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(54) APPARATUS FOR HOLDING, SECURING AND STYLING HAIR

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APPAREIL PERMETTANT DE RETENIR, DE FIXER ET DE COIFFER LES CHEVEUX

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Description

BACKGROUND

[0001] The present invention relates to apparatus for holding, securing and styling hair.

[0002] Women have many alternative hair styles they use to present themselves in public. Among these is the use of a hair bun and a pony tail formed at the back of a woman's head, a headband to hold hair across the top of a woman's head, and hair extensions secured to a woman's hair. There is a desire to have such buns, pony tails, headbands and extensions enhanced with functional and decorative holders that can be used in forming and maintaining such styles.

[0003] US 6401726 shows a device and accessory for styling hair in a bun or a French knot. The device includes a long body portion which is rubber and includes a slit for receiving the hair. The device also includes clasp portions at the ends which can be closed for use. In use, the device holds the hair against a user's head in a bun or French knot arrangement.

SUMMARY

[0004] A hair styling accessory not according to the invention includes a flexible body portion capable of forming a loop around hair of a wearer. The flexible body has a first diameter in a central portion thereof. A ball portion is located at a first end of the flexible body and has a ball diameter greater than the first diameter. A receptacle portion is located at a second end of the flexible body and is configured to receive the ball portion therethrough. An eyelet is located between the first end and the second end of the flexible body and has an inner diameter configured to receive the ball portion therethrough upon application of a force. A decorative element may be secured to the flexible body via an aperture therein configured to receive the flexible body therethrough.

[0005] A ponytail holder apparatus according to the present invention comprises a flexible body having a length and having a height for extending along a height of a ponytail of the wearer's hair. The flexible body has a slot for receiving the wearer's hair therethrough to anchor the body in the wearer's hair. The flexible body includes a flexible foam material layer and a flexible decorative layer attached to the flexible foam material layer. The flexible decorative layer includes a backing layer that holds a plurality of miniature crystals providing a faceted appearance. At least one pair of securing mechanisms are provided for closing the body in a wrapped position around the ponytail of the wearer's hair. The flexible body height provides column stiffness that allows hair to be held in a ponytail in a direction extending away from the head.

[0006] A hair styling accessory not according to the present invention includes a flexible body having first and second opposite ends and a gap in a central portion be-

tween the first and second ends that separates the body into first and second side members, the gap being configured to receive hair therethrough. The flexible body is covered with a synthetic hair-like material. First and second clasp members are located at the first and second ends of the flexible body, and are configured to clasp together upon closing the flexible body into a rounded loop shape so as to hold hair in a bun configuration. A decorative hair element made up of braided hair-like pieces extends along the first and second side members of the flexible body. The decorative hair element is secured at its ends to the flexible body.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007]

FIG. 1 is a diagram illustrating a bun holder in an open position not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a diagram illustrating the bun holder of FIG. 1 in a closed position.

FIG. 3 is a diagram illustrating a bun anchor not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4A is a diagram illustrating an accessory holder not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4B is a diagram illustrating a hair pin not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4C is a diagram illustrating a hair accessory not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4D is a diagram illustrating a hair accessory not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 5 is a diagram illustrating a headband not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 6 is a diagram illustrating a ponytail extender in an open position according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 7 is a diagram illustrating the ponytail extender of FIG. 6 in a closed position.

FIG. 8 is a diagram illustrating a hair extension securing apparatus in an open position not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 9 is a diagram illustrating the hair extension apparatus of FIG. 8 in a closed position.

FIG. 10 is a diagram illustrating a bun anchor not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 11, 12 and 13 are diagrams illustrating a bun holder similar in configuration to the bun holder shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, composed of a rubber-like material.

FIGS. 14 and 15 are diagrams illustrating a headband similar in configuration to the headband shown in FIG. 5, composed of a rubber-like material.

FIGS. 16 and 17 are diagrams illustrating a ponytail

extender similar to the ponytail extender shown in FIGS. 6 and 7, composed of a rubber-like material. FIG. 18 is a diagram of a hair accessory not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 19A and 19B are photographs of a hair styling accessory not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 19C and 19D are diagrams illustrating various embodiments of the hair styling accessory shown in FIGS. 19A and 19B.

FIG 20A is a photograph of a hair styling accessory having a hair extension attached.

FIG. 20B is a diagram of a removable mounting button for attaching a hair extension to a hair styling accessory.

FIG. 21 is a photograph of a hair styling accessory having a hair extensions attached.

FIG. 22 is a photograph of a bun anchor having an insertable hair piece not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 23 is a photograph of a ponytail extender including an attached hair extension not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 24 is a diagram illustrating a fastening mechanism for use in many of the designs not according to embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 25 is a diagram illustrating a hair accessory not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 26 is a photograph illustrating the hair accessory of FIG. 25 having a decorative element secured thereto.

FIG. 27 is a photograph illustrating the hair accessory of FIG. 25 having another decorative element secured thereto.

FIG. 28 is a top view, and FIG. 29 is a bottom view, of a ponytail holder/extender according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 30 and 31 are photographs of a hair styling accessory not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 32A-32E are diagrams illustrating a hair styling accessory not according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0008] FIGS. 1 and 2 illustrate bun holder 10 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Bun holder 10 includes first member 12 and second member 14 attached to each other at first end 16 and second end 18 of bun holder 10. First member 12 is longer than second member 14, so that bun holder 10 forms a "C" shape so that first member 12 and second member 14 separates to form gap 20 as shown in FIG. 1. Gap 20 allows hair to be inserted therethrough to anchor bun holder 10 in place in a woman's hair. Once hair is inserted through gap 20 of bun holder 10, bun holder may be curled into

a circular configuration as shown in FIG. 2, with first member 12 and second member 14 forming concentric circles. Bun holder 10 may be secured in the circular configuration by any of a plurality of fastening arrangements, including a strap 22 and button 24 (made, for example, of high density polyethylene), as shown in the exemplary embodiment of FIGS. 1 and 2, a male/female closure (made, for example, of molded plastic or die cut pieces), a clamp and extension closure, or others. The mechanism for securing bun holder 10 in a circular configuration may, in one embodiment, be located between first member 12 and second member 14, so that the securing mechanism is somewhat hidden from view when bun holder 10 is closed. Examples of suitable fastening arrangements are the WHIRL-A-STYLE™ and KLICINZ™ clasps available from Whirl-a-Style of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

[0009] In an exemplary embodiment, bun holder 10 is composed of a flexible, closed cell foam material. In some embodiments, bun holder 10 may also be covered in cloth or fabric on one or both sides, which may be plain or decorative. The configuration and construction of bun holder 10 allows bun holder 10 to be used as a perm rod in some applications. Bun holder 10 allows a "softer" curl to be produced than typical perm rods, and also is able to produce a curl that is large at the top and small at the end, which is desirable in some situations. Bun holder 10 may also be used as a curler or a hair styler, in addition to its use as a bun holder.

[0010] In some embodiments, bun holder 10 includes apertures in first member 12 and/or second member 14 for receiving decorative items such as jewelry or other accessories. For example, these accessories may take the form of POPPI™ jewelry available from Whirl-a-Style of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the apertures may be formed as clasps configured to receive this jewelry.

[0011] In an exemplary embodiment, first member 12 has a length of 7 inches (17.78 cm) and second member 14 has a length of 5.5 inches (13.97 cm), and both first member 12 and second member 14 have a width of 0.875 inches (2.22 cm). In another exemplary embodiment, first member 12 has a length of 8 inches (20.32 cm) and second member has a length of 6 inches (15.24 cm), and both first member 12 and second member 14 have a width of 1 inch (2.54 cm). In yet another exemplary embodiment, first member 12 has a length of 8.5 inches (21.59 cm) and second member 14 has a length of 7 inches (17.78 cm), and both first member 12 and second member 14 have a width of 0.875 inches (2.22 cm). In an exemplary embodiment, holes are provided in the first and second members for receiving pieces of the securing mechanism that holds bun holder 10 together in a circular configuration, such as the button and strap configuration shown in FIGS. 1 and 2. In one embodiment, these holes are 0.125 inches (0.32 cm) in diameter and are provided 0.5 inches (1.27 cm) from the ends of first member 12 and second member 14.

[0012] FIG. 3 illustrates bun anchor 30 not according

to an embodiment of the present invention. Bun anchor 30 includes mounting surface 32 and anchoring portion 34. Mounting surface 32 provides an outward facing surface for mounting of decorative items for display, such as a graphical logo, jewelry, or other accessories. Anchoring portion 34 is shown in FIG. 3 as a bendable pair of anchors as an exemplary configuration, but in other embodiments anchoring portion could be any of a number of configurations, including a plastic clip or pin, a flexible rubber loop, or others. In use, bun anchor 30 may be inserted through the circular interior of bun holder 10 (FIGS. 1 and 2) and anchored in place by anchoring portion 34, so that mounting surface 32 faces outward to display a graphical logo, jewelry, or another decorative item. Optionally, receptacle 36 may be provided on mounting surface 32 to receive accessories for securing to mounting surface 32.

