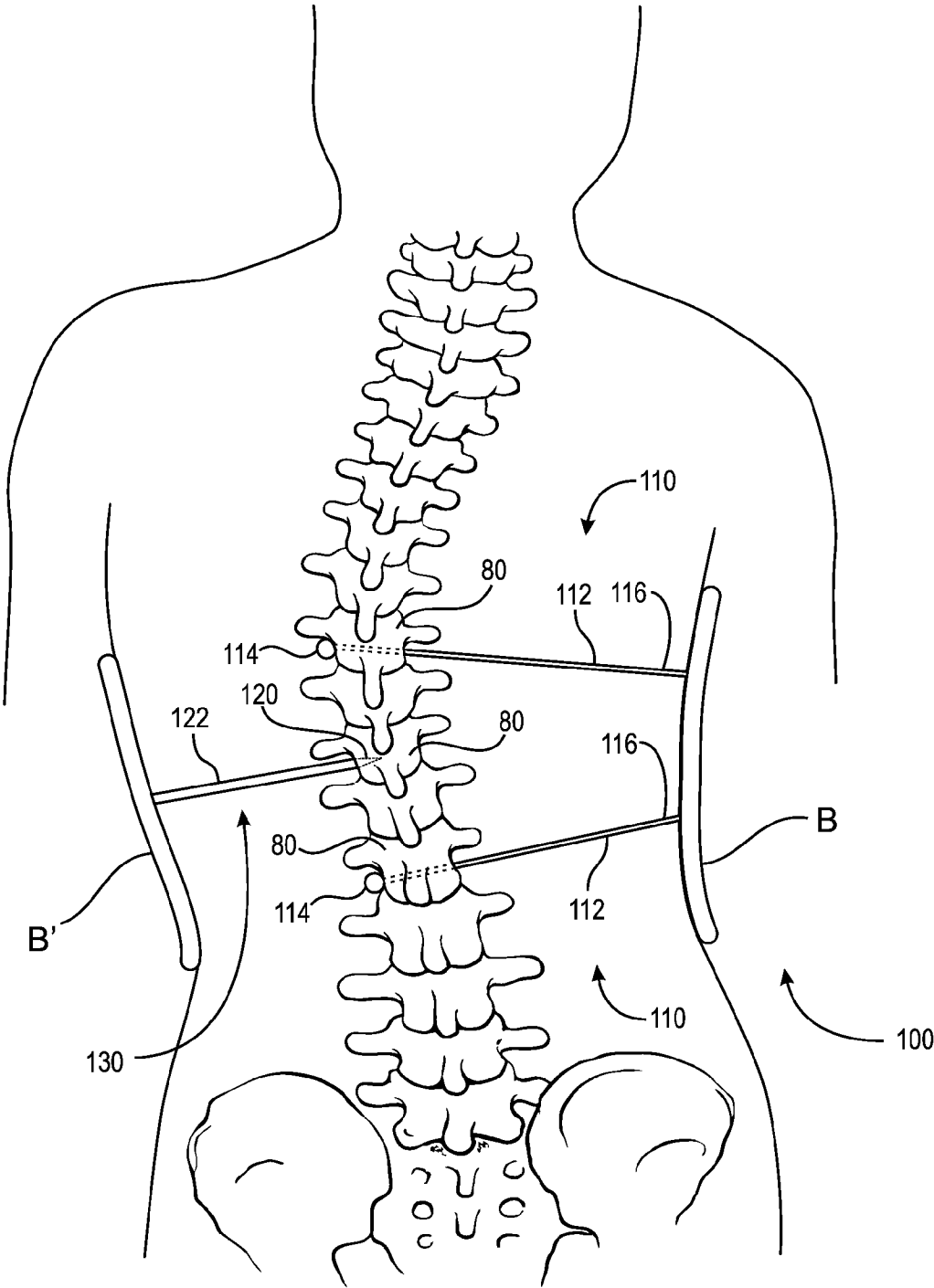


Fig. 18B

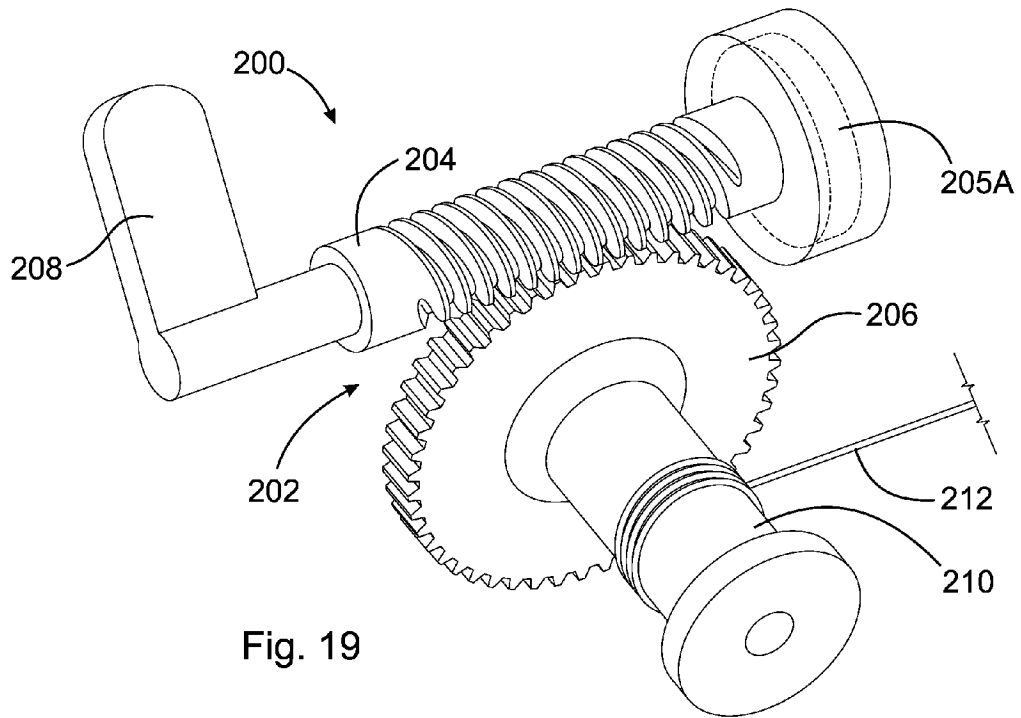


Fig. 19

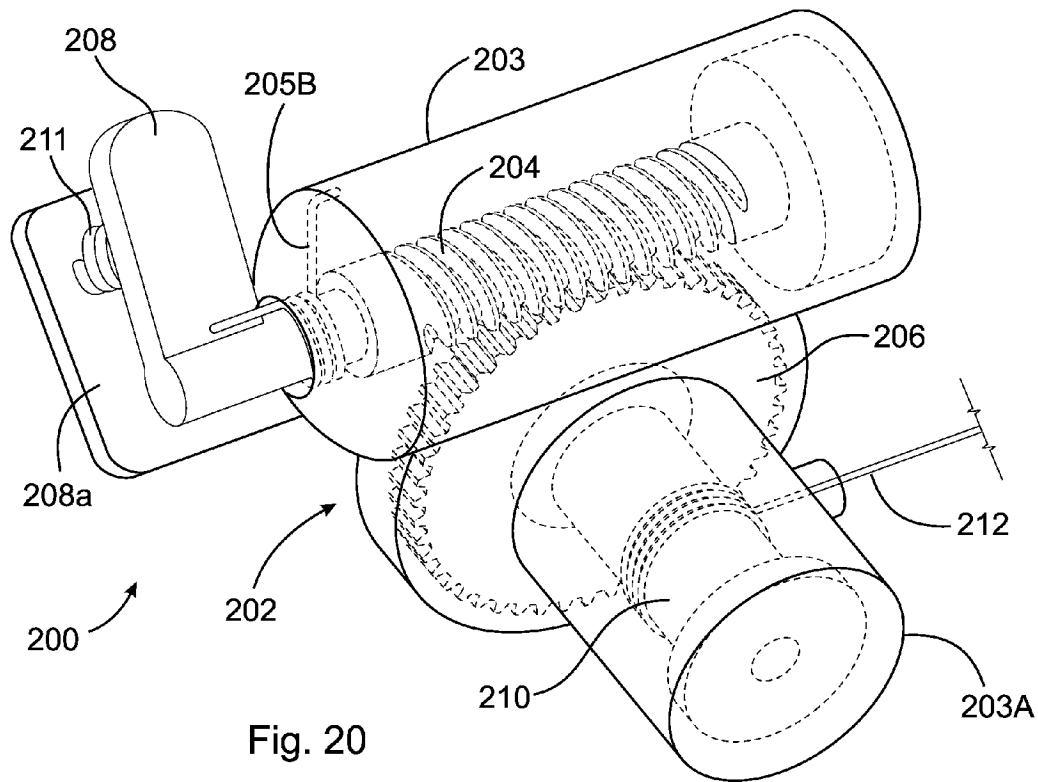
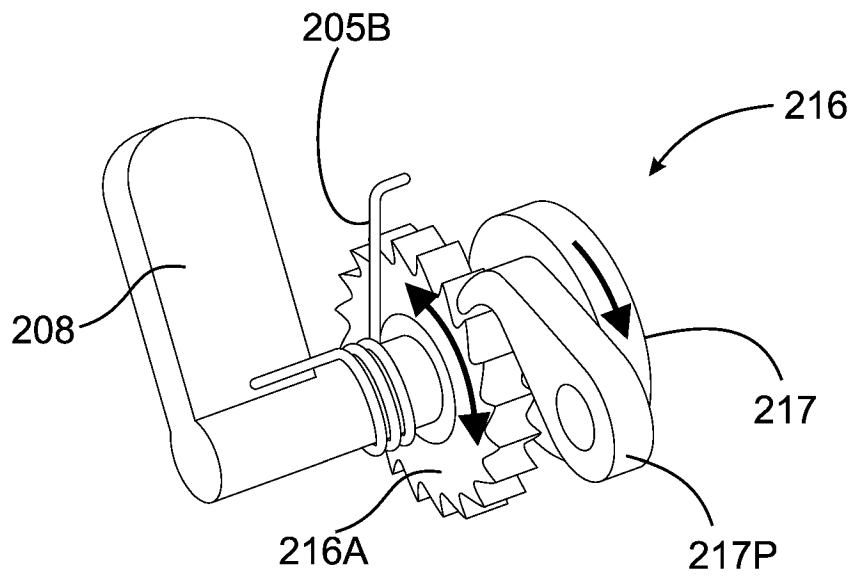
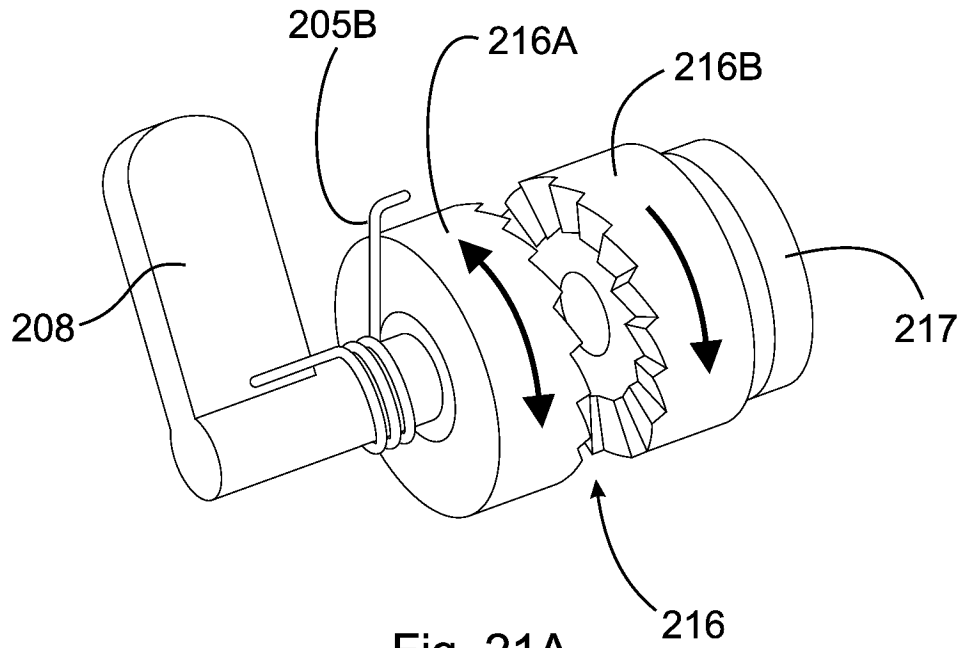


