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(54) **Progressive pump force regulation**

(57) A pump comprising a membrane element and a pump housing having a chamber with bevelled inner walls. The chamber comprises an open end having a third area. The membrane element has a first area, and comprises a central section with a second area which is surrounded by a periphery section. The central section is thicker than the periphery section. Further, the second

area of the central section is smaller than the third area of the open end of the chamber and the membrane element is arrangable over said pump housing forming a sealed chamber, whereby the central section of the membrane element is arranged over the open end, and the central section is protruding away from the chamber.

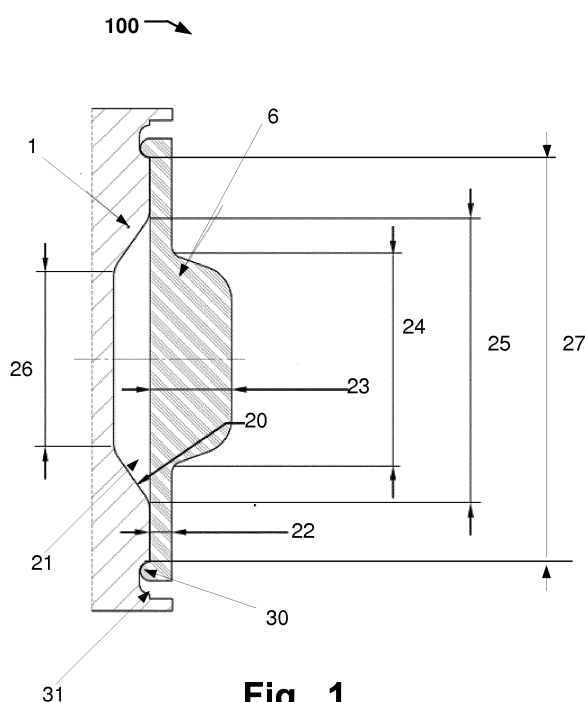


Fig. 1

Description**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION****Field of the Invention**

[0001] This invention pertains in general to the field of membrane pumps or diaphragm pumps. More particularly the invention relates to membrane pumps used as sampling pumps in devices for patient monitoring, breath monitoring, anaesthesia monitoring, especially for medical ventilation monitoring and gas analyzers for monitoring gas composition in patient's breathing.

Description of the Prior Art

[0002] The membrane pumps have the advantages of simple, compact and good sealing. Membrane pumps have therefore been widely used in medical instrumentations and biochemical analysis as sampling pumps for fluid analysis. In the field of medical ventilation monitoring, the gas measurement module analyses gases extracted from patient breathing circuits by a membrane pump. This may be done for real time monitoring of gas composition in patient's breathing circuits and to get patient's status. Currently, the gas analysis module tends to be smaller with increased reliability and low power exhaust. Hence there are higher requirements for the design of membrane pumps concerning size, life and energy loss.

[0003] Gas monitoring instruments, such as sensors, used to detect gases are precision components sensitive to vibration interference which reduces the measurement accuracy. Under normal circumstances, the sampling pump is a main vibration source in a monitoring module. Thus may introduce noise which could affect the measurement accuracy. The sampling pump is therefore required to provide a more stable sample flow.

[0004] The normal design of a membrane pump has a flat membrane and a pump chamber which is either spherically concave or cylindrical with a flat bottom. Two examples of these types of pumps are Thomas membrane pump or Xavitech membrane pump. Also, membrane pumps have normally membranes that are fixed to outer edges of the membrane, thus defining a pump area. This design is limiting the elastic behaviours of the membrane, is limiting the stroke length and the pump area is limiting the maximum pump pressure (since the area together with the pump force is defining the maximum pump pressure) and the fatigue life. Other problems are when a flat membrane meets a concave or a flat surface of the pump chamber. This will generate noise and the pump stroke will stop instantly causing mechanical vibrations.

[0005] Hence, a new improved design of a membrane pump would be advantageous. Especially a smaller pump with a higher pressure having low vibrations and that runs quieter than known membrane pumps.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] Accordingly, embodiments of the present disclosure preferably seek to mitigate, alleviate or eliminate one or more deficiencies, disadvantages or issues in the art, such as the above-identified, singly or in any combination by providing a device or method according to the appended patent claims for providing progressive pump force regulation, such as in devices for patient monitoring, breath monitoring, anaesthesia monitoring, especially for medical ventilation monitoring and gas analyzers for monitoring gas composition in patient's breathing.

[0007] Disclosed herein are device, system and methods for providing the progressive pump force regulation.