[0013] FIG. 4A illustrates accessory holder 40 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Accessory holder 40 is made of a flexible material such as silicone rubber, and is sufficiently flexible to be formed into a loop, with male connector 42 and female connector 44 that are capable of mating together. Accessory holder 40 is configured with the ability to receive accessory 46, shown in FIG. 4 as a decorative flower 47 carried by mating portion 48. Mating portion 48 includes a female connector 50 and a male connector 52, so that female connector 50 can be mated to male connector 42 of accessory holder 40, and male connector 52 can be mated to female connector 44 of accessory holder 40. This configuration allows multiple accessories to be connected together and to accessory holder 40, allowing many different appearances and styles to be achieved.

[0014] In an exemplary embodiment, accessory holder 40 has a triangular cross-section, for ease of use and securing of the apparatus.

[0015] In some embodiments, decorative flower 47 (or other accessory parts of different designs) may also provide the ability for stacking of decorative pieces, connected through center portion C, optionally spaced from each other by a spacer to provide an appearance of depth. This provides further flexibility in the creation of an appearance style on accessory holder 40.

[0016] FIG. 4B illustrates hair pin 53 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Hair pin 53 is composed of a plastic material having sufficient stiffness to function as a pin in a user's hair, similar in function to a metal or plastic bobby pin. Hair pin 53 includes first member 54a and second member 54b that are wider than the pieces of a typical bobby pin, and in some embodiments, first member 54a and second member 54b have triangular cross-sections for each of use and securing of hair pin 53. Hair pin 53 also includes female socket 55 for receiving a male inserting piece to allow securing of a decorative accessory on hair pin 53. In an alternative embodiment, hair pin 53 may include a male fastener for mating with a female piece to secure a decorative accessory on hair pin 53. For example, a decorative accessory

may take the form of POPPI™ jewelry available from Whirl-a-Style of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the male/female connectors may be configured to secure this jewelry.

[0017] FIG. 4C illustrates hair accessory 56 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Hair accessory 56 includes band portion 57 and decorative portion 58. Band portion 57 is composed of a flexible material, such as a flexible thermoplastic or rubber-like material, which allows band portion 57 to stretch elastically and serve as a ponytail holder in one exemplary use. Decorative portion 58 may also be composed of a flexible material, integral with band portion 57, or may be a separate piece attached or bonded to band portion 57. In some embodiments, decorative portion 58 holds a jewel 59 or other accessory, which may be permanently attached or may be removably mounted. Additional decorative pieces may be stacked on decorative portion 58 in some embodiments, to create a three dimensional decorative effect.

[0018] FIG. 4D illustrates hair accessory HA not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Hair accessory HA has an elongated body with a socket S on one end and a keyhole K on the other, and is composed of a flexible thermoplastic or rubber-like material. In use, hair accessory HA may function as a ponytail holder, by wrapping the body of hair accessory HA around a ponytail and securing its position by inserting socket S through keyhole K. A decorative piece may be attached to socket S in a manner similar to that described above with respect to other embodiments. Socket S may be replaced with a ball in alternative embodiments, and mated with a socket attached to a decorative piece. In an exemplary embodiment, the elongated body of hair accessory HA has a round cross-section with ribs, as shown in FIG. 4D.

[0019] FIG. 5 illustrates headband 60 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Headband 60 includes flexible body 62, tying portion 64, which may be an elastic rope connected to the bottom ends of body 62, and accessories 66 attached to the bottom ends of body 62. Accessories 66 may be similar to accessory 46 described above with respect to FIG. 4.

[0020] In an exemplary embodiment, headband 60 has a length of 12-15 inches (30.48- 38.1 cm) and a width that tapers from 2 inches (5.08 cm) at the center to 0.75 inch (1.91 cm) at each end. In another exemplary embodiment, the width of headband 60 tapers from 1.5 inches (3.81 cm) at the center to 0.675 inches (1.71 cm) at each end. Headband 60 may be made of 0.1875 inch (0.48 cm) thick foam with fabric coating on one or both sides, either plain or patterned. Headband 60 may also include a one or more "button" slits near each end to accommodate jewelry or other accessories that include a backing to retain the accessories in the slits.

[0021] FIGS. 6 and 7 illustrate ponytail extender 70 according to an embodiment of the present invention. Ponytail extender 70 includes flexible body portion 72 and securing mechanisms 74 and 76, which are shown

as elastic ropes and buttons in the exemplary embodiment shown in FIGS. 6 and 7, but could be one of many other securing mechanisms. In one exemplary embodiment, hair accessory HA shown in FIG. 4D may be used to secure ponytail extender 70 by extending it through slots in body portion 72 and securing the socket and key-hole together. Slot 75 is also provided in body portion 72 for receiving the wearer's hair to anchor ponytail extender 70 in place. Flexible body portion 72 is composed of a flexible foam material, and may be cloth covered in some embodiments. Ponytail extender 70 is shown in a relaxed position in FIG. 6, and is shown in a wrapped and secured position in FIG. 7, held together by attachment mechanisms. In use, ponytail extender 70 allows a woman's hair to be held in a ponytail in a direction extending away from the head, due to the column stiffness provided by the height H of body portion 72.

[0022] In exemplary embodiments, height H of body portion 72 ranges from 1.5 inches (3.81 cm) to 3 inches (7.62 cm), and the length of body portion 72 is about 4 inches (10.16 cm) (although other dimensions are possible and envisioned within the scope of the present invention). In an exemplary embodiment, slot 78 is about 0.75 inches (1.91 cm) by 0.25 inches (0.64 cm) in size.

[0023] FIGS. 8 and 9 illustrate hair extension securing apparatus 80 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Securing apparatus 80 includes first piece 82 and second piece 84, connected together by hinge 86 and at least one elastic band 88 extending through apertures 89a and 89b in first piece 82 and second piece 84, respectively. First piece 82 is attached to hair extension 90, such as via netting 92 being secured by ties 94 extending through apertures 96 of first piece 82. First piece includes notch 97 at an end opposite hinge 86. Second piece 84 includes slot 98 configured to receive the wearer's hair for beginning to secure hair extension 90 to the hair, and also includes notch 100 (configured to match notch 97) at an end opposite hinge 86. FIG. 8 shows securing apparatus in an open position, for the wearer's hair to be inserted through slot 98 in second piece 84. Once this is done, hair extension 90 is secured to the wearer's hair by closing securing apparatus 80 as shown in FIG. 9. First piece 82 and second piece 84 are closed to face and abut one another as shown in FIG. 9, and elastic band 88 is wrapped around both first piece 82 and second piece 84 through notches 97 and 100. This securely closes securing apparatus 80 with the wearer's hair secured therein, and with hair extension 90 thereby attached to the wearer's hair in a comfortable and secure fashion.

[0024] In some embodiments, hinge 86 may be omitted, so that first piece 82 and second piece 84 are simply hinged together by elastic band 88 extending through apertures 89a and 89b. First piece 82 and second piece 84 may be made of a number of suitable materials, such as lightweight plastic, wood, rubber or a number of other materials.

[0025] FIG. 10 illustrates bun anchor 110 not according

to an embodiment of the present invention. Bun anchor 110 includes open mounting ring 112, backing support 114, and pin 116 for securing bun anchor 110 in place. In an exemplary embodiment, mounting ring 112 includes receptacles 118 for receiving accessories, decorative displays, or other pieces. Pin 116 may also include a similar receptacle 118 as well. Bun anchor 110 is usable with bun holder 10 (FIGS. 1 and 2), extending through the inner portion of bun anchor 110 and providing a surface (mounting ring 112) for mounting decorations, accessories, hair extensions, logos, or other pieces.

[0026] In an exemplary configuration of bun anchor 110, mounting ring 112 has a diameter of 1.25 inches (3.18 cm) backing support 114 has a height of 0.75 inches (1.91 cm) and pin 116 has a length of 3 inches (7.62 cm) and a span (height) of 0.25 inches (0.64 cm). Other dimensions are contemplated in other exemplary configurations and embodiments.