Fig. 20



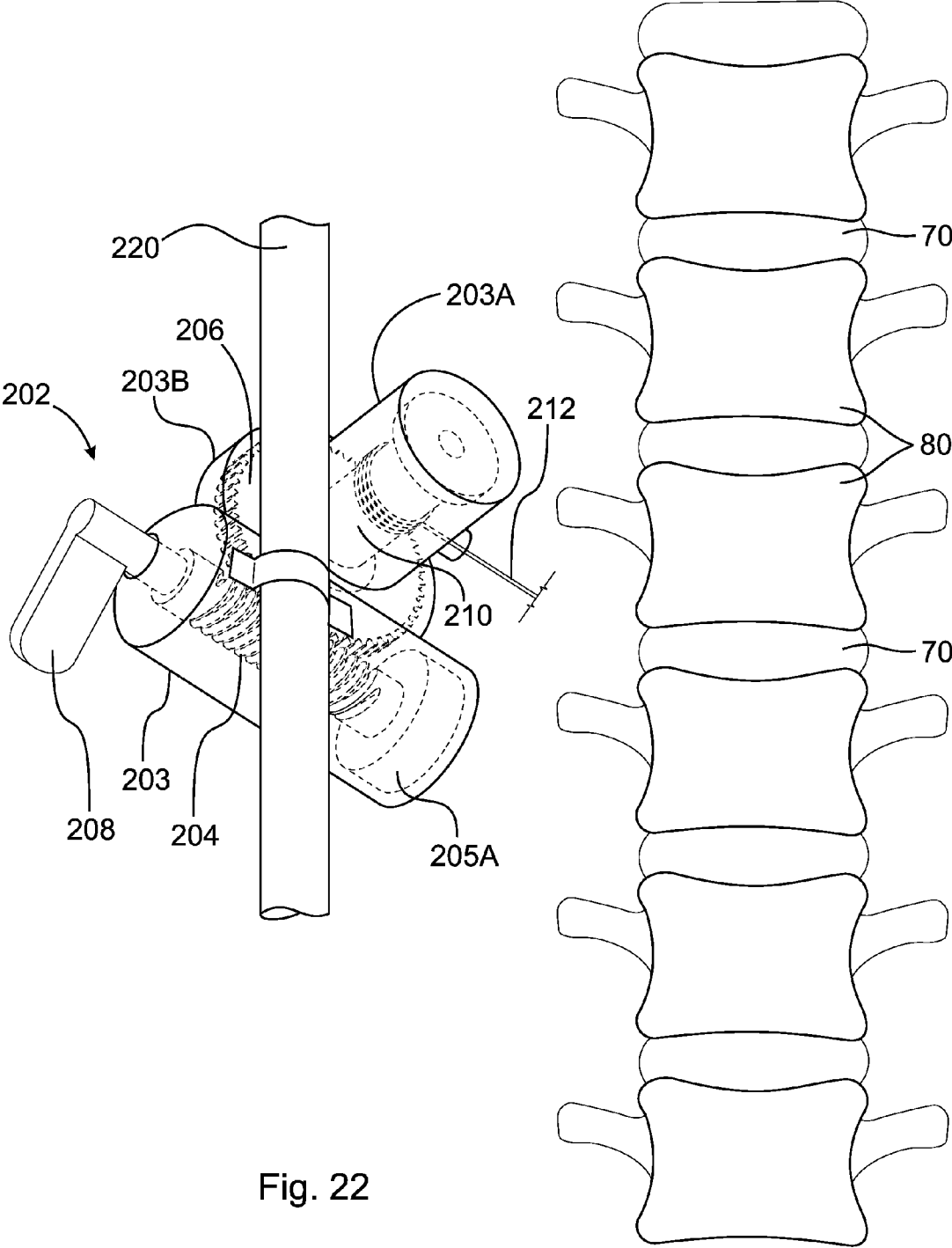
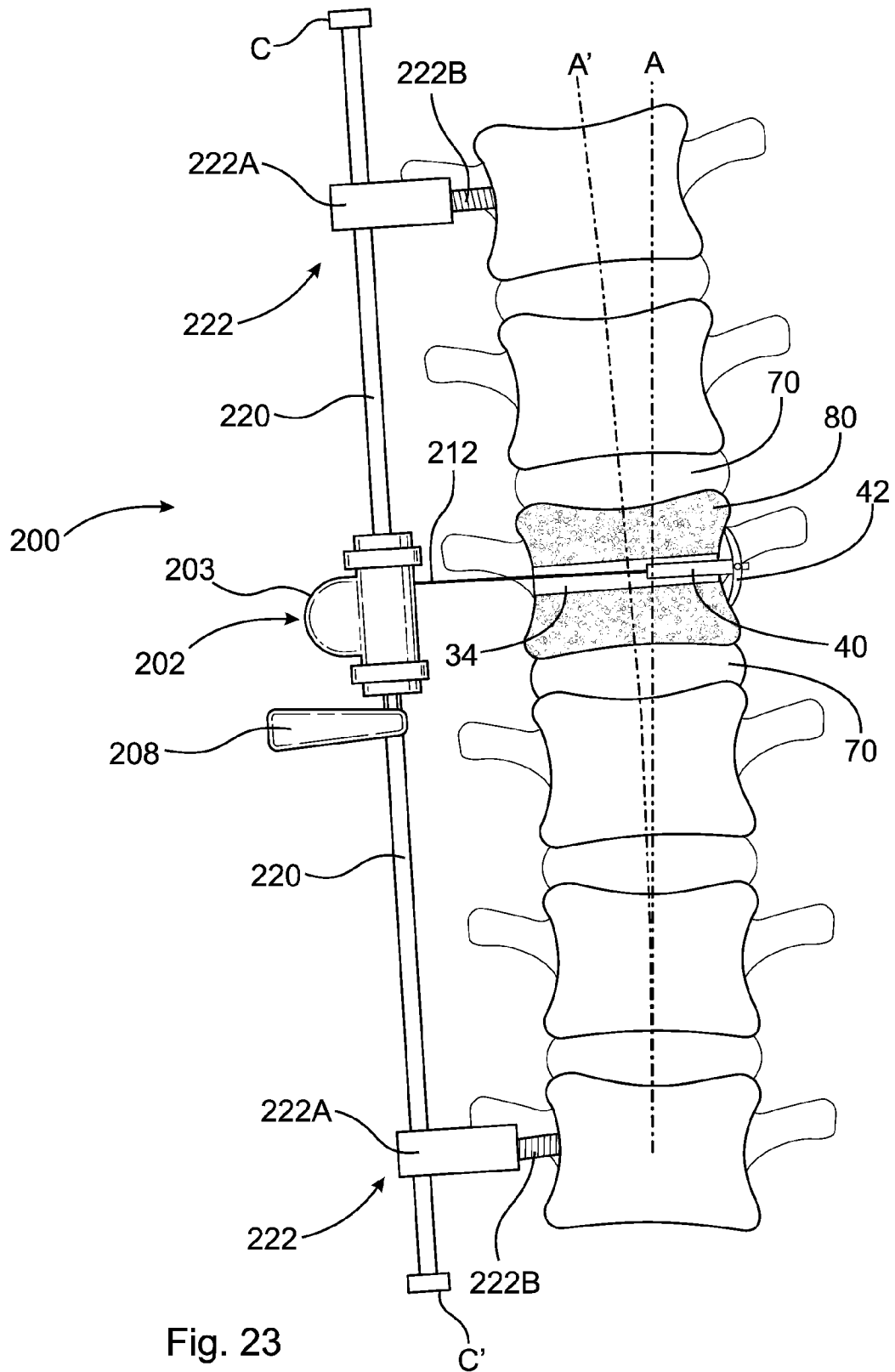