[0008] According to one aspect of the disclosure, a membrane element for a pump having a chamber is disclosed. The membrane element has a first area and comprises a central section with a second area surrounded by a periphery section. The central section is thicker than the periphery section, and the second area of the central section is smaller than an area of an open end of said chamber of which said central section is arranged over.

[0009] According to a further aspect of the disclosure, a pump comprising a membrane element and a pump housing having a chamber with bevelled inner walls is disclosed. The chamber comprises an open end having a third area. The membrane element has a first area, and comprises a central section with a second area which is surrounded by a periphery section, wherein the central section is thicker than the periphery section; further, the second area of the central section is smaller than the third area of the open end of the chamber and the membrane element is arrangerable over the pump housing forming a sealed chamber, whereby the central section of the membrane element is arranged over the open end, and the central section is protruding away from the chamber.

[0010] The advantages with this disclosed configuration is that it prevents the stroke from hitting the bottom of the chamber since a pump stroke is decelerated in a progressive way which not only makes the stop silent but also reduces the mechanical vibrations and keep them to a minimum. Further, the deceleration reduces the effective pump area of the membrane closer to the end of a stroke. Since the force of the stroke is constant, the pump becomes stronger closer

to the end of the stroke.

[0011] In some example, the central section has a circular shape.

[0012] The membrane is made of an elastic material, such as rubber and/or is selected from a list including: Chloroprene, EPDM, FKM/FPM, Silicon, TPE or nitrile.

[0013] In some examples the thickness ratio between the central section to the periphery section is between 2 to 15.

[0014] In some examples has the first section a protruding brim. This protruding brim works as an O-ring to increase the sealing effect.

[0015] In some examples has the thicker central section bevelled outer walls with a base larger than a top section, such as a truncated cone.

[0016] In some examples of the disclosure may the central section and the chamber both have circular shapes.

[0017] In some examples of the disclosure may the bevelled inner walls be straight, or concave, or convex, or have two or more radii, or have a sinoidal shape, or be of shaped as a polynomial of higher order.

[0018] In some examples has the membrane element an effective pump area with an area substantially the same as the third area of the open end of the chamber.

[0019] In some examples may the pump housing have an enlarged surface surrounding the open end of the chamber with an area with at least the same size as the membrane element.

[0020] In some examples of the disclosure may the membrane element clamped between the enlarged surface of the pump housing and a second member of the pump housing.

[0021] The advantages with this configuration are that by holding a membrane element slidably fixed at a larger diameter than the actual working diameter (area) is that the membrane is free to move radial and stretch. Hence a longer pump stroke may be achieved (i.e. more volume can be pumped per stroke). Also, due to the radial movement, the same pump volume can be maintained with less stretching which will increase life of the membrane due to lower fatigue stress levels and more effective use of the available pump force may be obtained.

[0022] The enlarged surface may comprises a groove to fit said protruding brim of the membrane member.

[0023] According to another aspect of the disclosure, a method for progressive pump force regulation is disclosed. The method comprising providing a pump according to the discloser herein, and applying a reciprocating stroke motion on the central section of the membrane element. The motion may be restricted by the bevelled inner walls of the chamber at a position where the central section of the membrane element becomes thicker.

[0024] It should be emphasized that the term "comprises/comprising" when used in this specification is taken to specify the presence of stated features, integers, steps or components but does not preclude the presence or addition of one or more other features, integers, steps, components or groups thereof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0025] These and other aspects, features and advantages of which examples of the disclosure are capable of will be apparent and elucidated from the following description of embodiments of the present disclosure, reference being made to the accompanying drawings, in which

Fig. 1 is illustrating a cross-sectional schematic overview of an example of a pump house and a membrane.

Fig. 2 is illustrating a cross-sectional schematic overview of an example of a pump house and a membrane.

Fig. 3 is illustrating a cross-sectional schematic overview of a membrane pump.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0026] Specific examples of the disclosure will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings. This disclosure may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those skilled in the art. The terminology used in the detailed description of the embodiments illustrated in the accompanying drawings is not intended to be limiting of the disclosure. In the drawings, like numbers refer to like elements.

[0027] The following description focuses on examples of the present disclosure applicable to a membrane element and to a membrane pump. The membrane pump is to be used as a sampling pump in devices for patient monitoring, breath monitoring, anaesthesia monitoring, especially medical ventilation monitoring and gas analyzers for monitoring gas composition in patient's breathing. However, it will be appreciated that the invention is not limited to this application but may be applied to many other systems where a fluid pump is required.