[0027] FIG. 11 is a diagram illustrating bun holder 200, which is similar in configuration to bun holder 10 shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, but is composed of a rubber-like material. Bun holder 200 is shown in FIG. 11 in an open position. FIG. 12 is a diagram illustrating bun holder 200 in a closed position. Bun holder 200 is generally configured and operates in the same manner as bun holder 10 shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, with the main difference being that bun holder 200 is composed of a flexible material such as a flexible, rubber-like material such as a thermoplastic elastomer. In exemplary embodiments, the two members of bun holder 200 each have a thickness that is less than the thickness of the members of bun holder 10 (FIGS. 1 and 2), so that bun holder 200 remains relatively lightweight. FIG. 13 is a diagram illustrating bun holder 200 provided with bumps 202 on its hair-facing surface, to provide volume to bun holder 200 without increasing its weight commensurately. In an exemplary embodiment, bumps 202 have a diameter and a height of about 0.0625 inches (0.16 cm), although other sizes and geometries are also contemplated.

[0028] FIG. 14 is a diagram illustrating headband 220, which is similar in configuration to headband 60 shown in FIG. 5, but is composed of a rubber-like material. Headband 220 is generally configured and operates in the same manner as headband 60 shown in FIG. 5, with the main difference being that headband 220 is composed of a flexible, rubber-like material such as a thermoplastic elastomer. In exemplary embodiments, headband 220 has a thickness that is less than the thickness of headband 60 (FIG. 5), so that headband 220 remains relatively lightweight. Headband 220 employs tensioner 222 in place of tying portion 64 (FIG. 5). FIG. 15 is a diagram showing headband tensioner 222, which is composed of a flexible, rubber-like material such as a thermoplastic elastomer, and which is configured to include two members (first member 224 and second member 226) that are interconnected with one another via a shaft of each member extending through a receptor of the other member. The diameter of the hole in each receptor is equal

to the diameter of each shaft (such as 0.125 inches (0.32 cm) in an exemplary embodiment), so that friction is provided therebetween to provide a stable length of headband tensioner 222, while allowing this length to be adjusted by manual movement of first member 224 and second member 226. Headband 220 may also be provided with bumps (not shown) on its surface, similar to those discussed above with respect to bun holder 200 (FIGS. 11-13).

FIGS. 16 and 17 are diagrams illustrating ponytail extender 240, which is similar to ponytail extender 70 shown in FIGS. 6 and 7, but is composed of a rubber-like material. Ponytail extender 240 is generally configured and operates in the same manner as ponytail extender 70 shown in FIGS. 6 and 7, with the main difference being that ponytail extender 240 is composed of a flexible, rubber-like material such as a thermoplastic elastomer. In exemplary embodiments, ponytail extender 240 has a thickness that is less than the thickness of ponytail extender 70 (FIGS. 6 and 7), so that ponytail extender 240 remains relatively lightweight. In some embodiments, ponytail extender 240 is provided with bumps 242 on its surface, to provide volume to ponytail extender 240 without increasing its weight commensurately and/or slot 243 to put a portion of hair through to anchor ponytail and to keep ponytail extender 240 from falling out of hair. In an exemplary embodiment, bumps 242 have a diameter and a height of about 0.0625 inches (0.16 cm), although other sizes and geometries are also contemplated.

[0029] FIG. 18 shows hair accessory HA' not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Hair accessory HA' is similar to hair accessory HA of FIG. 4D, and has an elongated body with a socket S' on one end and a keyhole K' on the other. In this embodiment, keyhole K' has a circular shape on one end and a rounded point on the other. Keyhole K' includes a large circular portion 250 for socket S' to go through and small circular portion 252 to lock socket S' in place. Hair accessory HA' is composed of a flexible thermoplastic or rubber-like material. In use, hair accessory HA' may function as a ponytail holder, by wrapping the body of hair accessory HA' around a ponytail and securing its position by inserting socket S' through large circular portion 250 of keyhole K' and locking it into small circular portion 252. Locking socket S' into small circular portion 252 of keyhole K' ensures that socket S' hair accessory HA' stays securely connected to keyhole K' when in use. A decorative piece may be attached to socket S' in a manner similar to that described above with respect to other embodiments.

[0030] FIGS. 19A and 19B are photographs of hair styling accessory 300 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Hair styling accessory 300 is shown in FIG. 19A in an open position, and in FIG. 19B in a closed or clasped position. Hair styling accessory 300 is configured with flexible body portion 302 having male connector 304 and female connector 306 at opposite ends. Body portion 302 has gap 308 in a central region, through which hair is pulled and then rolled and

styled as desired. Hair styling accessory 300 allows hair to be pulled back in a twist or bun without the use of bobby pins or claw clips.

[0031] In exemplary embodiments, hair styling accessory 300 is composed of a flexible, rubber-like material such as a thermoplastic elastomer. As shown in FIGS. 19A and 19B, body portion 302 of hair styling accessory 300 is covered with a synthetic hair-like material, which allows hair styling accessory 300 to blend in with a wearer's own hair when in use. The hair-like material may be tied, sewn or glued to body portion 302 of hair styling accessory 300, or woven around body portion 302. Male connector 304 and female connector 306 may, in exemplary embodiments, take the form of WHIRL-A-STYLE™ and KLICINZ™ clasps available from Whirl-a-Style of Minneapolis, Minnesota. FIGS. 19C and 19D are diagrams illustrating different sizes and geometric configurations of hair styling accessory 300 in various embodiments.

[0032] FIGS. 20A is a photograph of hair styling accessory 320 having hair extension 321 attached. Hair styling accessory 320 is configured with flexible body portion 322 having male connector 324 and female connector 326 at opposite ends, in the same general configuration as hair styling accessory 300 of FIGS. 19A and 19B. Hair styling accessory 320, similar to hair styling accessory 300 of FIGS. 19A and 19B, allows hair to be pulled back in a twist or bun without the use of bobby pins or claw clips. Hair styling accessory 320 further includes hair extension 321 attached thereto, to provide further styling involving hair extension 321, which may be braided, curled, or provided in a number of other styles. Hair extension 321 may be removably attached to hair styling accessory 320 with an elastic loop around mounting button 328, for example (as shown in FIG. 20A), or may be attached more permanently by sewing or gluing in other embodiments. In one embodiment, as shown in FIG. 20B, removable mounting button 328' may be used to attach hair extension 321, with male connector 329 insertable into female connector 326 of body portion 322 (FIG. 20A), and with female connector 326' provided for clasping with male connector 324. Reversal of the male/female relationship of connectors 326' and 329 is possible in other embodiments. FIG. 21 is a diagram illustrating a more full hair extension 331 glued to hair styling accessory 320', where hair styling accessory 320' is configured similarly to hair styling accessory 320.

[0033] Hair styling accessory 320 may also be covered with hair-like material, similar to hair styling accessory 300 described above with respect to FIGS. 19A and 19B, in some embodiments. In exemplary embodiments, hair styling accessory 300 is composed of a flexible, rubber-like material such as a thermoplastic elastomer.

[0034] FIG. 22 is a photograph of bun anchor 340 having insertable hair piece 341 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Bun anchor 340 includes open mounting ring 342 and backing support 344, and a pin (similar to pin 116 in FIG. 10) may be used to secure

bun anchor 340 in place. As described above with respect to FIG. 10, bun anchor 340 is usable with bun holder 10 (FIGS. 1 and 2) or other hair styling accessory embodiments disclosed herein, providing a mount for hair piece 341 and adding to the style provided. Hair piece 341 includes support portion 350 that is received in the interior of bun anchor 340 to removably hold hair piece 341 in bun anchor 340. Hair-like material of hair piece 341 may be attached to support portion 350 by a number of suitable methods, including tying, sewing, gluing, or others.

[0035] FIG. 23 is a photograph of ponytail extender 360 including attached hair extension 361 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Ponytail extender 360 includes flexible body portion 362 and securing mechanisms 364 and 366, which are shown as elastic ropes and buttons in the exemplary embodiment shown in FIG. 23, but could be one of many other securing mechanisms. Slot 365 is also provided in body portion 362 for receiving the wearer's hair to anchor ponytail extender 360 in place. In some embodiments, flexible body portion 362 is composed of a flexible foam material, and may be cloth covered in some embodiments, or may be covered with hair-like material in other embodiments. In other embodiments, flexible body portion 362 is formed of a plastic or rubber-like material, and again may be cloth covered or covered with hair-like material in some embodiments. In use, similar to ponytail extender 70 shown in FIGS. 6 and 7, ponytail extender 360 allows a woman's hair to be held in a ponytail in a direction extending away from the head, due to the column stiffness provided by the height of body portion 362. Ponytail extender 360 further includes hair extension 361, which is attached to body portion 362 to provide further style for the wearer. Hair extension 361 may be attached to body portion 362 by tying, sewing, gluing, or another suitable method. In other embodiments, hair extension 361 may be removably attached to body portion 362, to allow changing of hair extension 361 by a wearer.