Fig. 22



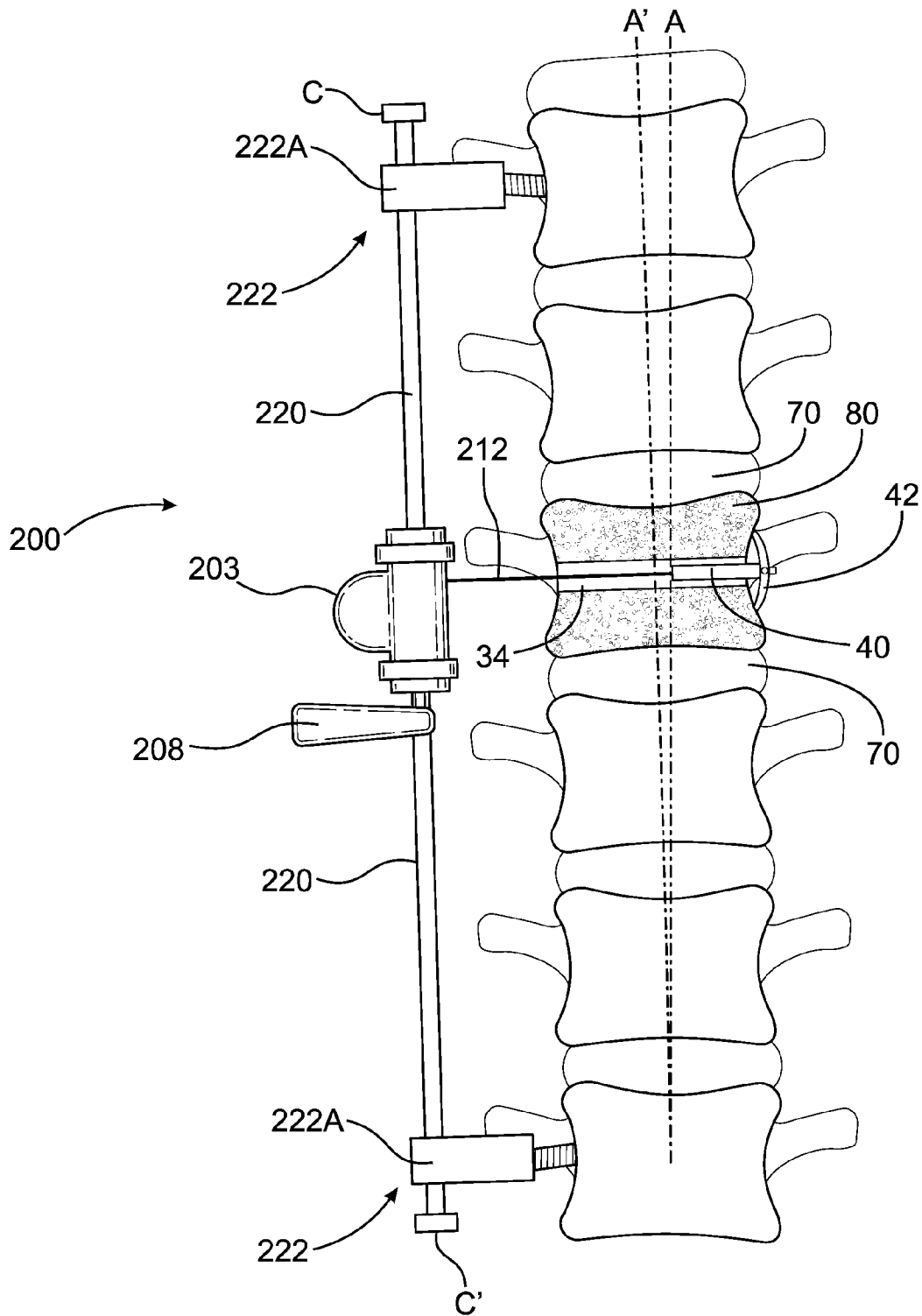


Fig. 24

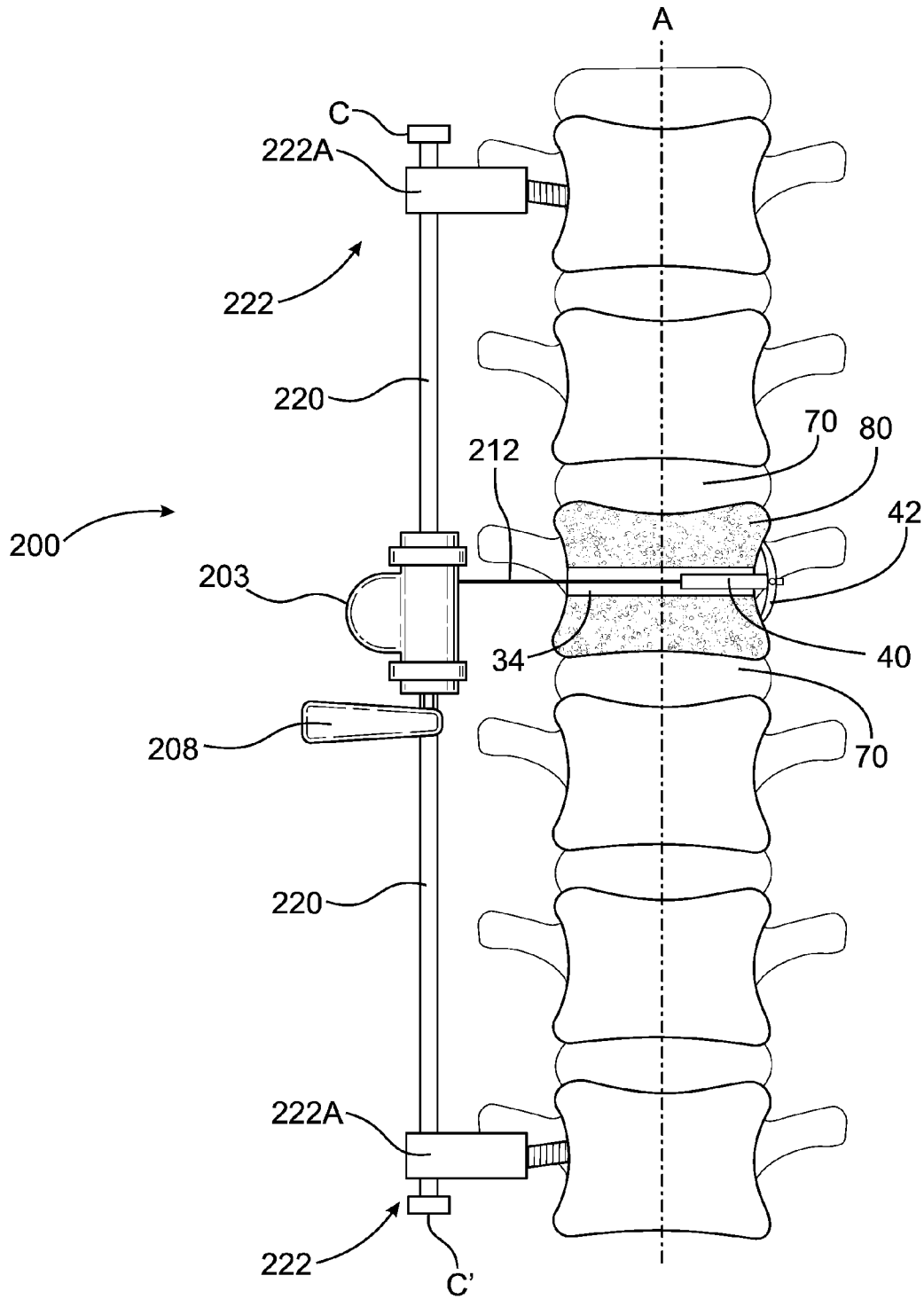


Fig. 25

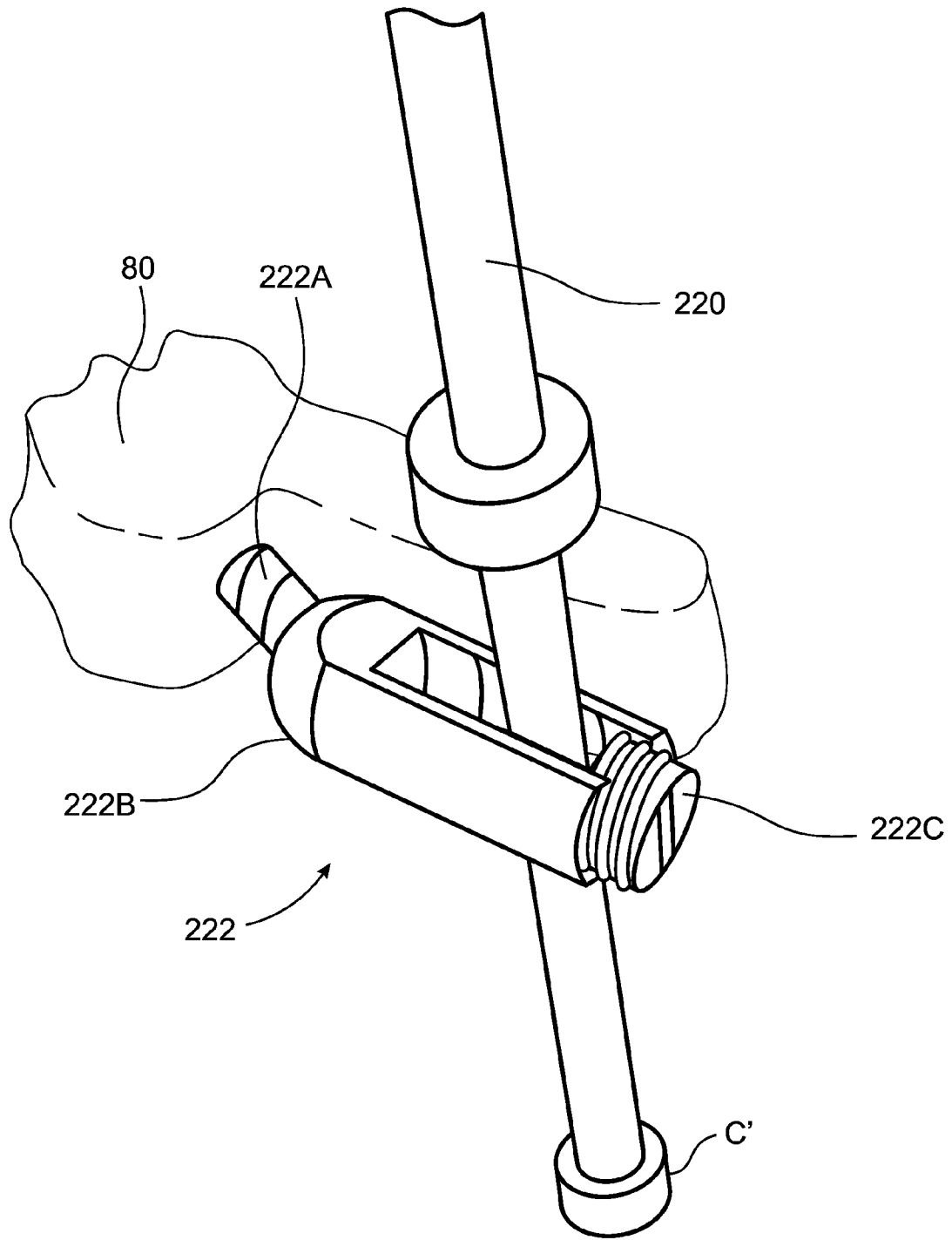
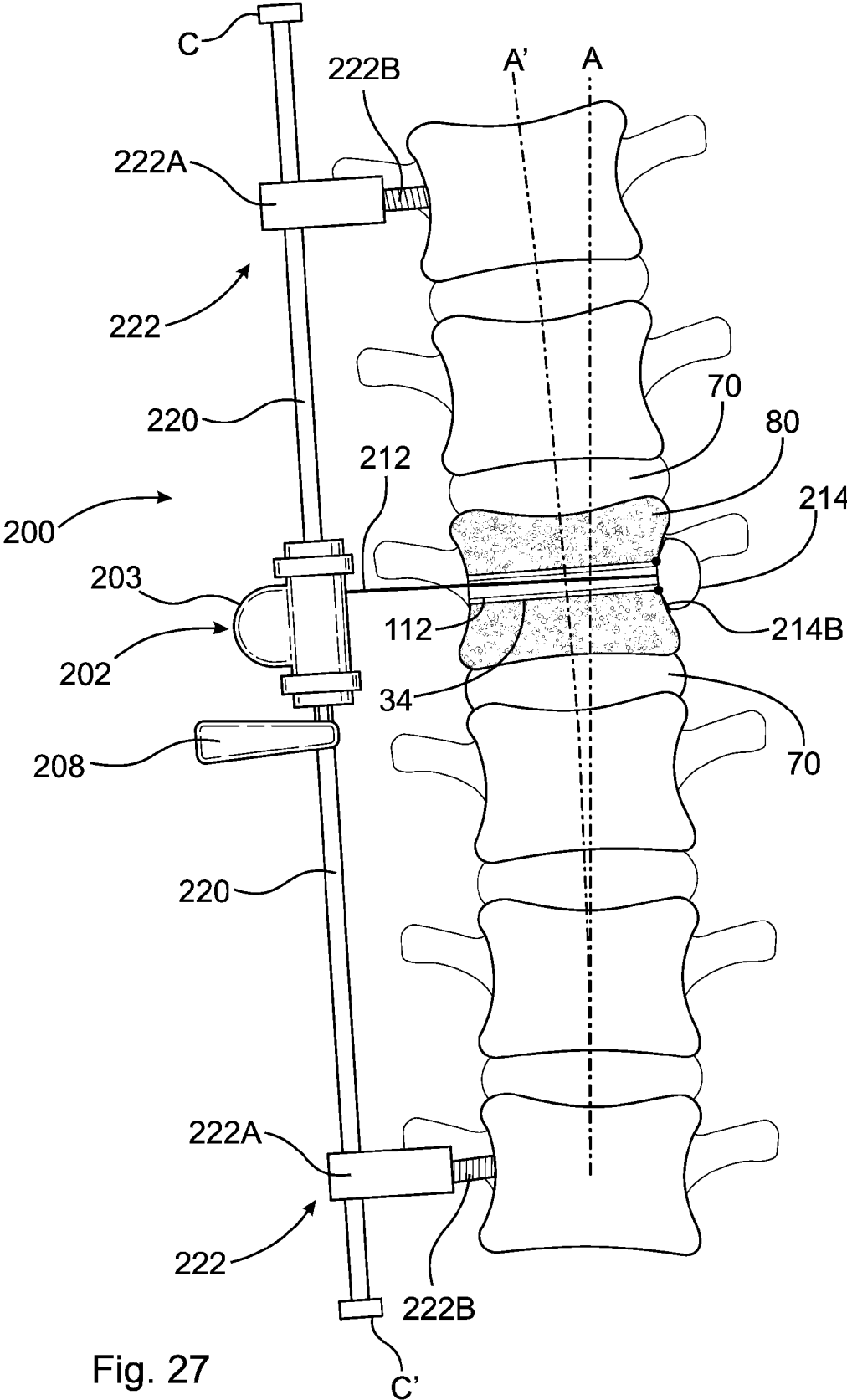