[0028] Fig. 1 illustrates a membrane pump 100, with an example of a pump housing element 1 and a membrane element 6. The pump housing element has a chamber 21 with an open end having a first area. The membrane element 6 is arrangeable over the open end of the chamber 21 to seal the chamber 21.

[0029] The chamber 21 has bevelled or chamfered walls 20. The bevelled or chamfered walls 20 may be straight, such as in the shape of a truncated cone, illustrated in Fig 1. In some examples, the bevelled or chamfered walls 20 may be convex or concave. In other examples, the walls 20 have more than one radii. In other configurations the walls 20 may have a sinoidal shape, a wave shape, a polynomial shape or spline shaped. The chamber 21 is preferably circular but may have any shape such as, a square, rectangular, a polygon or an ellipsoid.

[0030] Additionally and/or alternatively, in some examples, the bottom area of the chamber 21 has an area 26 which is smaller than the area 25 of the open end.

[0031] The membrane element 6 has a second area 27 and a first central section having a third area 28 (see Fig 2). The first central section is a central portion of the membrane element. Thus the third area is smaller than the second area 27.

[0032] The membrane element has preferably a circular shape but may have any shape, such as a square, rectangular, a polygon or an ellipsoid. Additionally, the first central section has preferably a circular shape but may have any shape, such as a square, rectangular, a polygon or an ellipsoid.

[0033] The shape of the membrane element and first central section does not need to be the same, for example, the membrane element may be a square while the first central section has is circularly shaped. Preferably, the first central section has the same shape as the open end of the chamber.

[0034] The membrane element is preferably made of a flexible or elastic material, such as rubber. Examples of materials that may be used are Chloroprene, EPDM, FKM/FPM, Silicon, TPE or nitrile. But other materials with similar properties known by the skilled person may be used.

[0035] Additionally and/or alternatively, the membrane element may include a second central section having a fourth area 24. The second central section has a thickness 23 which is larger than the thickness 22 of the rest of the membrane element. The rest of the membrane may be defined as a periphery section surrounding the second central section. Preferably the ratio between the thicknesses 23 of the second central section to the thickness 22 of the rest of the membrane element may be between 2 to 15.

[0036] The thicker second central section may preferably be shaped to protruding in an opposite direction from the open end of the chamber. The walls of the protruding part are bevelled or chamfered, such as a truncated cone or convex or concave. Alternatively, in some examples, the protruding part may be shaped as a segment of a circle or a half circle.

[0037] Additionally, in some examples, the thicker second central section of the membrane element may preferably have a smaller area than the opening. Also the thicker second central section of the membrane element may be centrally positioned over the open end of the chamber 21.

[0038] The thickness of the second central section provides for a stiffer central part of the membrane element 6 at a location where a reciprocating pump stroke motion from an actuator, such as a voice coil, a minimotor, a piston, a cam or any other mechanical device that could be used to expose the membrane element 6 to a force, is applied. When the stroke motion presses the membrane element towards the chamber 21 the downward motion of the thicker second central section will be restricted by the bevelled inner walls 20 of the chamber 21 at a position where the second central section of the membrane element 6 becomes thicker. This will decelerate the pump stroke in a progressive way. This will not only provide a silent the stop of the stroke but also reduce mechanical vibrations to a minimum.

[0039] Another advantage is that when the pump stroke reaches deeper into the chamber the actual pumping area, e.g. the effective pump area, becomes smaller but the force of the stroke is the same. Hence the pump 100 becomes stronger, i.e. is able to generate a higher pressure. This is in accordance with the equation:

$$P = F/A \quad (1)$$

[0040] where, P is the pump pressure, F is the force of the stroke and A is the effective pump area.

[0041] Further, this configuration prevents the stroke to hit the bottom of the chamber.

[0042] Depending on the desired pump characteristics the shape and the thickness 23 of the thicker section can be varied. The same applies to the design of the inner walls 20 of chamber.

[0043] Additionally, in some examples, the membrane element 6 may have a protruding brim 30. This brim 30 may be positioned at the periphery edge of the membrane element 6. Further, the pump housing 1 may have an enlarged surface surrounding the open end of the chamber 21. This enlarged surface may comprise a groove 31 to fit the protruding brim 30 of the membrane member 6. This may increase the sealing effect in the same fashion as an O-ring.

[0044] Additionally, in some examples, the enlarged surface may have an area at least the same as the area of the membrane element 6.

[0045] Fig. 2 illustrates further example of a membrane pump 200. The membrane pump 200 has a pump housing member 1 and a membrane element 32. In the illustration the pump housing member 1 and membrane element 32 may

be configured in accordance with the description to Fig. 1.