[0036] FIG. 24 is a diagram (with a side view and opposite end views) illustrating fastening mechanism 400 for use in many of the designs described above. Fastening mechanism 400 includes first piece 402 and second piece 404 connectable together. First piece 402 is made up of first disc 410, post 412, and retaining element 414. Second piece 404 is made up of second disc 416 and tube 418. Post 412 of first piece 402 is insertable into tube 418 of second piece 404, and is retained in place by virtue of retaining element 414. Discs 410 and 416 each provide a surface to display a logo, design, pattern, or other ornamentation for branding or style augmentation, and first and second pieces 402 and 404 may be interchanged for replacement pieces in order to change the design displayed on discs 410 and 416. A hair extension may also be attached to fastening mechanism 400 in some embodiments.

[0037] In many of the designs described above, further style and ornamentation may be provided by attaching gems to the bodies of the hair styling accessories, or by

integrally forming gems in the bodies of the hair styling accessories. The gems involves may be genuine gemstones for high-end fashion products, or may be less expensive created gemstones or crystals in other embodiments to provide a more affordable, yet still fashionable, product. One example of suitable gems may be SWAROVSKI GEMS™ gemstones manufactured by Daniel Swarovski Corporation AG of Männedorf, Switzerland. Referring to FIGS. 11-13 as an example, a plurality of relatively small gems may be attached to or integrally formed on the outer surface of the body of bun holder 200 in place of bumps 202, to add eye-catching ornamentation to the product. Similarly, referring to FIGS. 16 and 17, a plurality of small gems may be attached to or integrally formed on the outer surface of the body of ponytail extender 240 in place of bumps 242. In many other designs shown in the figures of the present disclosure, gems may be added in a similar manner, either as a plurality of small gems covering a selected portion of the surface of the body of a hair styling accessory, or as a larger gem to provide a focal design element to the product. For example, a relatively large gem may be provided in place of decorative flower 47 shown in FIG. 4A as an accessory carried by accessory holder 40.

[0038] Ornamental gems may be attached to a body portion of a hair styling accessory by a number of methods, including gluing, sewing, stitching, or heat processing. In some embodiments, particularly where the hair styling accessory is composed of a plastic material, it is possible to mold the gems into the plastic as the hair styling accessory is being formed, so that the gems are integrally formed in the hair styling accessory. Providing the gems on a surface of a hair styling accessory, either by attachment or integral formation, adds an eye-catching ornamental style to the hair styling accessory that is attractive and fashionable in a variety of settings.

[0039] FIG. 25 is a diagram illustrating hair accessory 500 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Hair accessory 500 is similar to hair accessory HA shown in FIG. 4D, and may function as a ponytail holder as described above for hair accessory HA with respect to FIG. 4D. Hair accessory 500 has an elongated body with a socket 502 forming a ball portion on one end and keyhole 504 forming a receptacle portion on the other end, and is composed of a flexible thermoplastic or rubber-like material. Hair accessory 500 also includes securing eyelet 506 that provides an additional clasp mechanism to ensure that hair accessory 500 does not release its closure inadvertently while being worn.

[0040] FIG. 26 is a photograph illustrating hair accessory 500 having decorative element 510 secured thereto. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 26, decorative element 510 has apertures 512 and 514 formed therein, through which hair accessory 500 is received. In some embodiments, the fit of hair accessory 500 through apertures 512 and 514 is loose enough to allow decorative element 510 to migrate freely along the length of hair accessory 500, while in other embodiments the fit is tight so that

decorative element 510 is retained in place in a fixed position along the length of hair accessory 500, or can be moved only by the application of some amount of force. In an exemplary embodiment, decorative element 510 is a faceted gem, such as a genuine gemstone or a less expensive created gemstone or crystal. One example of a suitable gem may be a SWAROVSKI GEM™ gemstone manufactured by Daniel Swarovski Corporation AG of Männedorf, Switzerland.

[0041] FIG. 27 is a photograph illustrating hair accessory 500 having decorative element 520 secured thereto. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 27, decorative element 520 has aperture 522 formed therein, through which hair accessory 500 is received. Aperture 522 may simply be a hole formed through decorative element, or may be provided by a ring of metal or another structural material around which decorative element 520 is attached or formed. In some embodiments, the fit of hair accessory 500 through aperture 522 is loose enough to allow decorative element 520 to migrate freely along the length of hair accessory 500, while in other embodiments the fit is tight so that decorative element 520 is retained in place in a fixed position along the length of hair accessory 500, or can be moved only by the application of some amount of force. In an exemplary embodiment, decorative element 520 is a faceted gem, such as a genuine gemstone or a less expensive created gemstone or crystal. One example of a suitable gem may be a SWAROVSKI GEM™ gemstone manufactured by Daniel Swarovski Corporation AG of Männedorf, Switzerland. In some em-

bodiment, multiple decorative elements may be employed on the same hair accessory, either connected together or independently secured to hair accessory 500.

[0042] FIG. 27 illustrates the additional clasping security provided by eyelet 506. Hair accessory is clasped by inserting socket 502 through keyhole 504. The clasp may be further secured by inserting socket 502 through eyelet 506 as well, as shown in FIG. 27. Eyelet 506 has an aperture sized to require an amount of force for socket 502 to pass through it, which helps to prevent inadvertent opening of the clasp when hair accessory 500 is being worn.

[0043] FIG. 28 is a top view, and FIG. 29 is a bottom view, of ponytail holder/extender 550 according to an embodiment of the present invention. Ponytail holder/extender 550 is similar to ponytail extender 70 shown in FIGS. 6 and 7, although the embodiment shown in FIGS. 28 and 29 has only one set of securing mechanisms (ponytail extender 70 in FIGS. 6 and 7 has two sets of securing mechanisms). Ponytail extender 550 includes flexible body portion 552 and securing mechanism 554, which is shown as an elastic rope and button in the exemplary embodiment shown in FIGS. 28 and 29, but could be one of many other securing mechanisms. Slot 555 is also provided in body portion for receiving the wearer's hair to anchor ponytail extender 550 in place. Flexible body portion 552 is composed of two layers - flexible foam material layer 556 and flexible decorative

layer 558. Decorative layer 558 may be attached to foam material layer 556 by a mechanical process such as gluing or sewing in some embodiments, or may be heat adhered to foam material layer in other embodiments. In an exemplary embodiment, decorative layer includes a thin plastic backing layer that holds a plurality of miniature crystals, in order to provide a faceted or sparkling appearance. The crystals may be SWAROVSKI GEM™ gemstones manufactured by Daniel Swarovski Corporation AG of Männedorf, Switzerland in some embodiments.

[0044] FIGS. 30 and 31 are photographs of hair styling accessory 600 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Hair styling accessory 600 is similar to hair styling accessory 300 shown in FIGS. 19A-19D, except that synthetic hair is provided on hair styling accessory 600 in a different manner. Hair styling accessory 600 is configured with flexible body portion 602 having male connector 604 and female connected 606 at opposite ends. Body portion 602 has gap 608 in a central region, through which hair is pulled and then rolled and styled as desired. In an exemplary embodiment, hair styling accessory 600 is composed of a flexible, rubber-like material such as a thermoplastic elastomer.

[0045] As shown in FIGS. 30 and 31, body portion 602 of hair styling accessory 600 is covered with a synthetic hair-like material, which allows hair styling accessory 600 to blend in with a wearer's own hair when in use. The hair-like material may be tied, sewn or glued to body portion 602, or wrapped or woven around body portion 602. In addition, as shown in the embodiment of FIGS. 30 and 31, decorative hair element 610 may be secured to hair styling accessory 600 to provide an additional stylish or fashionable appearance. In the example shown in FIGS. 30 and 31, decorative hair element 610 is made up of braided hair-like pieces extending along each side of body portion 602 that are secured at each end by wrapped hair-like fixtures 612. Other decorative configurations may be employed in other embodiments.

[0046] FIGS. 32A-32E are diagrams illustrating hair styling accessory 650 not according to an embodiment of the present invention. Hair styling accessory 650 is similar to hair styling accessory 600 shown in FIGS. 30 and 31, except that synthetic hair is provided to hair styling accessory 650 in a different manner. FIG. 32A shows the structural configuration of hair styling accessory 650, with flexible body portion 652 having male connector 654 and female connected 656 at opposite ends. Body portion 652 has gap 658 in a central region, through which hair is pulled and then rolled and styled as desired. Protrusions 659 extend from an outer side of body portion 652. In an exemplary embodiment, hair styling accessory 650 is composed of a flexible, rubber-like material such as a thermoplastic elastomer.