Fig. 26



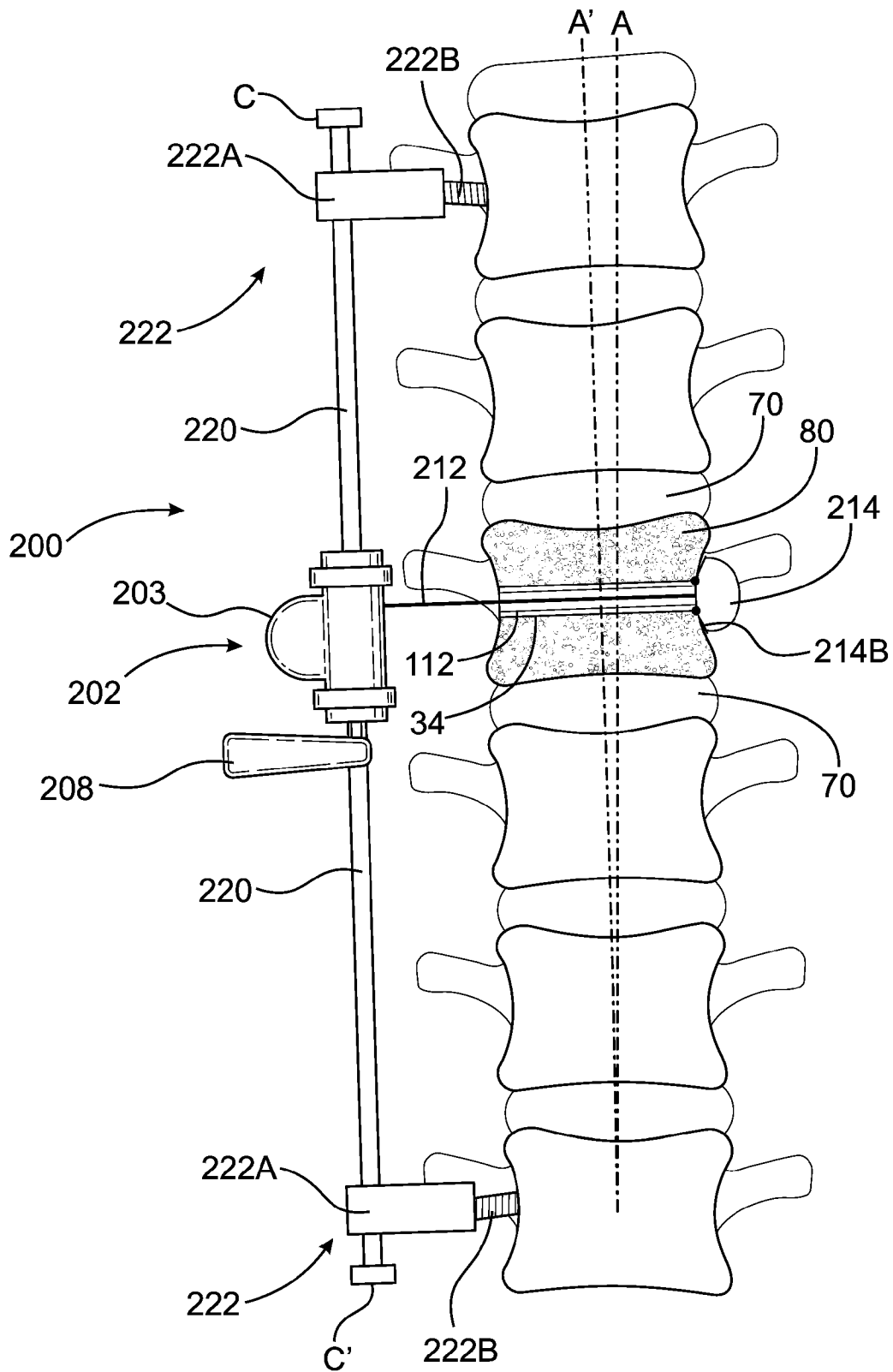


Fig. 28

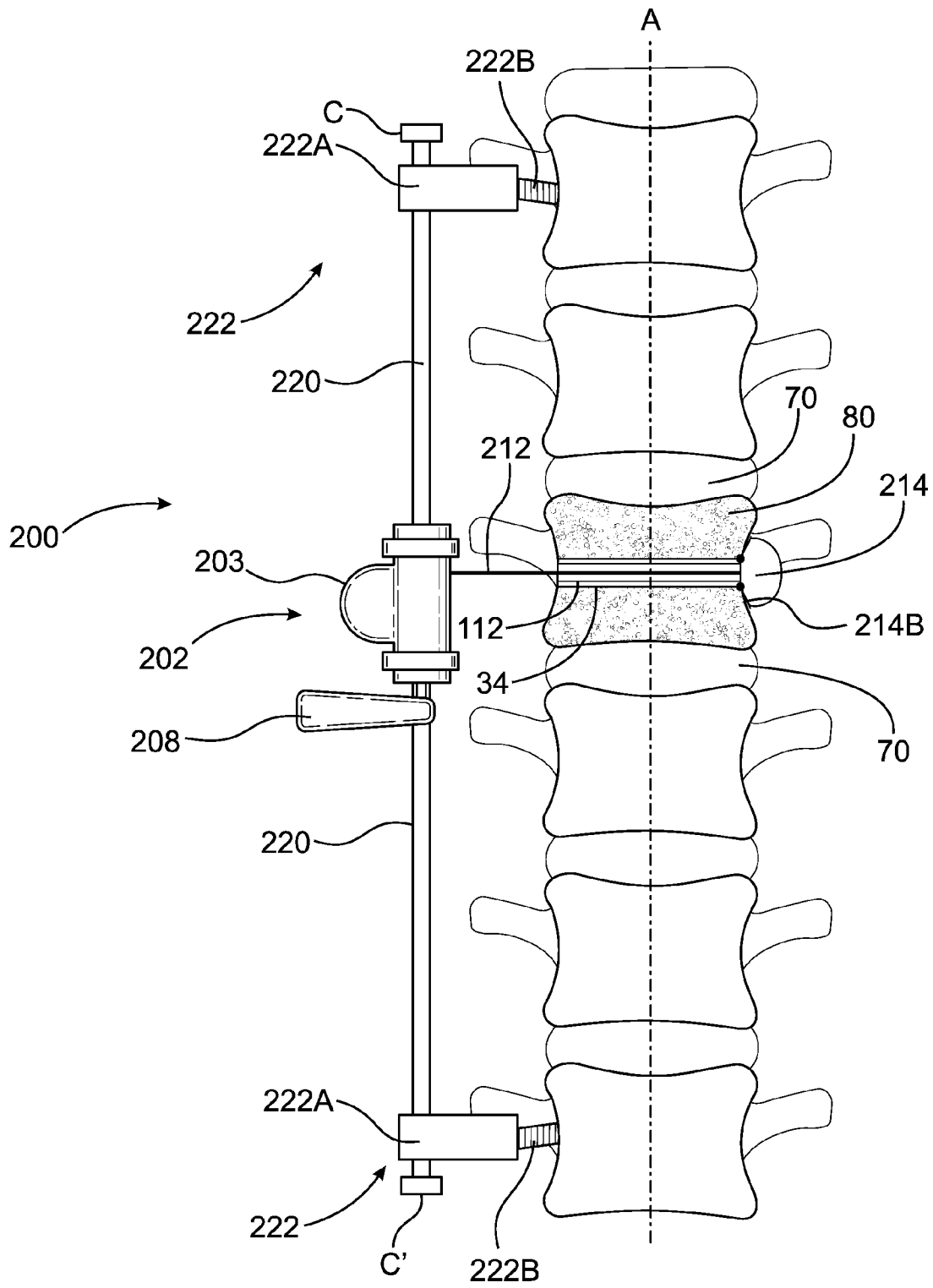


Fig. 29

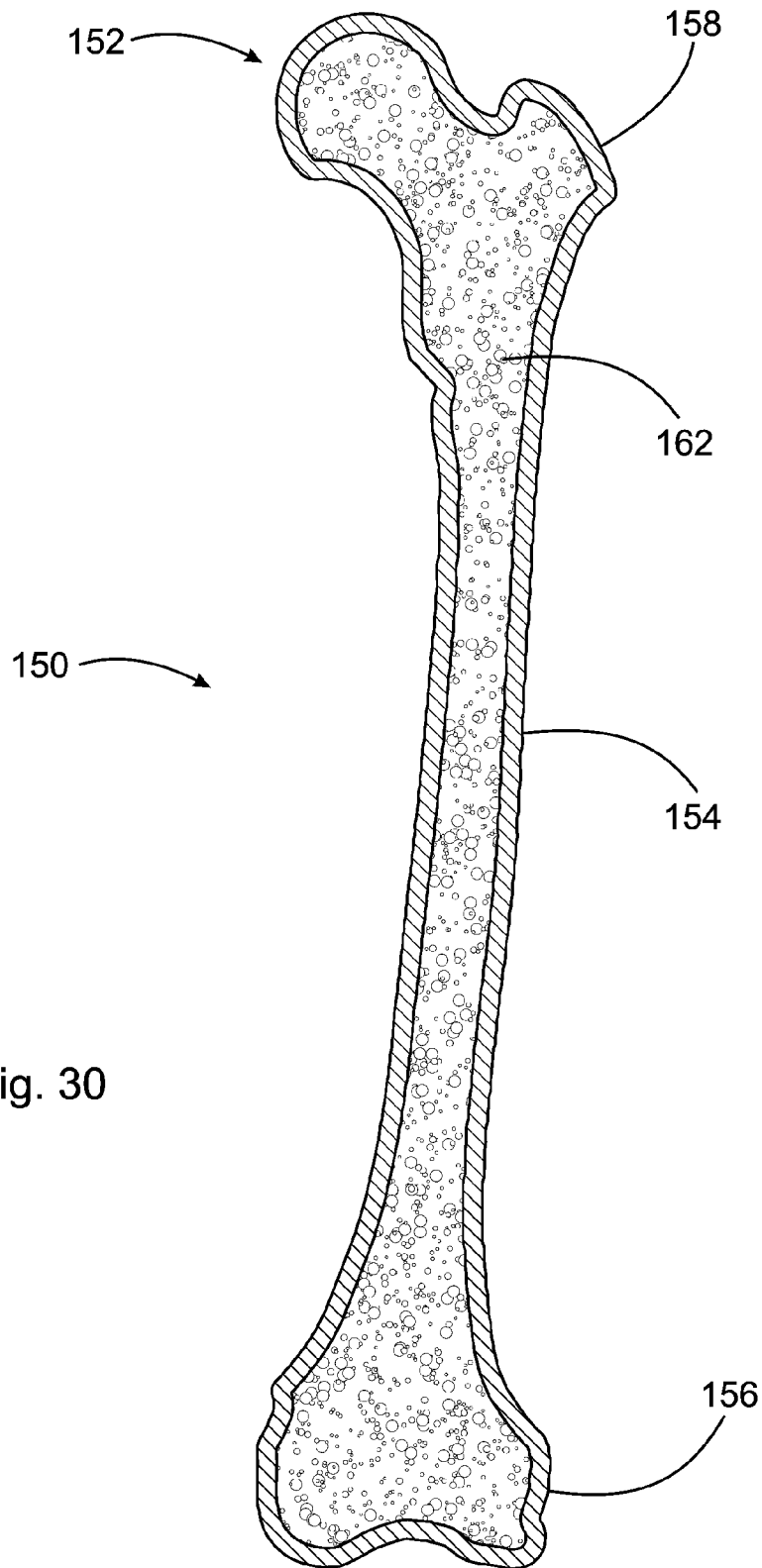


Fig. 30

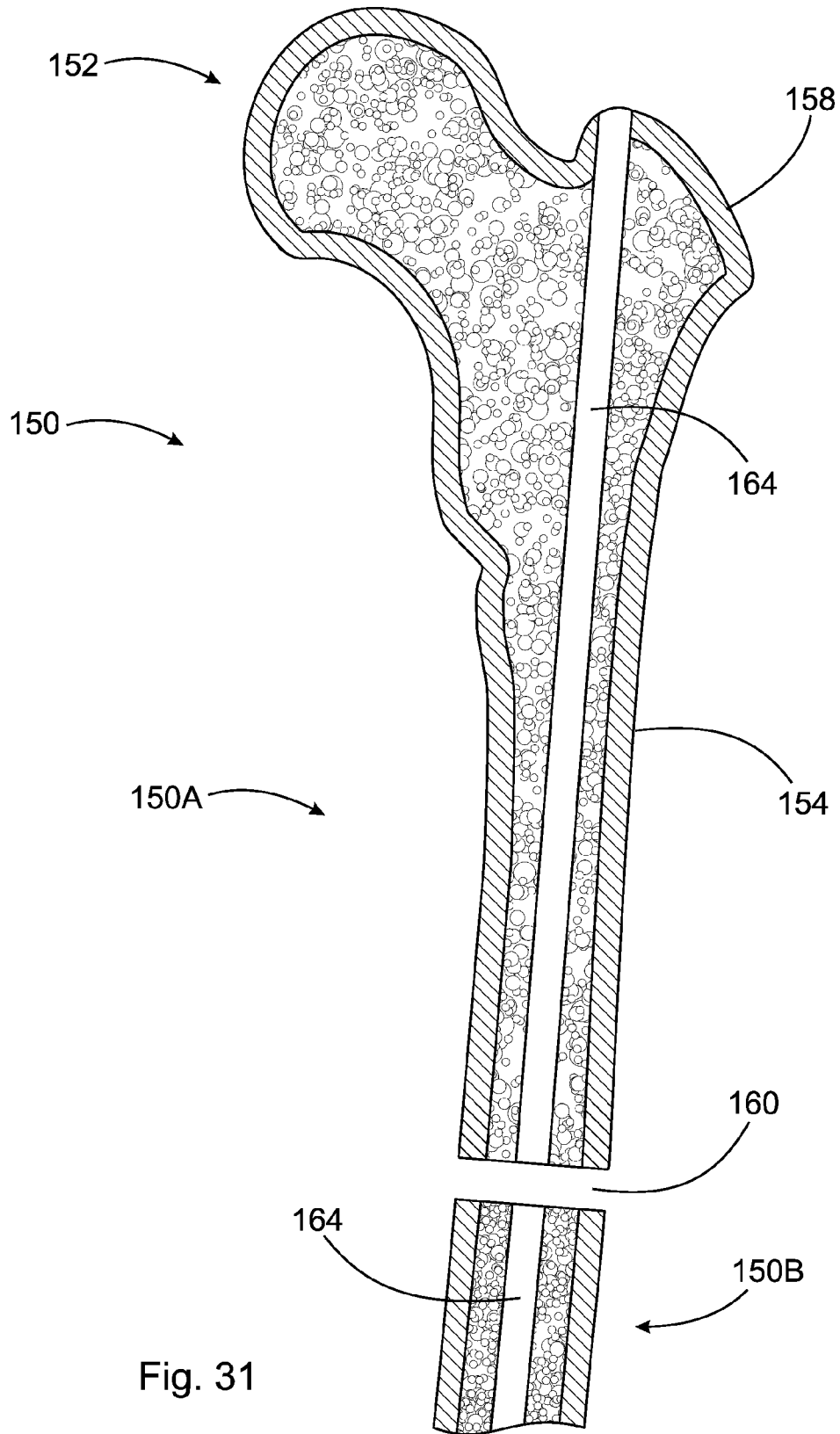


Fig. 31

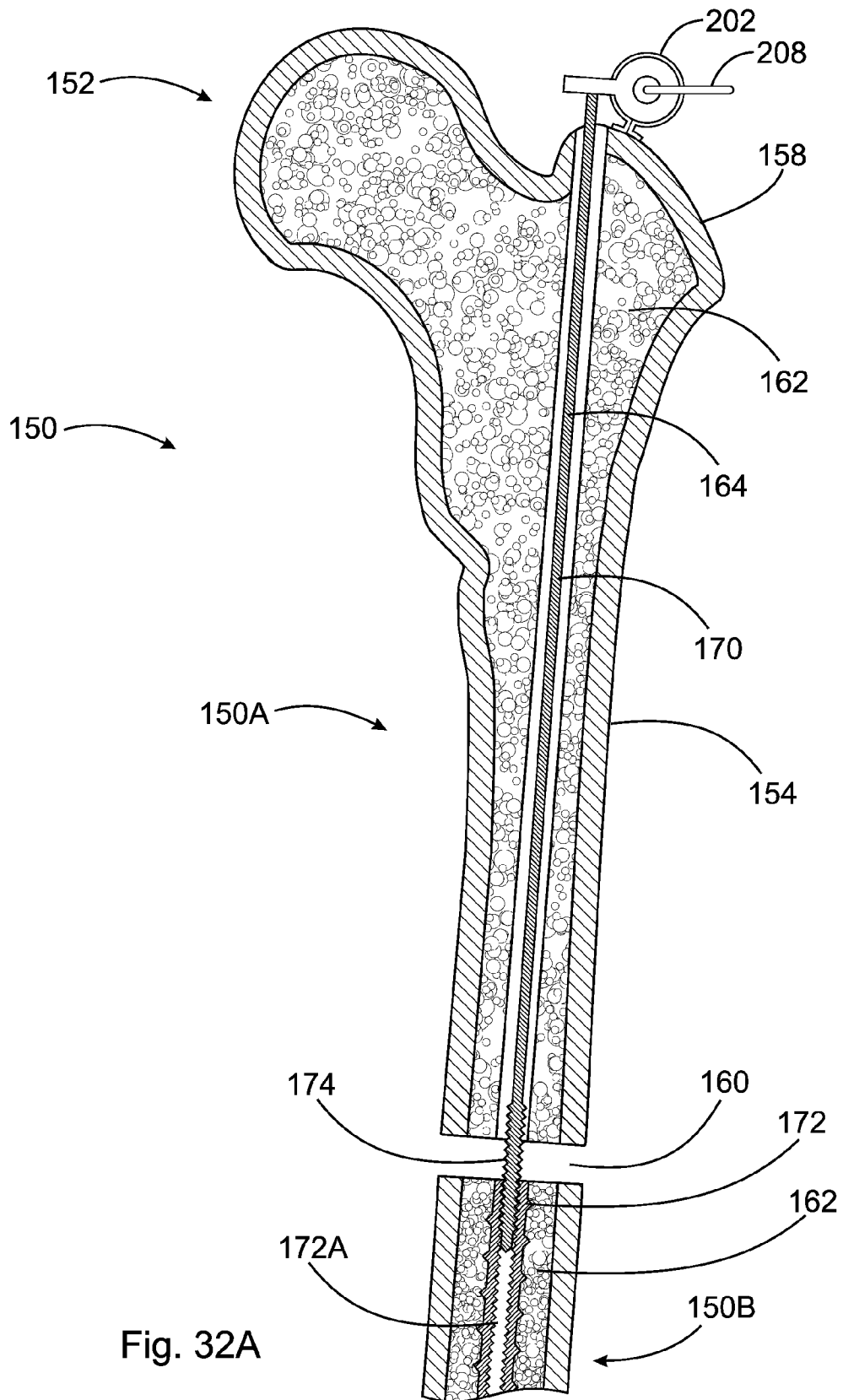


Fig. 32A

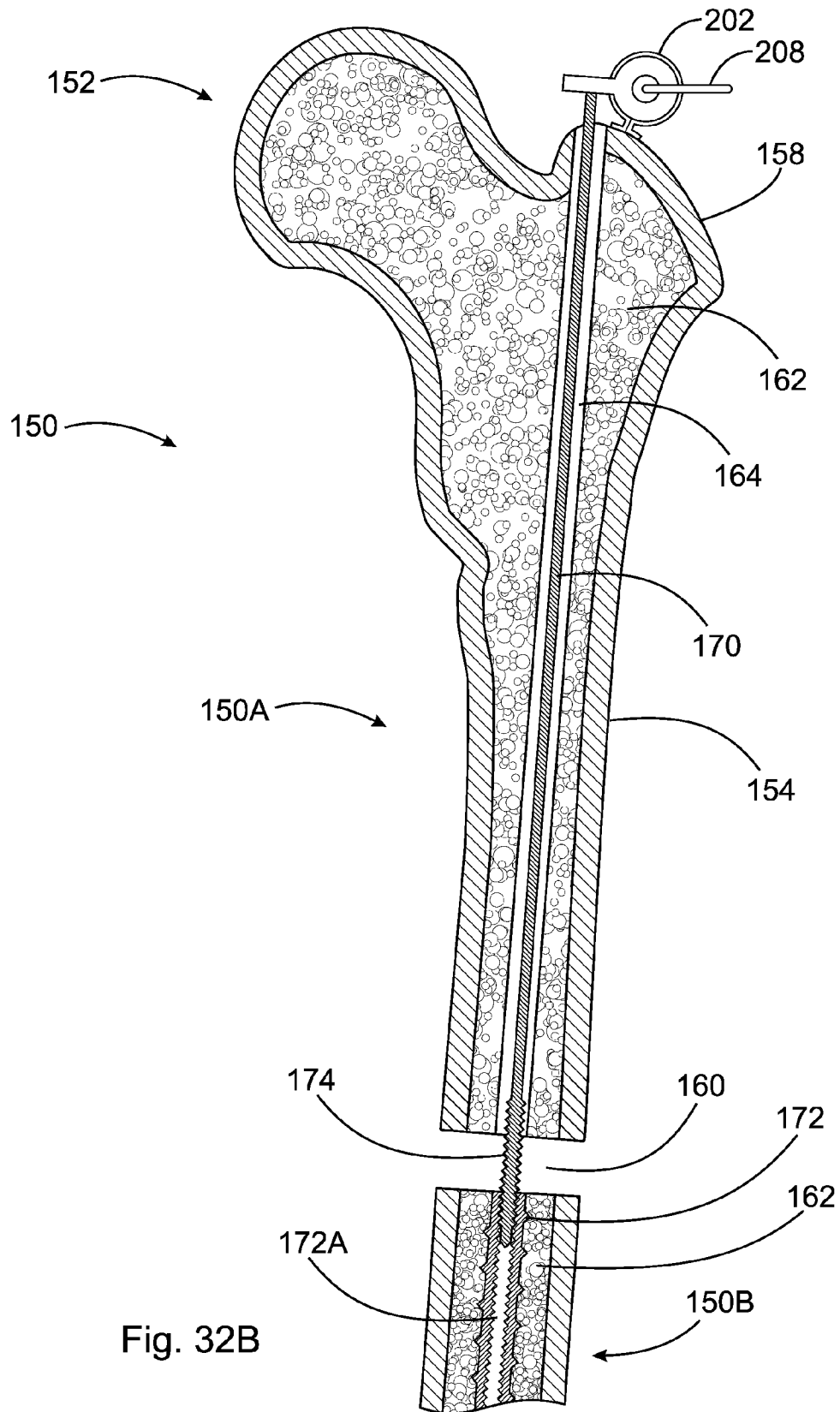


Fig. 32B

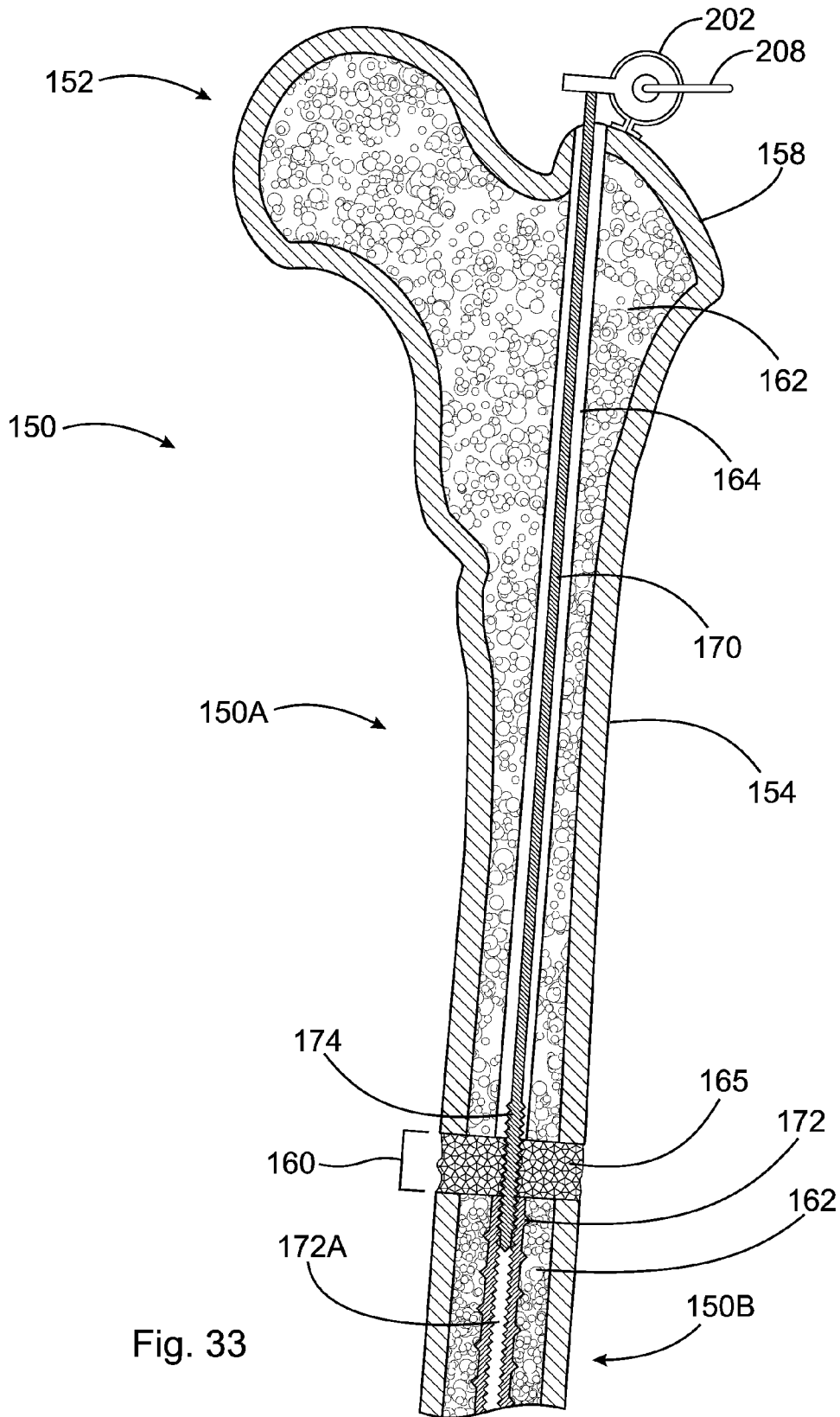


Fig. 33

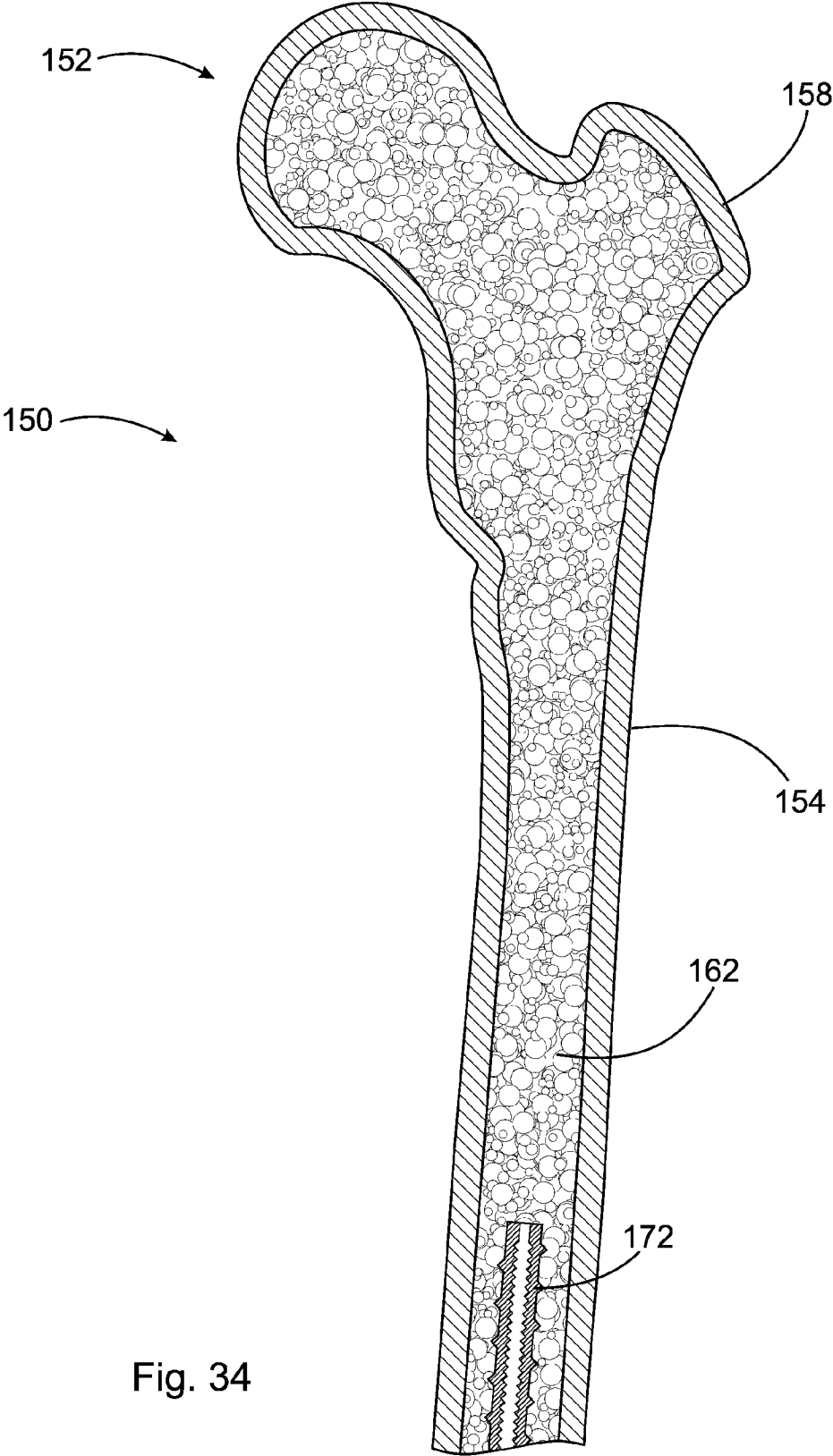


Fig. 34

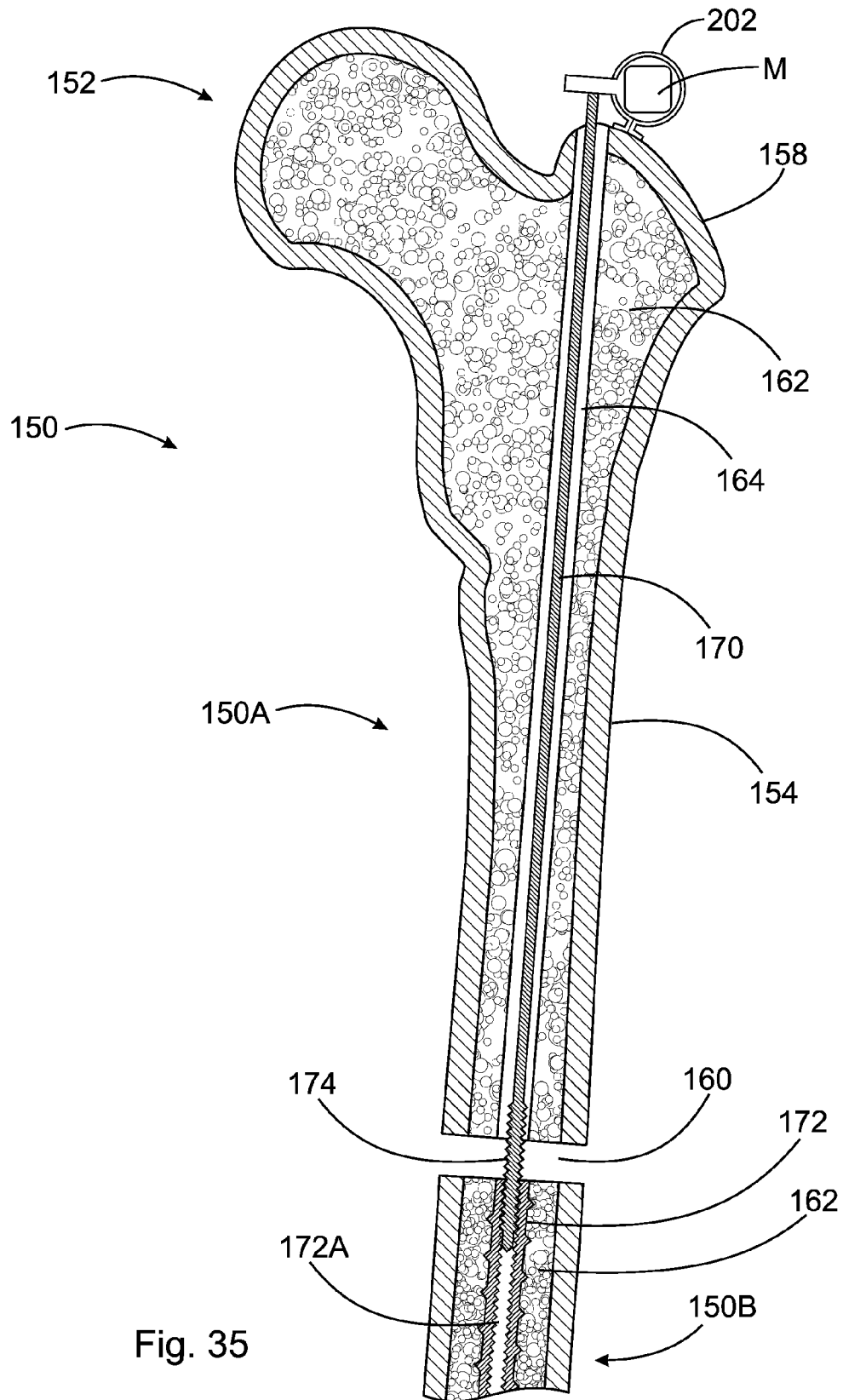


Fig. 35

**SUBCUTANEOUS IMPLANTABLE DEVICE
FOR GRADUALLY ALIGNING A SPINE AND
SUBCUTANEOUS IMPLANTABLE DEVICE
FOR GRADUALLY LENGTHENING A BONE**

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation-in-part patent application filed under 35 U.S.C. § 111(a) and 120 of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/244,241, filed Apr. 3, 2014, which application is a continuation-in-part patent application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/644,365, filed Oct. 4, 2012, now U.S. Pat. No. 8,764,803, issued Jul. 1, 2014, which applications are hereby incorporated by reference in their entireties.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to surgical devices, and, more particularly, to orthopedic surgical devices, and, more particularly, to corrective orthopedic surgical devices related to the spine.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Scoliosis is a disorder that causes an abnormal curve of the spine, or backbone. Patients with scoliosis develop abnormal curves to either side of the body's median line (lateral curve) and the bones of the spine twist on each other like a corkscrew. Scoliosis is about two times more common in girls than boys. It can be seen at any age, but it is most common in those over 10 years old.

FIG. 1 is a stylized posterior view of a person P with a spine afflicted with scoliosis. Spinal column 1 is shown to have two lateral curves—upper curve 2 and lower curve 3. Often the presence of one lateral curve generates the formation of a second curve to compensate for the reduced spinal support of the body caused by one lateral curve. FIGS. 2A and 2B depict two different types of prior art braces 4 and 5, respectively, used to prevent further deterioration of spinal alignment. In some cases, braces such as braces 4 and 5 may improve the condition, but they rarely enable the wearer to achieve a full recovery to a correct spinal alignment.

Often, the cause of scoliosis is unknown and is described based on the age when scoliosis develops. If the person is less than 3 years old, it is called infantile idiopathic scoliosis. Scoliosis that develops between 3 and 10 years of age is called juvenile idiopathic scoliosis, and people that are over 10 years old have adolescent idiopathic scoliosis.

In functional scoliosis, the spine is normal, but an abnormal curve develops because of a problem somewhere else in the body. This could be caused by one leg being shorter than the other or by muscle spasms in the back. In the neuromuscular form, there is a problem during the formation of the bones of the spine. Either the bones of the spine fail to form completely or they fail to separate from each other. This type of scoliosis may develop in people with other disorders including birth defects, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, and Marfan's disease. This type of scoliosis is often much more severe and needs more aggressive treatment than other forms of scoliosis. Degenerative scoliosis occurs in older adults. It is caused by changes in the spine due to arthritis. Weakening of the normal ligaments and other soft tissues of the spine combined with abnormal bone spurs can lead to an abnormal curvature of the spine.

Adolescent idiopathic scoliosis is the most common form of scoliosis. If the angle of the spinal curve (Cobb's angle) is small when first diagnosed, it can be observed and followed with routine X-rays and measurements. If the curve stays below 25 degrees, no other treatment is usually needed. If the curve is between 25-40 degrees, the curve can be considered significant and a brace may be recommended. If the curve is greater than 40 degrees, the curve can be considered severe and surgery may be recommended. Braces are not designed to correct severe spinal curves. They are used to help slow or stop the curve from getting worse. Since surgery is recommended typically only when the curve is considered significant or severe, surgeons are limited to performing surgical procedures on a subset of the population of individuals diagnosed with scoliosis.