[0046] Alternatively, in some examples, the pump housing 1 and could have a chamber 21 which either has a spherical or a flat bottom surface.

[0047] The total area 27 of the membrane element 32 is an elastic membrane area 27 and the part of the membrane element 32 covering the open end of the chamber 21 is the effective pump area 28 (i.e. same as the area 25 of the open end). Additionally, in some examples, when the membrane element 32 has a centrally positioned second central section having a thickness 23 larger than a thickness 22 rest of the membrane element (see Fig 1), the effective pump area (i.e. the first central section) 28 is larger than the area 24 of the second central section.

[0048] A major difference between the design illustrated in Fig. 2 and prior art is that the membrane element 32 is not fixed at the edge of the chamber 21. Instead a portion of the membrane element 32 is slidably clamped between an enlarged surface of the pump housing 1 and a second member 5 of the pump housing 1. The second member 5 of the pump housing 1 may be a membrane fixing plate. In the area between the second member 5 of the pump housing 1 and the enlarged surface of the pump housing 1, the membrane element 32 is free to move radial and to stretch when a force is applied.

[0049] Additionally, in some examples, the membrane element 32 may be fixed at an outer diameter, for example, by a protruding brim 30 fitted into a groove 31 at the enlarged surface of the pump housing 1. In the area between the fixing point and the pump chamber 21 the membrane element 32 is in this configuration still able to freely move radially and stretch.

[0050] By letting a portion of the membrane element 32 slide between two flat surfaces of the enlarged surface of the pump housing 1 and the second member 5 an elastic area 27 which is larger than the actual effective pump area 28 is used. This allows the membrane element 32 to stretch more, i.e. enabling a longer stroke, hence more volume per stroke.

[0051] The slideably clamped portion of the membrane element 32 is located between the membrane fixing point (i.e. an outer edge) and the chamber 21. When keeping the length of the stroke, the same pump volume can be maintained with less stretching which may increase the membrane fatigue life due to less fatigue stress levels. Also, the elastic resistance of the membrane element 32 may consume less of the available pumping force when comparing a pump of a design illustrated in Fig 2 with a prior art pump, both having same pump chamber size. The same effect would also be achieved if a flat membrane element would have been used instead of a membrane element with a thicker mid section as illustrated in the figures.

[0052] The material of the pump housing 1 and the second pump housing member 5 should have low friction and be stiff. Some examples of materials are polymer, metal or composite materials.

[0053] A problem with having a flat membrane surface meeting a concave spherical surface or a flat surface is that the meeting between these two will generate noise and the pump stroke movement will stop instantly causing mechanical vibrations. By designing the shape of the pump chamber 21 to have wall being conical or with one or more radii positioned in the area where the membrane element 32 becomes stiffer (thicker) it is possible to decelerate the pump stroke in a progressive way. This will make the stops, when the membrane element is in its end positions silent and also reduces the mechanical vibrations due to the progressive motion deceleration.

[0054] Additionally and/or alternatively, by designing the edge of the second pump housing member 5 (i.e. membrane fixing plate) to be conical or with one or more radii positioned in the area where the membrane element 32 becomes stiffer (thicker) it may also be possible to decelerate the pump stroke in a progressive way. This will make the stops, when the membrane element is in its turning point silent and also reduces the mechanical vibrations due to the progressive motion deceleration.

[0055] Depending on the desired pump characteristic and the obtainable amount of force, the shape of the cavity and membrane fixing plate wall may be designed in many different ways, a straight chamfer, a convex or concave radii etc.

[0056] Additionally, in some examples of a pump 200 according to the illustration of Fig. 2 a preferred ratio between the area 27 of the elastic membrane element to the effective pump area 28, defined by the previous equation 1, is between 1.5 to 10. The longer a stroke is the larger the difference between the two areas has to be.

[0057] Fig. 3 illustrates a cross-sectional view of an example of a membrane pump 300. The membrane pump 300 comprises a membrane element 33 (according to any of the herein disclosed configurations) and a pump housing 1, and optional second housing member 5 (e.g. membrane fixing plate) and a pump chamber 21. In this example, the pump chamber 21 has bevelled walls to abutting the area where the membrane element 33 becomes thicker. Hence decelerate the pump stroke in a progressive way.