[0047] FIGS. 32B-32E illustrate a configuration for securing decorative hair element 660 to hair styling accessory 650. Decorative hair element 660 includes sleeve 662 at one end (attached to the synthetic hair or other

material forming decorative hair element 660), having aperture 664 extending therethrough. Male connector 654 is inserted through aperture 664 of sleeve 662 (as shown by the arrow in FIG. 32C) to extend through as shown in FIG. 32D. Decorative hair element 660 is also secured to body portion 652 by protrusions 659. A sleeve may also be secured to female connector 656 at the opposite end of hair styling accessory 650, as shown by sleeve 662' in FIG. 32E. This configuration provides a wearer with the ability to selectively attach, remove and replace a plurality of decorative elements to achieve a number of different styles.

[0048] Although the present invention has been described with reference to preferred embodiments, workers skilled in the art will recognize that changes may be made in form and detail without departing from the scope of the invention.

Claims

1. A ponytail holder apparatus (70, 550) comprising:

a flexible body (72, 552) having a length and having a height (H) for extending along a height of a ponytail of a wearer's hair, the body having a slot (75, 555) for receiving the wearer's hair therethrough to anchor the body in the wearer's hair,
at least one pair of securing mechanisms (74, 76, 554) for closing the body in a wrapped position around the ponytail of the wearer's hair; the flexible body comprising a flexible foam material layer (556); and

a flexible decorative layer (558) attached to the flexible foam material layer, the flexible decorative layer including a backing layer that holds a plurality of miniature crystals providing a faceted appearance; and the flexible body height (H) provides column stiffness that allows hair to be held in a ponytail in a direction extending away from the head.

2. The ponytail holder apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one pair of securing mechanisms (74, 76, 554) comprises elastic ropes and buttons on opposite sides of the length of the body.

3. The ponytail holder apparatus of any of claims 1-2, wherein the flexible decorative layer (558) is attached to the flexible foam material layer (556) by gluing, sewing, or heat adhering.

4. The ponytail holder apparatus of any of claims 1-3, wherein the height (H) of the flexible body (72, 552) is 3.8 cm (1.5 inches) to 7.6 cm (3 inches).

5. The ponytail holder apparatus of any of claims 1-4, wherein the at least one pair of securing mechanisms (74, 76, 554) for closing the body in a wrapped position around the ponytail of the wearer's hair comprises two pairs of securing mechanisms (74, 76, 554).

Patentansprüche

1. Pferdeschwanzhaltevorrichtung (70, 550), umfassend:

einen flexiblen Körper (72, 552) mit einer Länge und mit einer Höhe (H), die sich entlang einer Höhe eines Pferdeschwanzes eines Haars einer Trägerin erstreckt, wobei der Körper einen Schlitz (75, 555) zum Aufnehmen des Haars der Trägerin aufweist, um den Körper im Haar der Trägerin zu verankern,
mindestens ein Paar von Sicherungsmechanismen (74, 76, 554) zum Schließen des Körpers in einer Position, in der er um den Pferdeschwanz des Haars der Trägerin geschlungen ist;

wobei der flexible Körper eine flexible Schaummaterialschicht (556) umfasst; und

eine flexible dekorative Schicht (558), die an der flexiblen Schaummaterialschicht befestigt ist, wobei die flexible dekorative Schicht eine Unterlagsschicht enthält, die mehrere Miniaturkristalle hält, wodurch ein facettenartiges Aussehen verliehen wird; und

die Höhe (H) des flexiblen Körpers eine Säulensteifheit verleiht, die ermöglicht, dass Haar in einem Pferdeschwanz in einer Richtung gehalten wird, die sich vom Kopf weg erstreckt.

2. Pferdeschwanzhaltevorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, wobei das zumindest eine Paar von Sicherungsmechanismen (74, 76, 554) elastische Seile und Knöpfe an gegenüberliegenden Seiten der Länge des Körpers umfasst.

3. Pferdeschwanzhaltevorrichtung nach einem der Ansprüche 1-2, wobei die flexible dekorative Schicht (558) an der flexiblen Schaummaterialschicht (556) durch Kleben, Nähen oder Wärmehaftung befestigt ist.

4. Pferdeschwanzhaltevorrichtung nach einem der Ansprüche 1-3, wobei die Höhe (H) des flexiblen Körpers (72, 552) 3,8 cm (1,5 Inch) bis 7,6 cm (3 Inch) beträgt.

5. Pferdeschwanzhaltevorrichtung nach einem der Ansprüche 1-4, wobei das zumindest eine Paar von Sicherungsmechanismen (74, 76, 554) zum Schließen

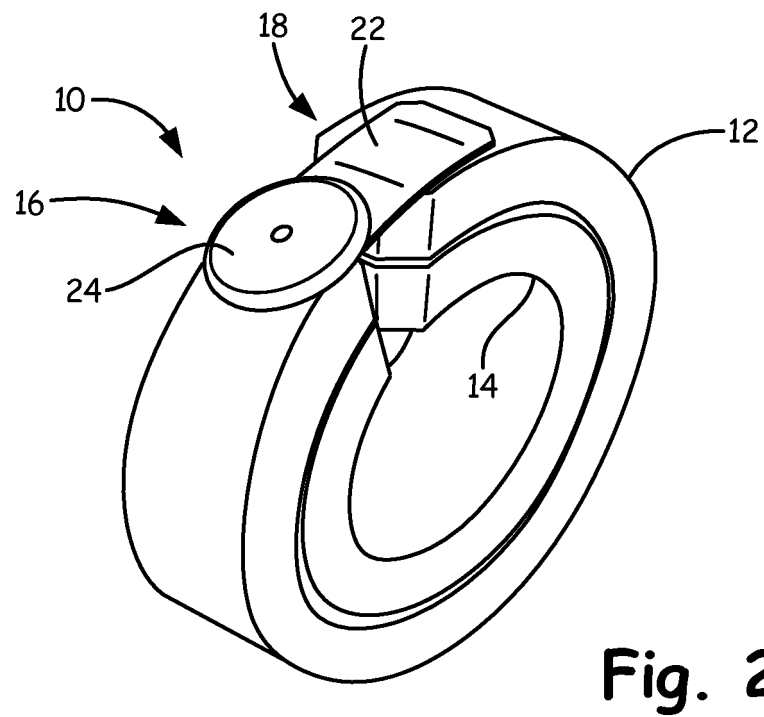
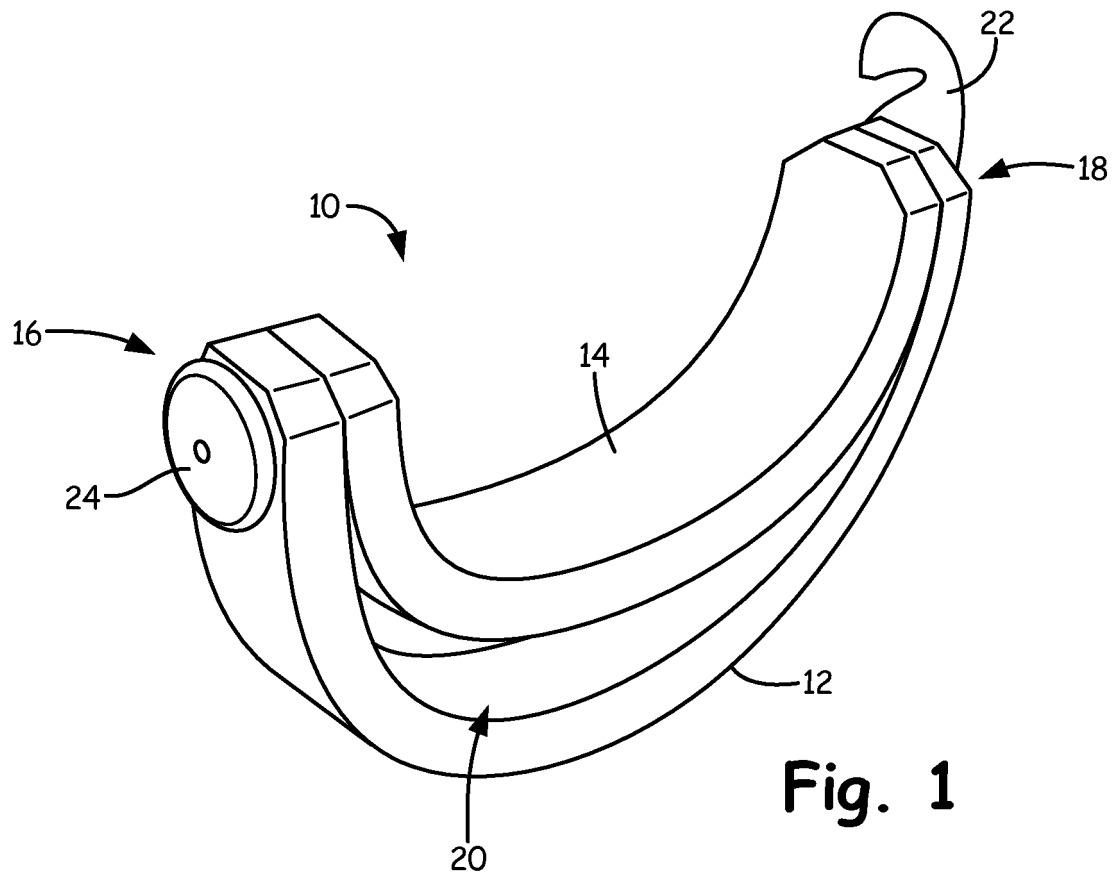
ßen des Körpers in einer um den Pferdeschwanz des Haars einer Trägerin geschlungenen Position zwei Paare von Sicherungsmechanismen (74, 76, 554) umfasst.