Spinal fusion is one surgical procedure that may be used to alleviate scoliosis. In this procedure, bone is grafted to the vertebrae to form a rigid column. The rigidity of the column prevents the curve from worsening. However, the rigid column reduces the range of motion available to the patient.

Modern surgical procedures attempt to address sagittal imbalance and rotational defects unresolved by the earlier rod systems. They primarily involve a combination of rods, screws, hooks, cables and/or wires fixing the spine and applying forces to the spine to correct the spinal curvature. An example of the use of screws and cables is seen in U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2006/0195090 (Suddaby) which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. Suddaby discloses a system for improving the alignment of a spine by placing a series of screws or pins into the posterior or lateral side of the bodies of individual vertebrae. Hollow spacers are placed between the pins and a cable is extended through the heads of the pins and the spacers and is attached to an expansion sleeve. Tension is applied to the cable by pulling it through the expansion sleeve and then applying tension to the cable to pull the attached pins into an improved alignment. One of a plurality of nodules at the end of the cable is then placed into the passage of the expansion sleeve thereby holding the cable in the new "tensioned" position. The tension discourages movement of the spine.

U.S. Pat. No. 6,551,320 (Lieberman) discloses an apparatus for aligning a spine that includes a plurality of anchors screwed into adjacent vertebral bodies. A cable or series of cables is strung through or around the anchors and then pulled. The tension applied to the cable(s) is used to pull the spine into a desired alignment. U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2009/0112262 (Pool et al.) discloses a system in which at least one anchor is screwed or otherwise embedded into an upper vertebra and one or more anchors are similarly placed in lower vertebrae. A cable is extended between the anchors and force applied to the cable by a magnetic adjustment device to align the spine. In some cases a second anchor-cable arrangement can be used on the opposite side of the spine.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,782,831 (Sherman et al.) discloses a system for reducing a displaced vertebra between adjacent vertebrae. The Sherman patent describes a system in which two anchors are screwed into the vertebrae on either side of the displaced vertebra with a rod attached between the anchors. A third anchor is screwed into the displaced vertebra and attached to a cable. A cable tightening device, such as a come-along type device is used to pull the displaced vertebra into alignment after which it is attached to the support rod. However, the attachment of a bar across three adjacent vertebrae prevents pulling a curved spine into a more proper alignment.

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In attempting to solve spinal alignment and displacement problems, the prior art relies on multiple vertebral anchors and the application of alignment force through complicated force applicators and cable systems. Such corrective systems can be prohibitively expensive. Additionally, typical corrective systems involve the risk of permanent neurological injury caused by stretching the spinal cord. Other typical risks of surgical corrective systems for treating scoliosis involve infection, blood loss, and lung, bowel, and bladder problems. Because direct visualization of the individual spinal elements is often required for the above techniques, lengthy incisions and large spinal dissections are required to expose the spinal segments requiring treatment. Even with these major life threatening surgeries, perfect spinal alignment is rarely, if ever, achieved.