[0058] The pump further comprises a pump head 12. In this example, the pump head 12 is abutting the second central section of the membrane element 33. Alternatively, in some examples, the pump head may be mechanically attached to the top of second central section, such as inserted into the second central section or a screw could be used to screw secure them together. When using a pump head 12 abutting the top of the second central section an adhesive may be used between the top of the second central section and the abutting area of the pump head 12 to affix the two members.

[0059] Examples of adhesives may be, glue, sticky tape, etc.

[0060] In this example depicted in Fig 3, the actuator exerting a force on the membrane element 33 is a voice coil.

The voice coil is used to transmit a reciprocating stroke motions by the pump head 12 to the membrane element 33. Specifically, the voice coil may be a cylindrical voice coil.

[0061] In one example, the coil 13 is a circular cylinder structure, which is fixed on the pump head 12 and placed in an air gap. The air gap is enclosed by a magnetic cup with conical bottom 7, a conical magnet 8, such as a permanent magnet, and a one side conical pole shoe 9.

[0062] Additionally, in order to maximize the utilization of the magnetic field in the air gap and reduce the size of the pump 300, the coil 13 may be a skeletonless coil, entwined by self-adhesive lining. This design may take advantage of the limit space of the air gap, hence it's possible to design smaller membrane pumps 300.

[0063] In the example illustrated in Fig. 3, the magnet cup with a conical bottom 7 is positioned as an inverted M-shape. The contact surface between the conical pole shoe 9, the conical magnet 8 and the contact surface between the conical magnet and conical bottom of the magnet cup 7 are all tapered. The tapered surfaces are tapered in the same direction. Such structure increases the side area of the conical pole shoe 9, making the magnetic field in the air gap distribute evenly radially.

[0064] This design allows for a larger magnet, better distribution of the magnetic flux inside the pole shoe 9. Further, the conical shape provides better support for the free shaft of the pump head 12 without adding any volume outside of the cylinder volume. Thus the magnetic field is as large as possible when the coil 13 works in the air gap.

[0065] In Fig 3, the working principle of the membrane pump 300 is: the coil 13 positioned in the magnetic field formed by the one side conical pole shoe 9, the conical magnet 8 and the magnet cup with conical bottom 7. When an alternating voltage is transmitted to the coil 13, the coil 13 will produce an alternating ampere force to drive the pump head 12 in reciprocating linear motion.

[0066] The pump cycle will produce a cycle of positive and negative pressure in the pump chamber 21. When pressure in the sealed room is negative, fluid will move through a pump inlet into the chamber 21. When pressure in the sealed room is positive, the pump 300 will move fluid out through an outlet.

[0067] In the example illustrated in Fig 3, a small voice coil is adopted to drive membrane to do linear motion so that large transmission mechanisms are eliminated. Thus the size of the membrane pump 300 is reduced. The voice coil does not affect the working life of the pump 300, because the voice coil does not comprise structures that are easily worn out. The voice coil drives the membrane element 33 directly without the process of transforming motion to another; hence no intermediate energy is consumed. Further, there is no starting torque problem; hence the pump 300 may start almost instantly by applying a small voltage. The voice coil therefore also output a force or a displacement of the pump head 12 to collect a small volume of fluid even at small driving voltage or current.

[0068] Also, the reciprocating motion of the pump head 12 is controlled by controlling the frequency of the voltage. Because the magnitude of reciprocating motion is dependent to the amplitude of the current, the collected flow size may be easily controlled by adjusting the amplitude of the voltage to the voice coil.

[0069] While several embodiments of the present invention have been described and illustrated herein, those of ordinary skill in the art will readily envision a variety of other means and/or structures for performing the functions and/or obtaining the results and/or one or more of the advantages described herein, and each of such variations and/or modifications is deemed to be within the scope of the present invention. More generally, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that all parameters, dimensions, materials, and configurations described herein are meant to be exemplary and that the actual parameters, dimensions, materials, and/or configurations will depend upon the specific application or applications for which the teachings of the present invention is/are used.

Claims

1. A pump comprising a membrane element and a pump housing having a chamber with bevelled inner walls, said chamber comprises an open end having a third area; said membrane element has a first area, and comprises a central section with a second area which is surrounded by a periphery section, wherein said central section is thicker than said periphery section; further, said second area of said central section is smaller than said third area of said open end of said chamber and said membrane element is arrangable over said pump housing forming a sealed chamber, whereby said central section of said membrane element is arranged over said open end, and said thickness of said central section is shaped to protrude away from said chamber.
2. The pump element of claim 1, wherein said central section has a circular shape.
3. The pump element of claim 1 or 2, wherein said membrane is made of an elastic material.
4. The pump of claim 3, wherein said material is rubber and/or is selected from a list including: Chloroprene, EPDM, FKM/FPM, Silicon, TPE or nitrile.