5

selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, dans lequel l'au moins une paire de mécanismes de fixation (74, 76, 554) pour fermer le corps à une position enveloppée autour de la queue de cheval des cheveux de la personne qui le porte comprend deux paires de mécanismes de fixation (74, 76, 554).

Revendications

1. Appareil permettant de retenir une queue de cheval (70, 550) comprenant : 10
 - un corps souple (72, 552) présentant une longueur et présentant une hauteur (H) pour s'étendre le long d'une hauteur d'une queue de cheval de cheveux d'une personne qui le porte, le corps comportant une fente (75, 555) pour recevoir les cheveux de la personne qui le porte à travers celle-ci pour ancrer le corps dans les cheveux de la personne qui le porte, 15
 - au moins une paire de mécanismes de fixation (74, 76, 554) pour fermer le corps à une position enveloppée autour de la queue de cheval des cheveux de la personne qui le porte ; 20
 - le corps souple comprenant : 25
 - une couche de matériau de mousse souple (556) ; et
 - une couche décorative souple (558) attachée à la couche de matériau de mousse souple, 30
 - la couche décorative souple comprenant une couche de support qui maintient une pluralité de cristaux miniatures donnant une apparence de facettes ; et
 - la hauteur de corps souple (H) fournit une rigidité de colonne permettant aux cheveux d'être maintenus dans une queue de cheval dans un sens s'étendant à l'écart de la tête. 35
2. Appareil permettant de retenir une queue de cheval selon la revendication 1, dans lequel l'au moins une paire de mécanismes de fixation (74, 76, 554) comprend des cordes élastiques et des boutons sur des côtés opposés de la longueur du corps. 40
3. Appareil permettant de retenir une queue de cheval selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 et 2, dans lequel la couche décorative souple (558) est attachée à la couche de matériau de mousse souple (556) par collage, par couture ou par adhérence à la chaleur. 45
4. Appareil permettant de retenir une queue de cheval selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3, dans lequel la hauteur (H) du corps souple (72, 552) est de 3,8 cm (1,5 pouce) à 7,6 cm (3 pouces). 50
5. Appareil permettant de retenir une queue de cheval 55