What is needed then is a percutaneous apparatus for aligning the spine that possesses few parts and is easy to implant while enabling a gradual restoration of the spinal alignment over a determined period of time so that large and/or sudden forces are not applied to the curved spine. By applying reduced corrective forces over a longer period of time, complications such as bone fracture and nerve damage can be reduced or avoided. Moreover, it would be advantageous in the art of neurosurgery and orthopedic surgery to align a spine with simple percutaneous methods so that endoscopic or minimally invasive techniques can be employed. Additionally, it would be advantageous to access a device for aligning a spine by palpating intact skin to avoid infections.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention broadly comprises a subcutaneous implantable device for aligning a spine having a plurality of vertebrae including a first brace assembly secured to a first vertebra of the spine, a second brace assembly secured to a second vertebra of the spine, a rod secured by the at least two brace assemblies, the rod arranged for limited sliding movement within the at least two brace assemblies, a gear mechanism attached to the rod, a control means attached to the gear mechanism, and a cable fixedly secured to a third vertebra of the spine by an anchor. The third vertebra is located between the first and second vertebrae, and the cable is arranged for pulling the third vertebra towards the rod.

The present invention also broadly comprises a bone lengthening apparatus including a screw shell secured to a distal portion of said bone, a separation rod including a threaded end arranged to engage the screw shell of the distal portion, the separation rod being arranged to be securable to a proximal portion of the bone and extendable from the proximal portion to the distal portion, and where the proximal portion is separated from the distal portion by a gap, a gear mechanism attached to the separation rod, and a control means attached to the gear mechanism and arranged to rotate the separation rod to widen the gap between the distal and proximal portions of the bone.

A primary object of the invention is to provide a device and method of spinal alignment in which corrective alignment is achieved "gradually" to avoid potential neurological and muscular damage. By "gradually" it is meant over a period of several weeks to several months depending on the severity of the lateral curve.

Another object of the invention is to provide a device for aligning a lateral curve in a spine using simple percutaneous methods and minimally invasive techniques, such as endoscopic techniques.

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Yet another object of the invention is to provide a method in which the alignment device may be accessed subcutaneously to reduce the possibility of infection which can occur when a spinal alignment device is connected to a brace outside the body through the skin.

Still another object of the invention is to provide a device for aligning a lateral curve in the spine which can be resorbed into the body where the alignment device, including the balloon and/or anchor and/or a traction cable, is made of bioabsorbable materials.

Another object of the invention is to provide a mechanical device for gradually correcting a spine afflicted with scoliosis subcutaneously.

A further object of the invention is to present a spinal alignment method in which both sides of the spinal column may be subject to an alignment procedure at the same time.

A still further object of the invention is to provide a device for aligning a lateral curve in a spine using a minimum amount of vertebral drilling sites.

Yet another object of the invention is to provide a percutaneous device for aligning a spine including a balloon that can be inflated with bioabsorbable liquids capable of being withdrawn or bioabsorbable material, e.g., bone putty.

Still another object of the invention is to provide a percutaneous device for aligning a spine including a balloon that contains metal vanes which can be deployed against the external cortical surface of a bone to strengthen anchoring capabilities.

An additional object of the invention is to provide a mechanically, hydraulically or electronically operated device including an expandable anchoring mechanism deployable within or around a bone that can be reliably actuated with a pushing or pulling vector force sufficient to controllably alter the temporary or permanent position of a skeletal structure.

An added object of the invention is to supply a bone lengthening assembly for the precise lengthening of a target bone.

These and other objects, features and functions of the present invention will become apparent to those having ordinary skill in the art upon the reading of the following detailed description in view of the drawings and appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

The nature and mode of the operation of the present invention will now be more fully described in the following detailed description of the invention taken with the accompanying drawing Figures, in which:

FIG. 1 is a stylized posterior view of a person with a spine afflicted with scoliosis;

FIG. 2A is a rear view of a person with scoliosis wearing a full body brace as known in the prior art;

FIG. 2B is a rear view similar to that of FIG. 2A but showing a lighter prior art brace;

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of a hollow bone screw having an outer shell and an inner screw threadably inserted therein;

FIGS. 4 and 4A demonstrate how the inner screw can be separated from the outer shell leaving a lumen as a hollow space along the length of the outer shell;

FIG. 5A is a top view of the stabilizing rod of the assembly of the present invention;

FIG. 5B is a side view of the stabilizing rod showing the receiver formed into the peak that defines a screw hole;

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FIG. 5C is a cross-sectional view taken generally along line 5C-5C in FIG. 5B;

FIG. 6 is side perspective exploded view of the assembly of the present invention attached to a vertebra in the spinal column of the spine to be aligned;

FIG. 7 is a side perspective view of the assembly showing a pulling tool attached to the end of the pulling cable;

FIG. 8 is an anterior view of a laterally curved spinal column with the alignment assembly in place;

FIG. 9 an anterior view showing the assembly holding the spinal column in place after a pulling procedure;

FIG. 10 is an anterior view similar to that of FIG. 9 showing the spinal column moved to a straighter position relative to the axis after a succeeding pulling procedure;

FIG. 10A is an anterior view similar to that of FIG. 10 showing the assembly with the pulling tool removed and the tube set screw screwed into the tube aperture to hold the cable in place between pulling procedures;

FIG. 11 is an anterior view showing the results of the final pulling procedure in which the lateral curve of the spinal column is significantly reduced if not eliminated;

FIG. 12 is an anterior view showing spinal column after the final pulling procedure;

FIG. 12A is a cross-sectional view similar to FIG. 5C showing the set screw holding the cable in place to maintain tension of the assembly after the final pulling procedure;

FIG. 13 is a top view of the inflatable balloon bone anchor which is a component of a second assembly utilized in the gradual alignment of a spine with one or more lateral curves;

FIG. 14A is a cross-sectional view of a target vertebra in which a Jamshidi needle is used to drill a hole into the target vertebra;

FIG. 14B is the same view as in FIG. 14A depicting the Jamshidi needle withdrawn from around the balloon and tube;

FIG. 14C shows the initiation of the inflation of the inflatable balloon inside the cancellous material at the core of the target vertebra;

FIG. 14D depicts the withdrawal of the anchor tip resulting in the inflated balloon lining a cavity created within the cancellous bone material;

FIG. 15A depicts a second method of attaching the inflatable balloon anchor to a vertebra in which the Jamshidi needle is drilled through the vertebra to create a passage extending through the opposing sides of the vertebra;

FIG. 15B shows the Jamshidi needle withdrawn from around the inflatable balloon catheter and the balloon starting to inflate;

FIG. 15C shows the inflatable balloon drawn against the side of the target vertebra opposing the side where the balloon bone anchor enters the vertebra (proximal side);

FIG. 15D depicts the fully inflated balloon drawn against the vertebra;

FIG. 16 is a schematic posterior view of the inflatable balloon catheter attached to an external leverage support to form the second embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 17 is a partial cross-sectional view of a bone screw embedded into a vertebra and attached to a strut;

FIG. 18A is a schematic view of the use of two balloon anchor assemblies to pull the spinal column into alignment;

FIG. 18B depicts schematically the use of the bone screw construction with one or more balloon anchor assemblies to combine both pulling and pushing forces to simultaneously apply corrective pressure on both sides of the lateral curve;

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FIG. 19 is a top perspective view of a winding means component of a second alternate embodiment of an assembly for performing a gradual lateral spinal alignment of a spine;

FIG. 20 is a top perspective view of the worm gear enclosed in a housing;

FIG. 21A is a top perspective view of a ratchet assembly used as an alternate form of a winding means in the second alternate assembly for performing gradual spinal alignments;

FIG. 21B is a top perspective view of a ratchet assembly used as an alternate form of a winding means in the second alternate assembly for performing gradual spinal alignments;

FIG. 22 is a bottom perspective view of the assembly secured to a rigid bracing rod;

FIG. 23 is an anterior view of the assembly attached to a curved spinal column;

FIG. 24 is the same view as in FIG. 23 depicting the spinal column pulled straighter, i.e., closer to the desired anatomical position;

FIG. 25 shows the spinal column in the desired anatomical alignment caused by the pulling of the curve of the spine toward the bracing rod;

FIG. 26 is an enlarged posterior view of one embodiment of the bracing assembly used to attach the vertebra to the bracing rod;

FIG. 27 depicts the second alternate embodiment of the assembly attached to a spinal cord in which an inflatable balloon anchor is extended through a target vertebra and attached to the assembly with a cable;

FIG. 28 is the same view as in FIG. 27 depicting the spinal column pulled straighter, i.e., closer to the desired anatomical position;

FIG. 29 is the same view as in FIG. 27 with the spinal column pulled into the desired anatomical alignment using the balloon anchor;

FIG. 30 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of a femur;

FIG. 31 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of a femur showing an osteotomy separating the femur into an upper section and a lower section;

FIG. 32A is the same longitudinal cross-sectional view of the femur as shown in FIG. 31 including a bone lengthening assembly including a worm gear;

FIG. 32B is a view similar to that of FIG. 32A wherein the gap formed by the osteotomy is widened after the separation rod is turned;

FIG. 33 shows bone growth that naturally occurs filling the gap created by the osteotomy;

FIG. 34 depicts the completion of the bone growth after the removal of the separation rod and worm gear; and,

FIG. 35 is the same view as in FIG. 32 showing the use of an electric motor to turn the separation rod.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

At the outset, it should be appreciated that like drawing numbers on different drawing views identify identical structural elements of the invention. It also should be appreciated that figure proportions and angles are not always to scale in order to clearly portray the attributes of the present invention.

While the present invention is described with respect to what is presently considered to be the preferred embodiments, it is understood that the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments. The present invention is intended to

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cover various modifications and equivalent arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

Furthermore, it is understood that this invention is not limited to the particular methodology, materials and modifications described and as such may, of course, vary. It is also understood that the terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular aspects only, and is not intended to limit the scope of the present invention, which is limited only by the appended claims.

Unless defined otherwise, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood to one of ordinary skill in the art to which this invention belongs. Although any methods, devices or materials similar or equivalent to those described herein can be used in the practice or testing of the invention, the preferred methods, devices, and materials are now described.

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of hollow bone screw 20. The bone screw is used to secure the assembly of the invention to the vertebrae of the patient, as described infra. Outer screw shell 22 is externally threaded with threads 22A to enable it to be screwed into the body of a vertebra as described below. Inner screw 24 is also externally threaded with threads 24A to threadably connect with internal threads 22B of outer screw shell 22. Preferably, cap 24B is attached to the proximal end of inner screw 24. FIGS. 4 and 4A demonstrate how inner screw 24 can be separated from outer shell 22 leaving lumen 26 as a hollow space along the length of outer shell 22. It should be understood that threads 22A and 24A can be omitted.

FIG. 5A is a top view of stabilizing rod 30 ("rod 30"). Preferably, the ends 30A of rod 30 are curved to provide the advantage of being able to move more easily along the spine and longitudinal muscles along the spine. Receiver complex 32 ("receiver 32") extends from the surface of rod 30 to form a peak which defines screw hole 34. FIG. 5B is a side view of rod 30 showing receiver 32 formed into the peak that defines screw hole 34 (not seen in FIG. 5B). Also seen is aperture 36 and set screw 37.

FIG. 5C is a cross-sectional view taken generally along line 5C-5C in FIG. 5B. Set screw 37 is shown set into receiver 32. It can be seen that aperture 36 and set screw 37 have parallel longitudinal axes and both of these axes are substantially perpendicular to the axis 34A of screw hole 34. Annular lip 38 surrounds aperture 36 and set screw 37 and is externally threaded. Set screw 37 engages threaded through-bore 37A (shown in FIG. 6).

FIG. 6 is a side perspective exploded view of assembly 10 attached to vertebra 80 in the spinal column of the spine to be aligned. Initially, hollow screw 20 is extended into screw hole 34 and is screwed into body 80 of the target vertebra until the distal end point 25 emerges slightly from the distal side, which preferably is at or near the peak of the convex curve of the laterally curved spinal column 1. Inner screw 24 is then removed from outer shell 22 thereby opening lumen 26. Toggle bolt 40 having shaft 41 with a distal end and a proximal end (not seen in FIG. 6) and deployable wings 42 is guided through lumen 26 from the proximal side of vertebra 80 until it extends past distal end point 25 at the distal end hollow screw 20. Preferably, toggle bolt 40 includes pivot attachment 44 to which wings 42 are attached. Wings 42 are deployed (opened out) as shown in FIG. 6 and pulled against the convex side of vertebra 80. Cable 46, attached to the proximal end of shaft 41, extends out the proximal end of lumen 26 and guided into screw hole 34 and up aperture 36. This perpendicular turn is preferably guided by curved wall 36A of aperture 36. Persons having ordinary skill in the art recognize that cable 46 may be threaded from

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distal end point 25 toward the proximal end of lumen 26 with wings 46 deployed at distal end point 25. In addition, equivalent devices having expanded or expandable components positioned similarly to wings 46 may be used in place of toggle bolt 40 as long as they provide satisfactory support for pulling cable 46 as described below.

Cable 46 is guided through tube 50 which extends posteriorly through back BA. Lip 52 is located at one end of tube 50 and includes internal threads 52A so that tube 50 can be threadably attached to annular lip 38. Set screw 54 is screwed into threaded tube aperture 50A to hold cable 46 in place.

FIG. 7 is a side perspective view of assembly 10 showing pulling tool 60 attached to the end of cable 46. Cable 46 has sufficient length to extend from the proximal end of the toggle bolt shaft to outside the back to be attached to pulling tool 60. Examples of pulling tools are winch or reel-type devices, come-along, pliers, screw jacks, or other suitable devices that are able to repeatedly apply a pulling force to cable 46 which pulls the convex apex of laterally curved spinal column 1 at the point where toggle wing 42 contacts vertebral body 80. Tube 50 is threadably attached to annular lip 38. It is understood that other vertebra are positioned above and below target vertebra 80. Because rod 30 is placed along the concave curve of the spine, it is possible that it does not contact vertebra 80 during some or all of the alignment process as is shown in FIG. 7. The perpendicular turn allows the force vectors on cable 46 to be directed out of back BA so that the lungs and surrounding viscera can be avoided.

FIG. 8 is an anterior view of laterally curved spinal column 1 with alignment assembly 10 in place as shown in FIG. 7. Axis A represents what the longitudinal axis of spinal column 1 would be when straightened to the ideal anatomical position. Toggle bolt 40 is depicted with deployed wings 42 contacting vertebra 80. Vertebral discs 70 are shown alternately placed within spinal column 1 between each vertebra. The attachment of tube 50 to annular lip 38 is depicted in cut-out form to show cable 46 extending from toggle bolt 40 through lumen 26 and aperture 36 into tube 50. In a preferred practice, tube 50 would be attached to annular lip 38. The further or distal end of cable 46 is attached to pulling tool 60. Rod 30 is placed laterally and longitudinally along spinal column 1. It can be seen that because rod 30 is preferably on the concave side of the lateral spinal curve, it may not contact curved spinal column 1 where cable 46 emerges from spinal column 1 on the concave or proximal side.