5. The pump of any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the thickness ratio between said central section to said periphery section is between 2 to 15.
6. The pump of any of claims 1 to 5, wherein said membrane element has a protruding brim.
7. The pump element according to any of claims 1 to 6, wherein said central section has bevelled outer walls with a base larger than a top section, such as a truncated cone.
8. The pump according to any of claims 1 to 7, wherein said central section and said chamber both have circular shapes.
9. The pump according to claims 1 to 8, wherein said bevelled inner walls are straight, or concave, or convex, or have two or more radii, or have a sinoidal shape, or be of shaped as a polynomial of higher order.
10. The pump according to any of claims 1 to 9, wherein said membrane element has an effective pump area with an area substantially the same as said third area of said open end of said chamber.
11. The pump according to any of claims 1 to 10, wherein said pump housing has an enlarged surface surrounding said open end of said chamber with an area with at least the same size as said membrane element.
12. The pump according to claim 11, wherein said membrane element is slidably clamped between said enlarged surface of said pump housing and a second member of said pump housing.
13. The pump according to any of claims 11 to 12, wherein said enlarged surface comprises a groove to fit said protruding brim of said membrane member.
14. A method for progressive pump force regulation, comprising:
providing a pump according to any of claim 1 to 13;
applying a reciprocating stroke motion on said central section of said membrane element; and
wherein said motion is restricted by said bevelled inner walls of said chamber at a position where said central section of said membrane element becomes thicker.
15. Use of a pump according to any of claim 1 to 14 for patient monitoring, breath monitoring, anaesthesia monitoring.