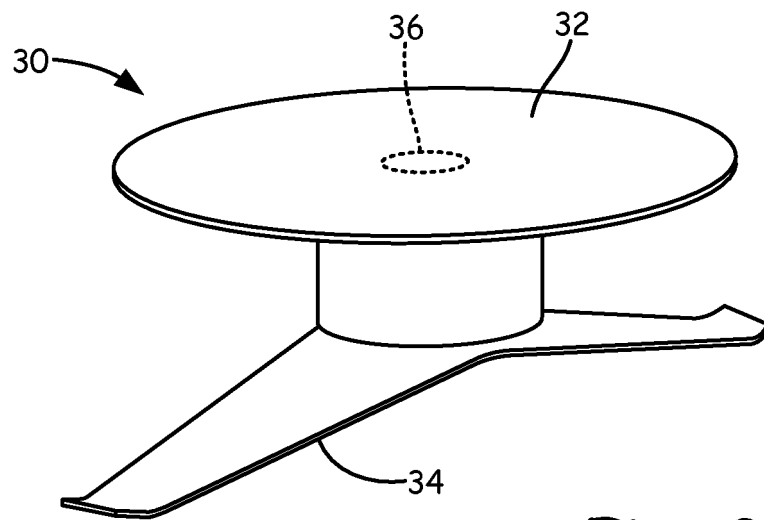


Fig. 3

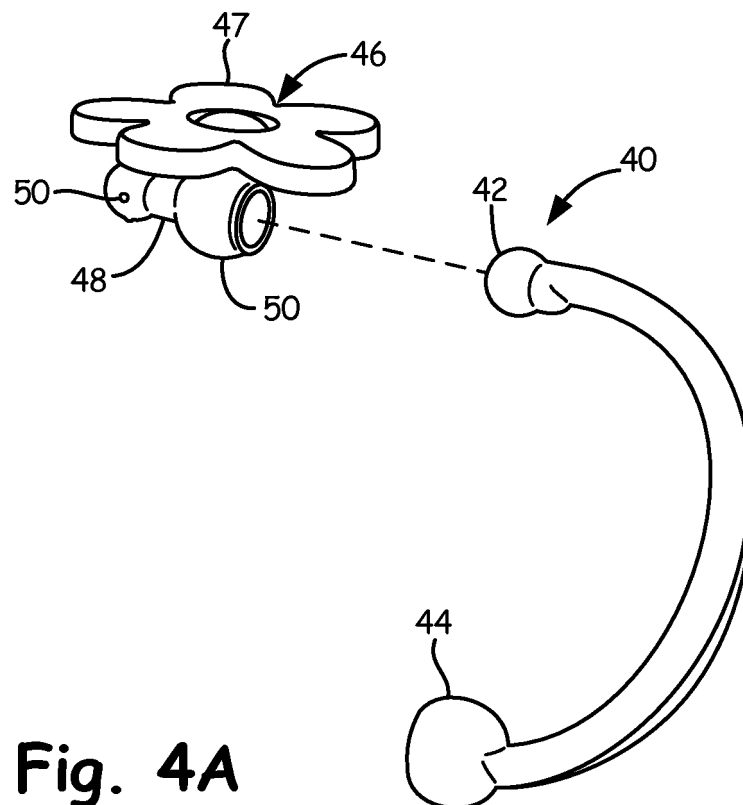


Fig. 4A

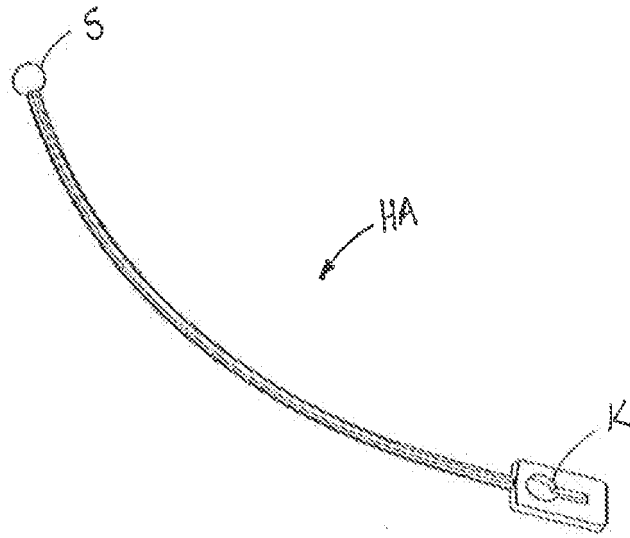


Fig. 4D

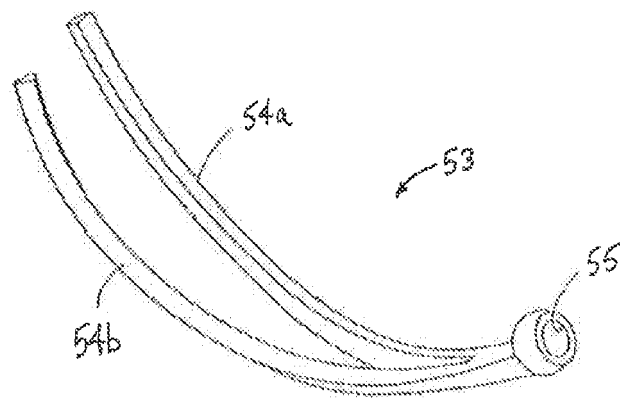


Fig. 4B

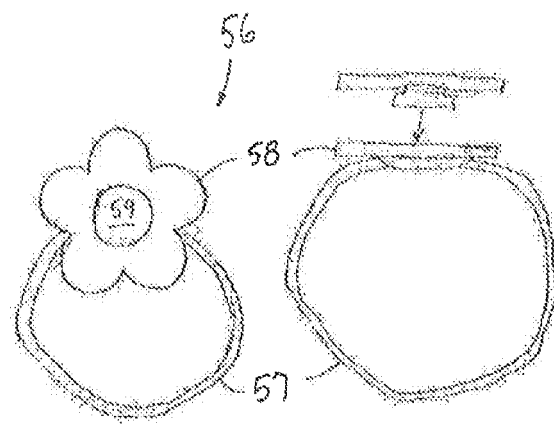


FIG. 4C

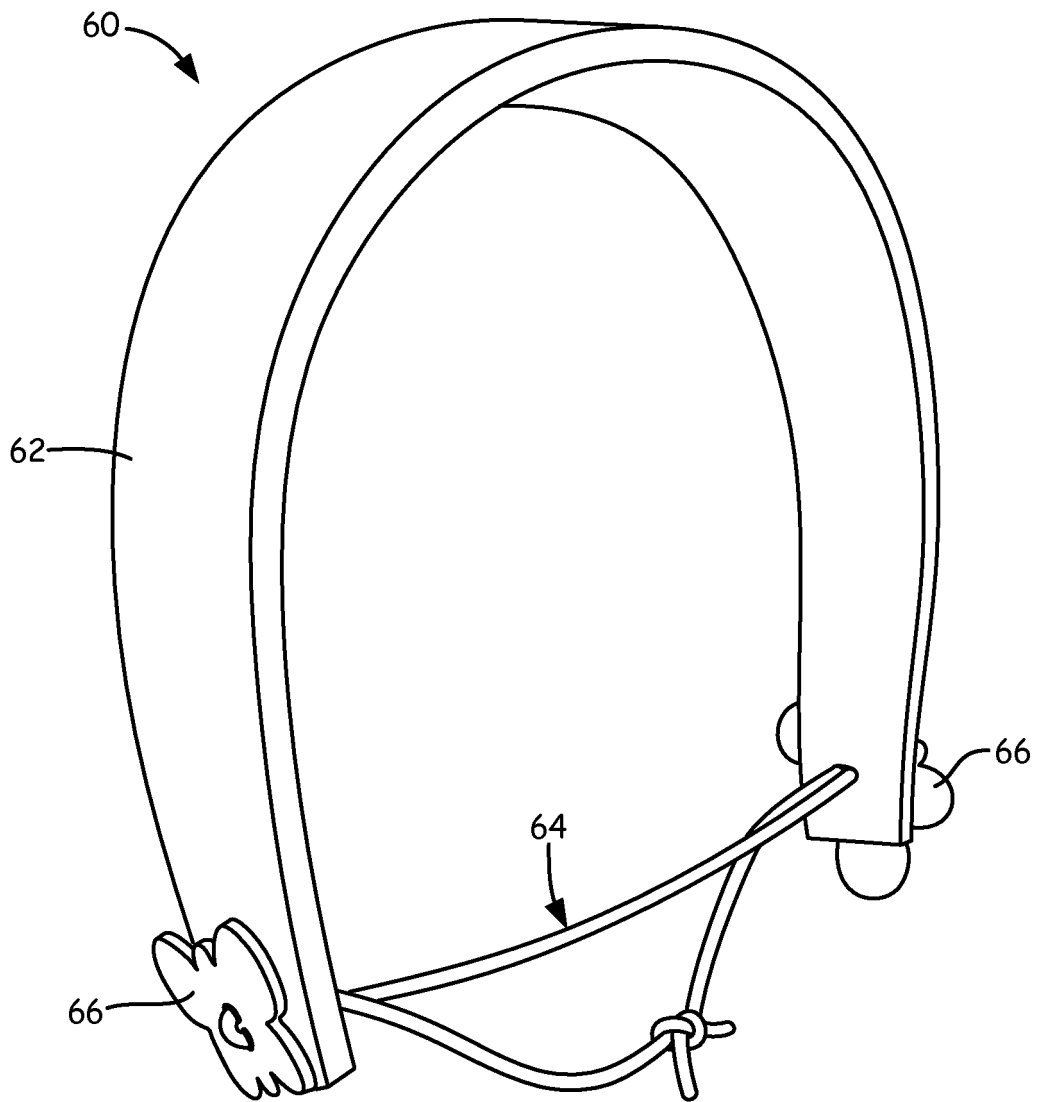
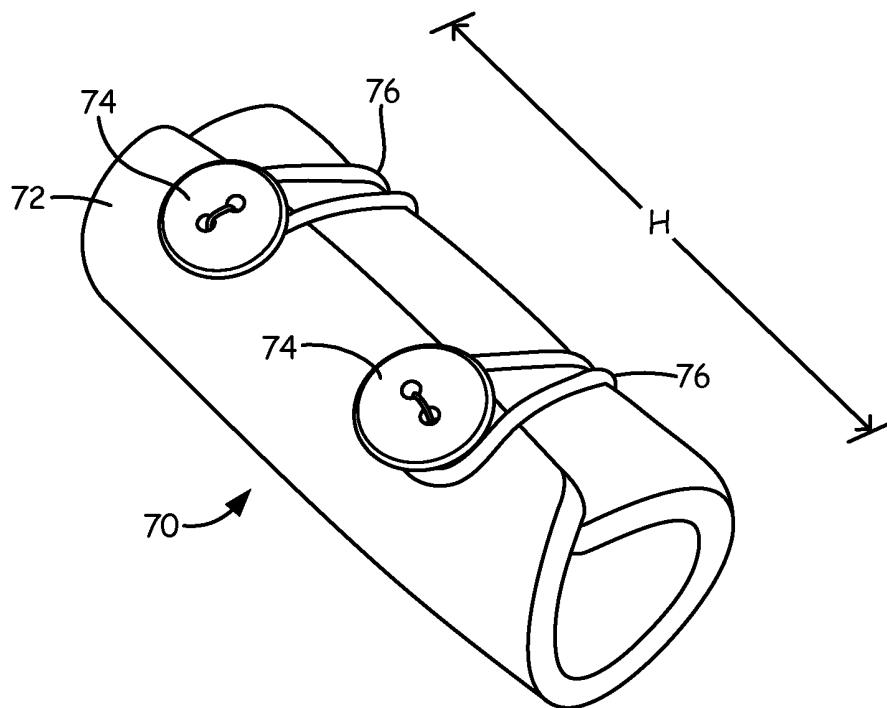
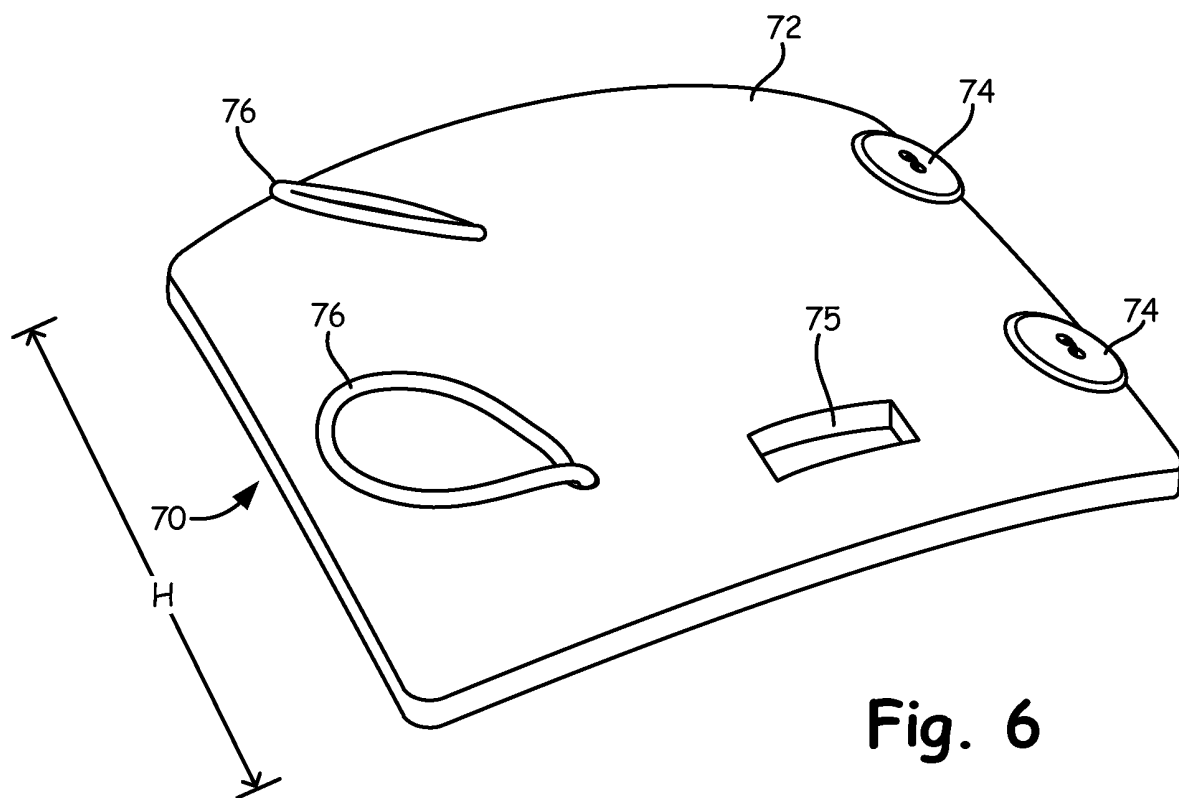