During the pulling procedure, set screw 54 is loosened or removed from tube aperture 50A. Pulling tool 60 applies pulling force across spinal column 1 onto wings 42. This pulls spinal column 1 against stabilizing rod 30 forcing wings 42 and consequently vertebra 80 toward rod 30 thereby reducing the lateral curve. After sufficient movement, tube set screw 54 is threaded into tube aperture 50A to hold the pulled cable and spinal column in the new straighter position. After a period of time to allow muscles and nerves and spinal column 1 to adjust to the new position, the pulling procedure is repeated with spinal column 1 again being pulled against rod 30 to an even straighter position relative to axis A. FIG. 9 shows assembly 10 after a pulling procedure with tube 50 attached to rod 30 at annular lip 38 (not shown in FIG. 9). By following the sequence of pulling, tightening, and waiting, spinal column 1 is gradually brought closer to proper alignment. By gradual or gradually is meant that alignment may be achieved in a period of as little as one or two days to as long as 6 months, although in

mild cases of scoliosis 5-15 minutes to one day may be possible. Normally, an alignment period may range from a week to about three months, but persons having ordinary skill in the art recognize that the length of the alignment period depends on such factors as the severity of the lateral curve, the age of the patient, and the strength of the surrounding neuromuscular structure as well as other factors.

FIG. 10 is an anterior view of spinal column 1 moved to a straighter position relative to axis A after a succeeding pulling procedure. Rod 30 is shown closer to spinal column 1 as spinal column 1 is pulled straighter. It can also be seen that curved ends 30A provide an advantage over straight ends in that it allows stabilizing rod 30 to move along spinal column 1 with less if any interference with elements of spinal column 1. FIG. 10A shows assembly 10 with pulling tool removed and tube set screw 54 screwed into tube aperture 50A holding cable 46 in place between pulling procedures.

FIG. 11 is the same anterior view showing the results of the final pulling procedure in which the lateral curve of spinal column 1 is significantly reduced if not eliminated. It can be seen that the middle section of stabilizing rod 30 is pulled close to vertebra 80 at the insertion point of hollow bone screw 20.

FIG. 12 is an anterior view showing spinal column 1 after the final pulling procedure. Tube 50 is removed through the back of the patient. Stabilizing rod 30 is left in place holding spinal column 1 in place against toggle bolt wings 42 with the holding force transmitted on cable 46 in lumen 26.

FIG. 12A is a cross-sectional view similar to FIG. 5C in which set screw 37 is shown screwed within screw hole 34 to hold (fix) cable 46 in place under tension after the final pulling procedure. Set screw 37 is screwed in place before set screw 54 is loosened to constantly maintain tension in cable 46 to enable assembly 10 to hold spinal column 1 in the final position. Set screw 37 may be tightened using appropriate conventional or arthroscopic instruments known to those having ordinary skill in the art. Thus, cable 46 is held in place under tension by its attachment to toggle bolt 40 at the distal end and by set screw 37 at the proximal end. After set screw 37 is fixed to cable 46, the remaining "tail" of cable 46 which extends beyond set screw 37 can be cut close to or inside aperture 36. In one embodiment, a cap may be placed over annular lip 38.

In an alternate embodiment, a percutaneous method of spinal alignment requiring no incisions employs puncture wounds to facilitate the placement of deployable bone anchors into or across chosen spinal elements such that tensile forces can be applied to specific areas of the spine thereby facilitating spinal alignment.

To achieve these ends, a standard Jamshidi needle, with removable central stylet, is passed across a chosen spinal element, such as a vertebra, from a direct lateral or a posterolateral approach depending on the desirability of avoiding intervening muscles or other structures.

FIG. 13 is a top view of inflatable balloon bone anchor 110 ("anchor 110") which is a component of assembly 100 (shown in FIG. 16) utilized in the gradual alignment of a spine with one or more lateral curves. Anchor 110 includes hollow tube 112 with inflatable balloon 114 attached at distal end 117 with fluid conduit 118 ("conduit 118") attached to proximal end 116. Optionally, ports 118A and 118B extend from conduit 118 and receive the fluid(s) that may be used to inflate balloon 114 as explained below. Fluids may be introduced into tube 112 and balloon 114 through conduit 118. Preferably, tube 112 and balloon 114 are fabricated

from polyglycolic acid or other similar biologically compatible absorbable material which can withstand the tensile or pulling strain created on anchor 110 as described below and resorb into the body well after the alignment procedure is completed. In an example embodiment where balloon 114 is inflatable and deflatable, both ports 118A and 118B can be utilized to allow fluids to pass in and out of balloon 114. In an example embodiment where balloon 114 is dissolvable, only a single port 118A or 118B is needed to allow fluid to pass into balloon 114. In that case, the fluid is introduced and sealed until it dissolves.

FIG. 14A is a cross-sectional view of target vertebra 80 in which a Jamshidi needle 102 ("needle 102") equipped with removable stylet 102A is used to drill a hole into vertebra 80. Inside needle 102 is the distal end 117 of tube 112 with uninflated balloon 114 contacting anchor tip 114A. Cable 113 is seen extending through tube 112 and attached to anchor tip 114A. FIG. 14B is the same view as shown in FIG. 14A with stylet 102A removed from needle 102 and needle 102 withdrawn over tube 112 and from around balloon 114 and tube 112. In one embodiment, needle 102 is withdrawn before conduit 118 is attached to proximal end 116. FIG. 14C shows the initiation of the inflation of balloon 114 inside the cancellous material that forms the core of vertebra 80 while FIG. 14D depicts the withdrawal of anchor tip 114A resulting in the inflated balloon 114 creating and lining a cavity 82 to become embedded within the cancellous bone material.

FIGS. 14C and 14D depict the inflation of balloon 114 through a hydraulic method in which fluid is introduced through ports 118A and/or 118B and passes into balloon 114 through tube 112. As fluid volume increases, balloon 114 increases in size to create cavity 82 in the cancellous material. For temporary anchor fixation, water or saline may be used to inflate balloon 114. Permanent fixation may be achieved with hardenable materials such as bone putty or methyl methacrylate (MMA) as is known to those having ordinary skill in the art. It should be appreciated that a noncompliant or compliant balloon can be used. If a compliant balloon is used it is made of a hardenable material.

FIG. 15A depicts a second method of attaching anchor 110 to vertebra 80. Needle 102 is drilled or tapped through vertebra 80 to create a passage extending through opposing sides of vertebra 80. Similar to the method described above, it can be seen that anchor 110 is carried inside needle 102 during the drilling process or placed later after stylet is removed. FIG. 15B shows stylet 102A removed and needle 102 withdrawn from around anchor 110 with balloon 114 starting to inflate. FIG. 15C shows balloon 114 drawn against the side of vertebra 80 (distal side) opposing the side where tube 112 enters vertebra 80 (proximal side). FIG. 15D depicts fully inflated balloon 114 drawn against vertebra 80.

FIGS. 15B-15D depict an alternate embodiment of an apparatus for mechanically deploying balloon 114. Array 114B comprises a plurality of arms or vanes operatively attached to the inner surface of balloon 114 and pivotally attached to cable 113. By operatively attached is meant that a component or device is connected either directly or indirectly to a second component and causes that second component to function. For example, each of the plurality of arms in array 114B is operatively attached to the inner surface of balloon 114 and causes balloon 114 to open. When cable 113 is pulled, the arms of array 114B each open causing balloon 114 to inflate. Alternatively, when the balloon is inflated, the arms pivotally deploy. Array 114B may be used to open balloon 114 when greater pulling or traction forces are necessary during the aligning process as

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explained below. It is recognized that the mechanical inflation method may be used to form cavity **82** and embed balloon **114** as seen in FIGS. **14C** and **14D**. Conversely, the hydraulic method described above may be used to inflate balloon **114** and draw it toward vertebra **80** as seen in FIGS. **15C** and **15D**.

FIG. **16** is a schematic posterior view of anchor **110** attached to external leverage support **B** to form assembly **100**. In the posterior view shown, tube **112** extends through vertebra **80** with inflatable balloon **114** drawn against a side of vertebra **80** on the convex side of the lateral curve of the spinal column. After balloon **114** is inflated, tube **112** is releasably attached to external leverage support **B**, in this case external body brace ("brace **B**") similar to that seen in FIG. **1** and otherwise described above. Proximal end **116** is attached to brace **B**. To effect the attachment outside the body, a small incision may be made to pass tube **112** through the skin and releasably attach it to brace **B**. Attachment may be made similar to that seen above with assembly **10** in which cable **46** is pulled and tied against stabilizing rod **30**. Pulling tools such as come-alongs, winches, pliers, etc., attached to proximal end **116** may be used.

Because the attachment to vertebra **80** is percutaneous and reversible, multiple points of attachment can be selected to resolve multiple curve issues as well as to spread corrective force over more than target vertebra **80** so that excessive force on a single cable is not required. Partial external braces **B** may be used opposite each series of assemblies **100** to direct the required pulling force more precisely. This provides the advantage of obviating the need for the large external braces presently in use. In a preferred embodiment, the braces may have movable pads or points of contact to prevent applying the pulling force at the same site on the skin.

FIG. **17** is a cross-sectional view of bone screw **120** embedded into vertebra **80** and attached to strut **122**. Bone screw **120** and strut **122** are components of bone screw-strut construction **130** shown in FIG. **18B**. This bone screw-strut construction **130** ("construction **130**") can be used to apply a pushing force on the lateral curve by turning strut **122**, which is attached to brace **B'**, toward embedded bone screw **120**, thereby pushing the lateral curve into alignment. Preferably, bone screw **120** is attached to strut **122** by a hinge or some other polyaxial connection to allow different vector angles of force to be applied to bone screw **120** as it pushes on the lateral curve.

FIG. **18A** is a schematic view of the use of two assemblies **100** to pull the spinal column into alignment. It can be seen that anchors **110** are attached to vertebrae **80** with balloons **114** contacting vertebrae **80** on the convex side of the lateral curve. This arrangement provides the advantage of reducing the forces applied to the components of bone anchor **110** as well as to the spinal column itself.

FIG. **18B** schematically depicts the use of bone screw construction **130** with one or more assemblies **100** to combine both pulling and pushing forces to apply corrective forces on both sides of the lateral curve. Construction **130** is attached to brace **B'** on the opposite side of the spine from assemblies **100**. It is recognized that brace **B'** may be the same or a different external support than support **B** attached to assemblies **100**. Bone screw **120** may be used to push the lateral curve into alignment by screwing strut **122**, threadably attached to brace **B'**, toward the convex side of the lateral curve and thereby pushing it into alignment. FIG. **18B** also shows two assemblies **100** pulling two portions of the same lateral curve into alignment demonstrating the attachment of assemblies **100** to multiple points on the spine.

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Assemblies **100** are used in a manner similar to that used for assembly **10** described above. With anchors **110** attached to target vertebra **80**, and proximal ends **116** attached to brace **B**, tubes **112** are pulled toward brace **B** to pull the lateral curve closer to alignment. After the pulling process, tubes **112** are attached to brace **B** in such a way so as to hold anchors **110** in the pulled position, thereby holding the lateral curve in its new position closer to the desired alignment. The pulling process and the results of the pulling process can be observed with MRI, x-rays, etc. to determine how much to pull anchors **110** each time. By repeating the "pull-tie off" process, the lateral curve can gradually be brought into or closer to alignment without disrupting surrounding tissue and nerves. Similarly, bone construction **130** may supplement assemblies **100** to gradually push the spine into the desired alignment.

Once the desired spinal alignment is achieved over a period of time, much like braces are used to align teeth, the spine can be fused using endoscopic techniques and the deployed anchors can be contracted and removed or dissolved into the body. Alternatively, percutaneous alignment could be maintained until skeletal maturity is reached, potentially obviating the need for surgery entirely.

FIG. **19** is a top perspective view of a winding means component of a second alternate embodiment of assembly **200** for performing a gradual lateral spinal alignment of a spine. In the configuration shown, the winding means is in the form of ratcheting mechanism **202**, for example, a worm gear, which includes screw **204** that interacts with wheel **206**. It should be appreciated that screw **204** could be a worm screw and that wheel **206** could be a worm wheel. Wheel **206** includes stem **210** which holds or retains cable **212**. Control lever **208** acts as a control means and is operatively attached to screw **204** to turn screw **204** a predetermined amount when pressed. By "operatively attached" it is meant that a component or device is connected either directly or indirectly to a second component and causes that second component to function, e.g., turn a predetermined amount. As can be seen in FIG. **19**, when screw **204** turns, wheel **206** also rotates which in turn rotates stem **210** to wind cable **212**. It should be appreciated that due to the frictional relationship between screw **204** and wheel **206**, wheel **206** cannot rotate worm screw **204**. Spring means **205A** is provided to enable lever **208** to rebound to its starting position so that lever **208** can only be moved a predetermined amount when pressed. Spring means **205A** is in the form of a torsion spring, for example.

FIG. **20** is a top perspective view of ratcheting mechanism **202** enclosed in housing **203**. It is apparent to those having skill in the art that housing **203** may be a single unit enclosing ratcheting mechanism **202** or may include separately elements that enclose the individual components of ratcheting mechanism **202**, such as housing **203A** enclosing stem **210** as seen in FIG. **20**. It should be appreciated that housing **203** can be made of any suitable casing for example, a silicone elastomer. Preferably, spring means **205B** is included to enable lever **208** to rebound to its starting position creating a ratchet effect so that lever **208** can only be moved a predetermined amount when pressed. Spring means **205B** can be in the form of a coil spring attached to housing **203** in which lever **208** is caused to return to a starting position. Lever **208** may rebound to a starting position off coil spring **211** attached to rebound board **208A**. Persons having ordinary skill in the art recognize that although FIGS. **19-20** depict different spring means that act

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to return lever **208** to a starting position, preferably, only one spring means is utilized in any one particular ratcheting mechanism **202**.

The winding means may be a ratchet mechanism used to control the rotation of stem **210** through ratcheting mechanism **202** or directly through control of ratchet assembly **216** as shown in FIGS. **21A** and **21B**. In FIG. **21A**, control lever **208** is operatively attached to ratchet gear **216A** which engages ratchet gear **216B** to rotate ratchet gear **216B** in a single direction. In FIG. **21B**, control lever **208** is operatively attached to a single ratchet gear **216A** and control lever **208** can rotate ratchet gear **216A** in a single direction via pawl **217P**. Pawl **217P** is connected to housing **203** surrounding assembly **216** (shown in FIG. **20**). Spring **217** acts to maintain rotational tension in ratchet assembly **216** to return lever **208** to its starting position. Persons having ordinary skill in the art recognize that a worm screw, such as screw **204**, may be attached to ratchet assembly **216** to enable ratcheting mechanism **202** to be rotated a predetermined amount and thus pull cable **212** a predetermined amount with each press of control lever **208**.

FIG. **22** is a bottom perspective view of assembly **200** including rigid bracing rod **220**. The components of ratcheting mechanism **202** are enclosed in housings **203**, **203A**, and **203B**. FIG. **22** also includes a posterior schematic view of a spinal column comprising vertebrae **80** and intervertebral disks **70**. Ratcheting mechanism **202** may be attached to rod **220** in different orientations relative to the spinal column. Preferably, ratcheting mechanism **202** is attached in such a way as to enable its longitudinal movement along rod **220** before it is fixed into position and to allow control lever **208** to be proximate to the external side of surrounding tissue to enable it to be operated, e.g., pressed, from outside the body of a patient. Although not shown in FIG. **22**, preferably, a spring means such as those discussed above, is included in assembly **200** to ensure cable **212** is wound only a predetermined amount when lever **208** is pressed, once identified by palpation through the skin.