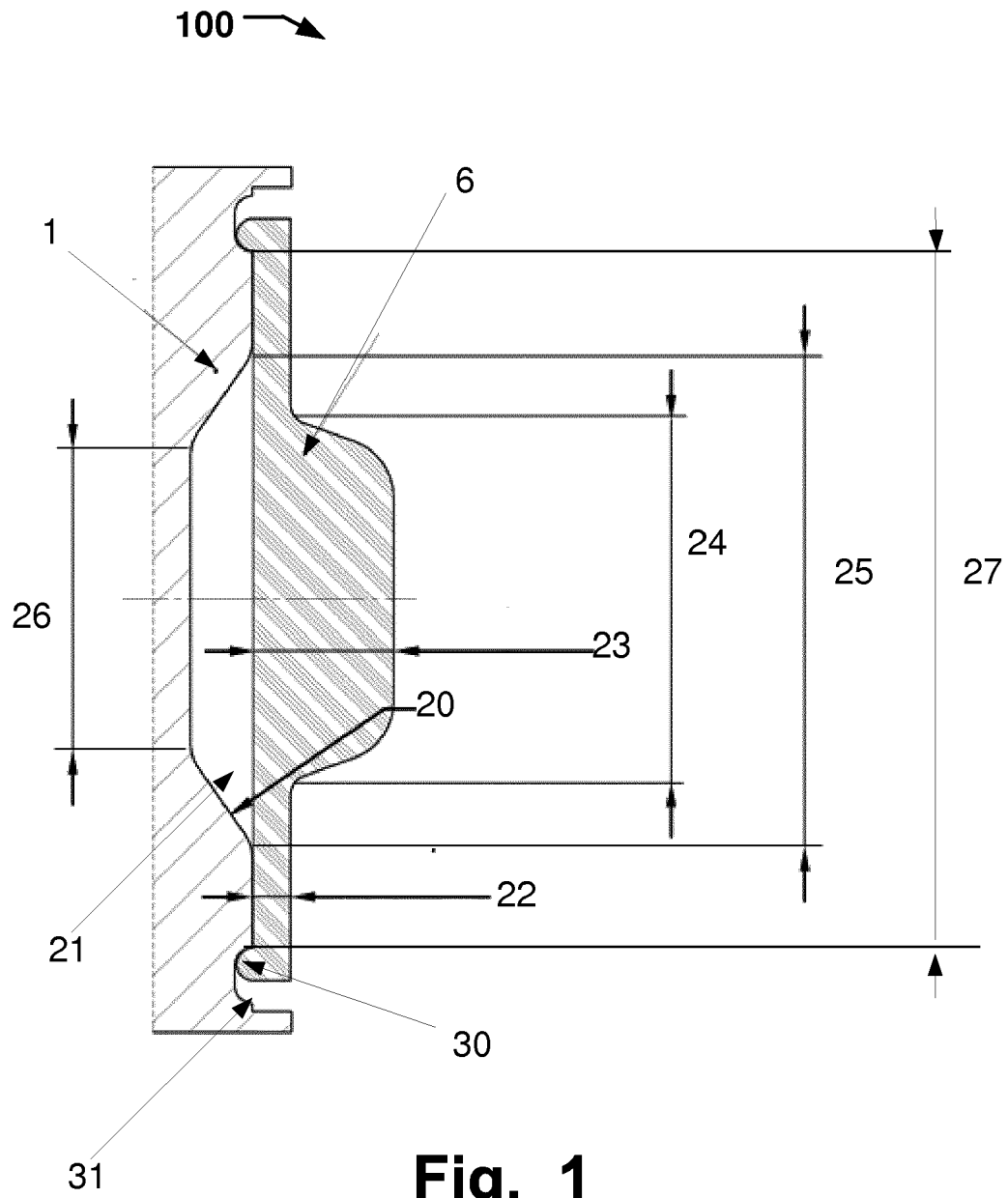
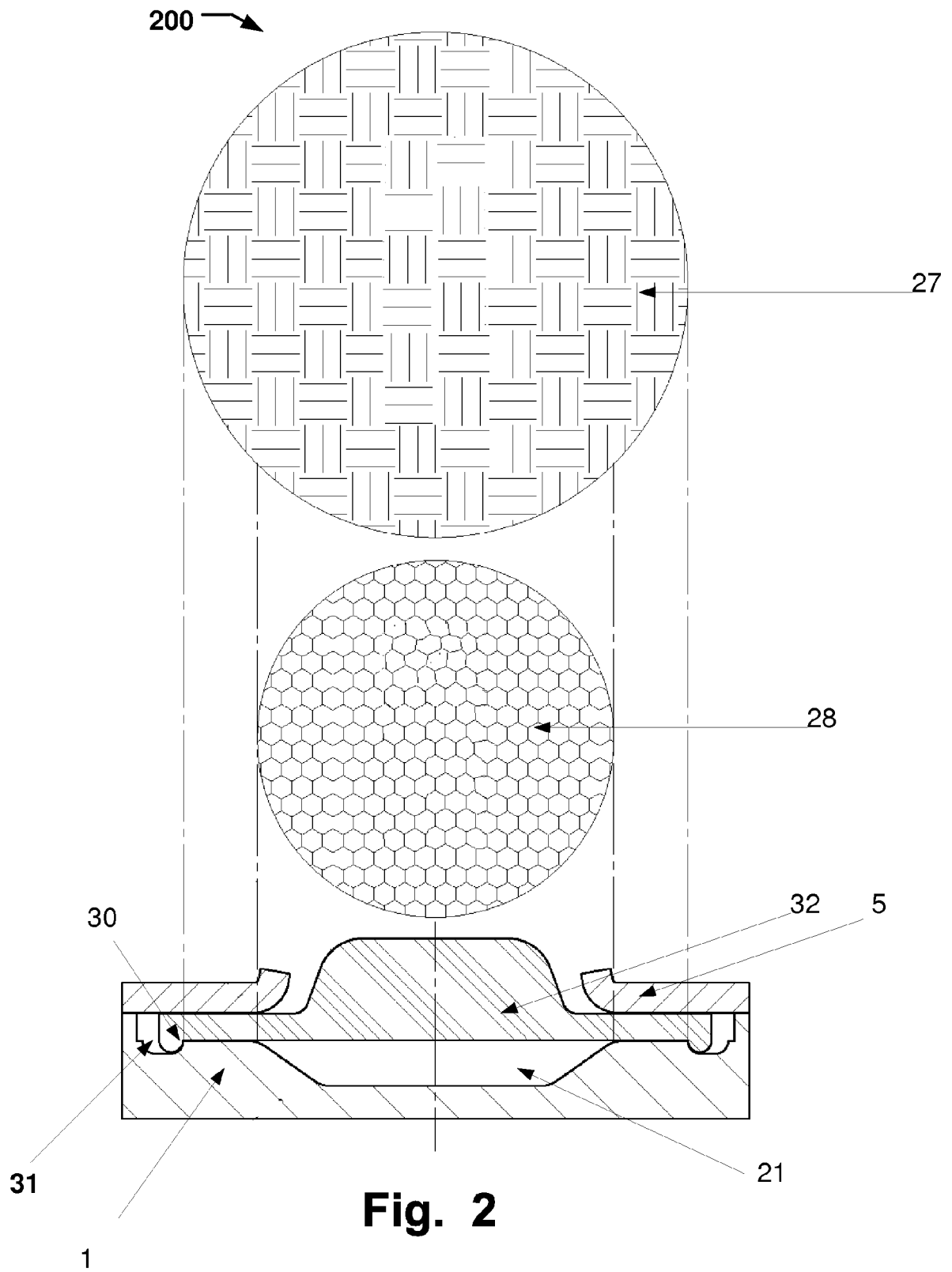


Fig. 1



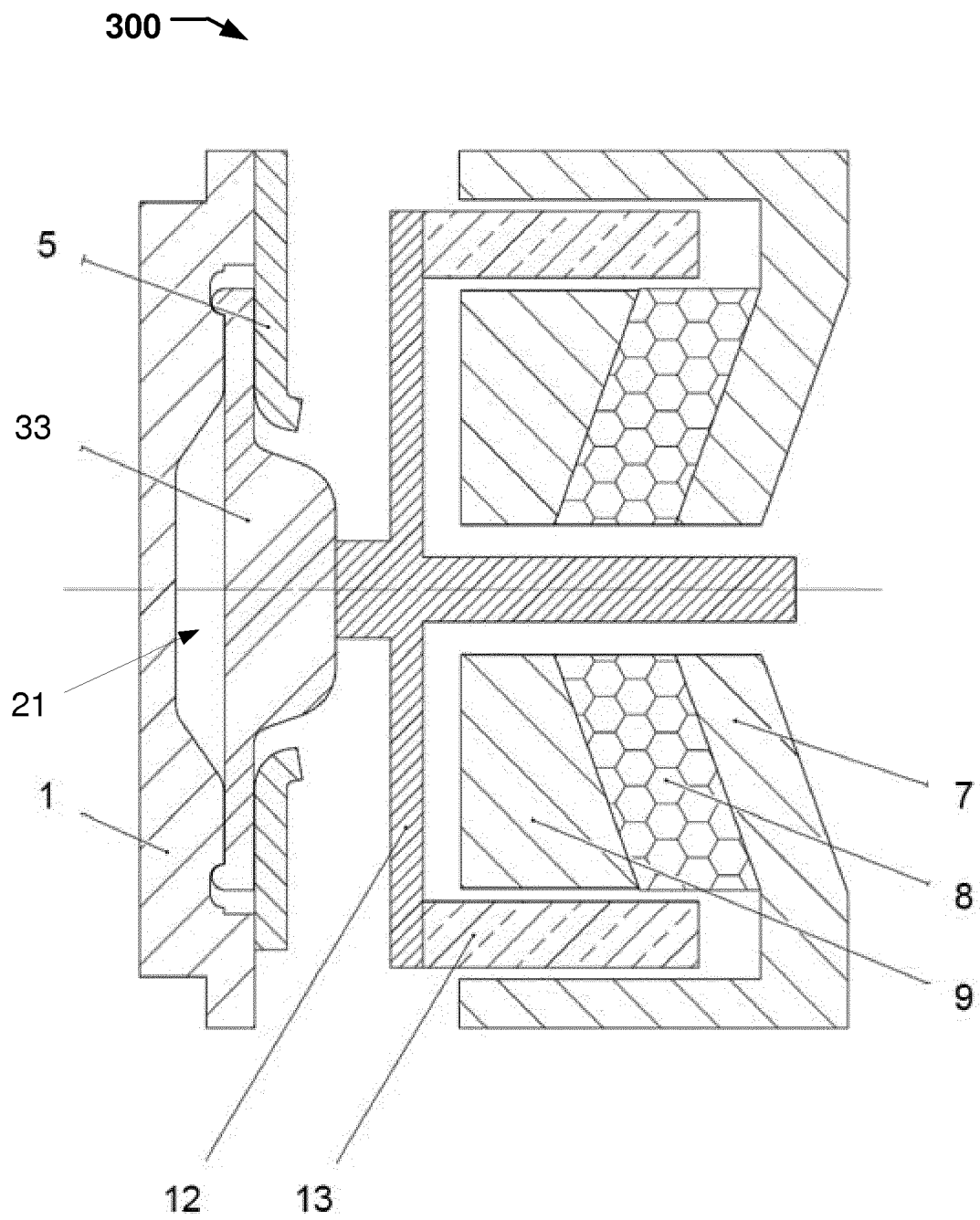


Fig. 3



EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 13 19 3067

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CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

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EPO FORM 1503 03.82 (P04C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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EP 13 19 3067

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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