FIG. **23** is an anterior view of assembly **200** attached to a curved spinal column. Axis **A** represents the longitudinal axis of the spinal column when straightened to the ideal anatomical position, while axis **A'** indicates the longitudinal axis of the curved spinal column. Target vertebra **80** may be prepared to receive a vertebra fixture element, in this case toggle bolt **40**, in the manner described above for example. Toggle bolt **40** extends through hole **34** such that the distal end of toggle bolt **40** extends through vertebra **80** with wings **42** extended against the side of vertebra **80**. Cable **212** is attached to the proximal end of toggle bolt **40** and is retained on stem **210** of ratcheting mechanism **202**. Bracing assemblies **222** are slidably attached to bracing rod **220** above and below assembly **200** to maintain the position of assembly **200** relative to hole **34** and toggle bolt **40** so that cable **212** continues to be wound at a convenient angle, e.g., generally perpendicular to the spinal column. Bracing assemblies **222** are prevented from sliding off of bracing rod **220** via caps **C** and **C'**. It should be appreciated that additional members can be placed along bracing rod **220** to limit the movement of bracing assemblies **222** as shown in FIG. **26**.

FIG. **24** is the same view as FIG. **23** depicting spinal column **1** pulled closer to the desired anatomical position as a result of winding cable **212** on stem **210** of ratcheting mechanism **202** (enclosed in housing **203**). This is seen by the smaller diverting angle between lines **A** and **A'**. As spinal column **1** becomes straighter, it lengthens which is reflected in the decrease in the distance between each of the bracing assemblies **222** and the end of bracing rod **220** demonstrat-

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ing the pivotal or sliding attachment of bracing assemblies **222** to bracing rod **220** as discussed below. FIG. **25** shows spinal column **1** in the desired anatomical alignment caused by the pulling of the curve of the spine toward bracing rod **220**.

FIG. **26** is an enlarged posterior view of one embodiment of bracing assembly **222** attached to a vertebra **80** and bracing rod **220**. Screw **222A** is pivotally attached to body **222B** and is screwed into vertebra **80**, in this case dorsal to the transverse process on the facet of the superior articular process. Holding screw **222C** is threaded onto body **222B** to hold bracing assembly **222** onto bracing rod **220** which passes through body **222B**. The pivotal attachment of screw **222A** to body **222B** enables bracing assembly **222** to remain attached to vertebra **80** and to allow spinal column **1** to be pulled to a straighter alignment. Bracing assembly **222** may be attached in such a way as to enable bracing assembly **222** to slide on bracing rod **220** as spinal column **1** is straightened.

In an alternate embodiment of assembly **200**, inflatable balloon anchor **214** having vanes **214B** can act as the vertebra fixture element to pull spinal cord **1** into or closer to the desired alignment. As explained above and depicted in FIGS. **15A-15D** regarding balloon anchor **114**, balloon anchor **214** is deployed through target vertebra **80** and inflated. Balloon anchor **214** is similar to balloon anchor **114**, but includes an attachment to cable **212** at its proximal end.

FIG. **27** depicts assembly **200** connected to spinal cord **1** in which balloon anchor **214** is extended through target vertebra **80** and attached to ratcheting mechanism **202** with cable **212** at its proximal end. Similar to FIG. **23**, bracing assemblies **222** are pivotally attached to vertebrae of spinal column **1** and attached to bracing rod **220** above and below assembly **200** to maintain the position of assembly **200** relative to hole **34** and balloon anchor **214** so that cable **212** continues to be wound at a convenient angle, e.g., generally perpendicular to spinal column **1**.

FIG. **28** is the same view as FIG. **27** depicting spinal column **1** pulled straighter, using balloon anchor **214** as a result of winding cable **212** on stem **210** of ratcheting mechanism **202** (enclosed in housing **203**). This is seen by the smaller diverting angle between lines **A** and **A'**. As spinal column **1** becomes straighter, it lengthens which is reflected in the decrease in the distance between each of the bracing assemblies **222** and the end of bracing rod **220** demonstrating the slidable attachment of bracing assemblies **222** bracing rod **220**. FIG. **29** shows spinal column **1** in the desired anatomical alignment caused by the pulling of the curve of the spine toward bracing rod **220**.

FIG. **30** is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of femur **150** including upper extremity **152**, shaft or body **154**, lower extremity **156**, and greater trochanter **158**. Also seen is bone marrow **162**. FIG. **31** is an enlarged cross-sectional view of femur **150** showing osteotomy or gap **160** separating femur **150** into upper and lower sections. Passage **164** is created by an intramedullary nail by inserting the nail into a hole drilled through greater trochanter **158** or other region of upper extremity **152** in a controlled manner. An example of a suitable intramedullary nail is supplied by Ellipse Technologies in Aliso Viego, Calif. under its Precice® product line.

FIG. **32A** is the same longitudinal cross-sectional view of femur **150** depicting a novel bone lengthening assembly that includes ratcheting mechanism **202**. Screw shell **172** is placed in the distal section **150B** of femur **150** below osteotomy **160** to act as an embodiment of a distal base portion of the assembly. This placement may be effected by

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the intramedullary nail when it is passed into distal section 150B. Like outer screw shell 22 discussed above, screw shell 172 includes inner threads 172A. Separation rod 170 ("rod 170") is an upper proximal adjustable portion of the assembly and includes threaded end 174 ("end 174") at its distal end. Separation rod 170 is operatively attached to ratcheting mechanism 202. End 174 extends through osteotomy 160 and is inserted into screw shell 172 so the threads of end 174 threadably interact with inner threads 172A. When control lever 208 on ratcheting mechanism 202 is activated, separation rod 170 rotates to turn threaded end 174 into shell 172 thereby pushing distal section 150B of bone 150 away from upper section 150A widening gap 160. This is depicted in FIG. 32B in which the gap formed by osteotomy 160 is widened after separation rod 170 is turned. In a typical embodiment, ratcheting mechanism 202 is configured to turn rod 170 to widen the gap 1 mm with each movement of control lever 208. Although not seen, it is understood that ratcheting mechanism 202 includes a spring means such as coil spring 211 with rebound board 208A and/or torsion spring 205A discussed above or other spring devices to return control lever 208 to a starting position.

FIG. 33 shows bone growth 165 that naturally occurs to fill the gap created by osteotomy 160. As can be seen, separation rod 170, which may include threaded end 174, spans osteotomy 160 to continue widening gap 160 to a desired width showing that new bone growth occurs while the separation procedure continues. In other words, the bone growth continues as gap 160 is widened to the desired width. Ultimately, as seen in FIG. 34, when gap 160 is widened to the target width, separation rod 170 and ratcheting mechanism 202 are withdrawn and bone and marrow growth continues to completely fill in gap 160 until the bone density is the same or almost the same as the rest of femur 150. It is noted that screw shell 172 remains in femur 150. FIG. 34 also shows bone marrow 162 having filled in passage 164 with femur 150 lengthened by the width of the gap that was lengthened by ratcheting mechanism 202.

In the embodiment of the bone lengthening assembly discussed above, similar to assembly 200 discussed above, worm screw 204 is rotated a specific number of degrees in order to rotate separation rod 170 to produce a predetermined distance, e.g., 1 mm, between proximal section 150A and distal section 150B of femur 150. After an established amount of time, ratcheting mechanism 202 is again rotated to separate the two femur sections another 1 mm. As with ratcheting mechanism 202 in the spinal alignment assembly 200 discussed above, control lever 208 is pressed to turn worm screw 204 to rotate separation rod 170 to enable the additional 1 mm separation. Preferably, assembly 200 is configured such that lever 208 only rotates rod 170 enough to widen gap 160 a predetermined distance, e.g., 1 mm, when lever 208 is pressed or activated. It is recognized by persons having skill in the art that ratcheting mechanism 202 may be mounted on greater trochanter 158 or another feature close to the external surface of the surrounding tissue to provide easy access to lever 208 by palpation through the skin.

In an alternate embodiment, shown in FIG. 35, control lever 208 is replaced by motor M having a Bluetooth® receiver capability. A Bluetooth® transmitter may be used to transmit a programmed command to motor M to turn worm gear 204 the predetermined amount to rotate separation rod 170. A similar motor with Bluetooth® receiver capability may be used to turn worm gear 200 when used in spine straightening assembly 200.

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The use of a worm gear in a bone lengthening assembly provides the advantage of precision in widening the gap between the divided portions of the bone by the same distance each time the rod is rotated by ratcheting mechanism 202. In addition, the ratchet mechanism described above with respect to the spinal alignment assembly 200, may be used in the bone lengthening assembly to hold the worm gear in position to prevent possibly slippage of worm screw 204 ensuring the gap continues to be widened to the desired width without the upper section 150A falling back toward the lower section 150B of the femur 150. Persons having ordinary skill in the art recognize that the other bones, such as the humerus or tibia may be targeted in a bone lengthening process, and such rod lengthening can be used to stretch a curved spine if the distal ends of the rod are secured to the spine with pedicle screws.

Thus, it is seen that the objects of the invention are efficiently obtained, although changes and modifications to the invention should be readily apparent to those having ordinary skill in the art, which changes would not depart from the spirit and scope of the invention as claimed.

REFERENCE NUMBERS

25	P Person
	1 Spinal column
	2 Upper curve
	3 Lower curve
	4 Brace
30	5 Brace
	20 Bone screw
	22 Outer screw shell
	22A Threads
	22B Internal threads
35	24 Inner screw
	24A Threads
	24B Cap
	25 Distal end point
	26 Lumen
40	30 Rod
	30A End
	32 Receiver
	34 Screw hole
	34A Axis
45	36 Aperture
	36A Wall
	37 Set screw
	37A Threaded through-bore for set screw
	38 Annular lip
50	40 Toggle bolt
	41 Shaft
	42 Deployable wings
	44 Pivot attachment
	46 Cable
55	50 Tube
	50A Tube aperture
	52 Lip
	52A Threads
	54 Set screw
60	60 Pulling tool
	70 Vertebral disc
	80 Vertebra
	100 Assembly
	102 Needle
65	102A Stylet
	110 Bone anchor
	112 Tube

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114 Balloon
 114A Anchor tip
 114B Array
 116 Proximal end
 117 Distal end
 118 Fluid conduit
 118A Port
 118B Port
 120 Bone screw
 122 Strut
 130 Bone screw-strut-construction
 150 Femur
 150A Upper section
 150B Lower section
 152 Upper extremity
 154 Body
 156 Lower extremity
 158 Greater trochanter
 160 Gap
 162 Bone marrow
 164 Passage
 165 Bone growth
 170 Separation rod
 172 Screw shell
 172A Inner threads
 174 Threaded end
 200 Assembly
 202 Ratcheting mechanism
 203 Housing
 203A Housing
 203B Housing
 204 Worm screw
 205A Torsion spring
 205B Coil spring
 206 Worm wheel
 208 Control lever
 208A Rebound board
 210 Stem
 212 Cable
 216 Assembly
 216A Ratchet gear
 216B Ratchet gear
 217 Spring
 220 Bracing rod
 222 Bracing assembly
 222A Screw
 222B Body
 222C Holding screw
 M Motor
 BA Back
 B Brace
 B' Brace
 A Axis
 C Cap
 C' Cap

What is claimed is:

1. A subcutaneous implantable device for aligning a spine having a plurality of vertebrae, comprising:
 a first brace assembly arranged to be secured to a first vertebra of said spine;
 a second brace assembly arranged to be secured to a second vertebra of said spine;
 a rod secured by said first and second brace assemblies, said rod arranged for limited sliding movement within said first and second brace assemblies;
 a cable arranged to be secured to a third vertebra of said spine, wherein:

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said third vertebra is located between said first and second vertebrae; and,
 said cable is arranged for pulling said third vertebra towards said rod; and,
 5 a gear mechanism attached to said rod, including:
 a stem arranged to wind said cable;
 a wheel connected to said stem, wherein said wheel includes gear teeth;
 a screw operatively arranged to rotate said gear teeth of said wheel in a single direction; and,
 10 a control lever attached to rotate said screw in a single direction.
 2. The implantable device recited in claim 1, wherein said cable is secured to said third vertebra with an anchor.
 3. The implantable device recited in claim 2, wherein said anchor is a molly bolt.
 4. The implantable device recited in claim 2, wherein said anchor is a toggle bolt.
 5. The implantable device recited in claim 2, wherein said anchor is a balloon.
 6. The implantable device recited in claim 5, wherein said balloon is inflated within said third vertebra.
 7. The implantable device recited in claim 1, wherein said control lever is connected to a fixed surface by a resilient member and said control lever is rotatable only to a limited extent.
 8. The implantable device recited in claim 1, wherein said control lever is connected to a resilient member to urge said control lever to a starting position after said control lever is pressed.
 9. The implantable device recited in claim 1, wherein said control lever is connected to a first gear which engages a second gear to rotate said second gear in said single direction.
 10. The implantable device recited in claim 1, wherein said control lever is connected to a first gear having gear teeth and said gear mechanism includes a pawl arranged to engage said gear teeth of said first gear to enable said first gear to rotate in said single direction.
 11. The implantable device recited in claim 1, wherein said first and second bracing assemblies are pivotable relative to said rod.
 12. The implantable device recited in claim 1, wherein said control lever is arranged to be palpated subcutaneously.
 13. The implantable device recited in claim 1, wherein the gear mechanism includes a worm gear.
 14. A subcutaneous implantable device for aligning a spine having a plurality of vertebrae, comprising:
 a first brace assembly arranged to be secured to a first vertebra of said spine;
 a second brace assembly arranged to be secured to a second vertebra of said spine;
 a rod secured by said first and second brace assemblies, said rod arranged for limited sliding movement within said first and second brace assemblies;
 a gear mechanism attached to said rod;
 a control means attached to said gear mechanism;
 a cable arranged to be secured to a third vertebra of said spine with a balloon anchor, wherein said third vertebra is located between said first and second vertebrae, and wherein said cable is arranged for pulling said third vertebra towards said rod.
 15. The implantable device recited in claim 14, wherein said gear mechanism includes a stem arranged to wind said cable.

16. The implantable device recited in claim 15, wherein said gear mechanism includes a wheel connected to said stem, wherein said wheel includes gear teeth.

17. The implantable device recited in claim 16, wherein said gear mechanism includes a screw operatively arranged 5 to rotate said gear teeth of said wheel in a single direction.

18. The implantable device recited in claim 17, wherein said gear mechanism includes a control lever attached to said screw to rotate said screw in said single direction.

19. The implantable device recited in claim 18, wherein 10 said control lever is connected to a fixed surface by a resilient member and said control lever is rotatable only to a limited extent.

20. The implantable device recited in claim 18, wherein said control lever is connected to a resilient member to urge 15 said control lever to a starting position after said control lever is pressed.

21. The implantable device recited in claim 18, wherein said control lever is connected to a first gear which engages 20 a second gear to rotate said second gear in said single direction.

22. The implantable device recited in claim 18, wherein said control lever is connected to a first gear having gear teeth and said gear mechanism includes a pawl arranged to engage said gear teeth of said first gear to enable said first 25 gear to rotate in said single direction.

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