Fig. 5



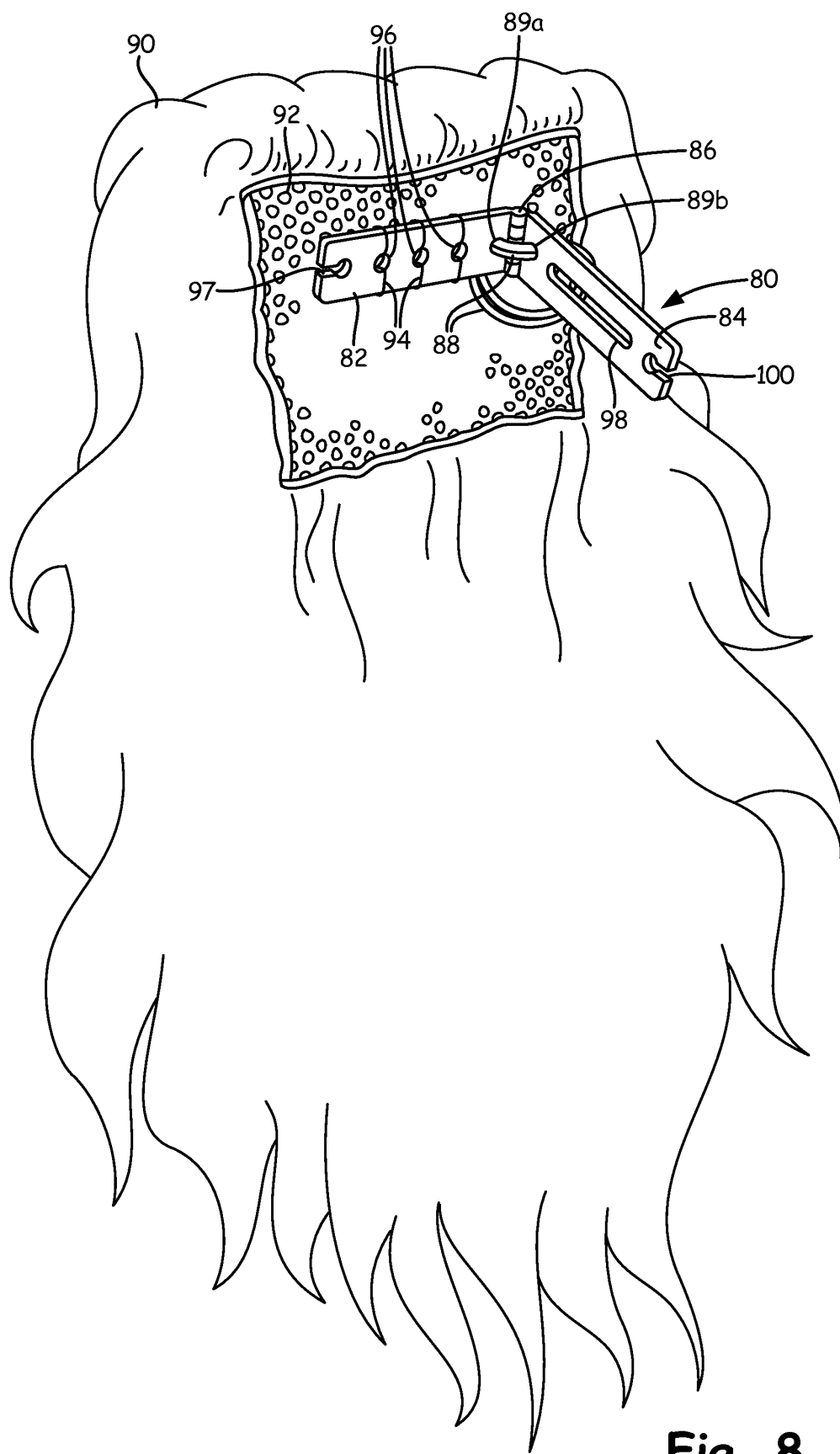
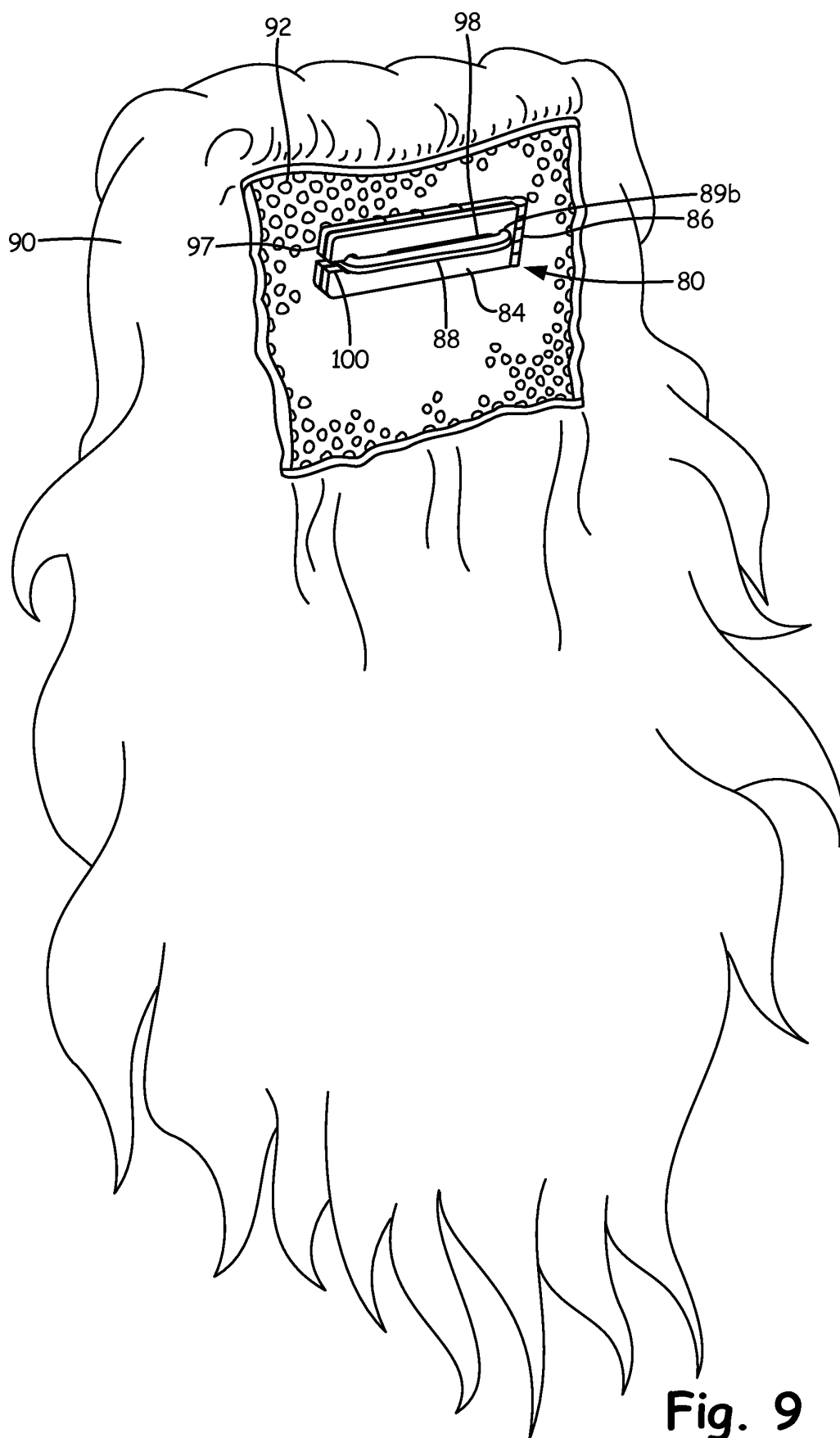
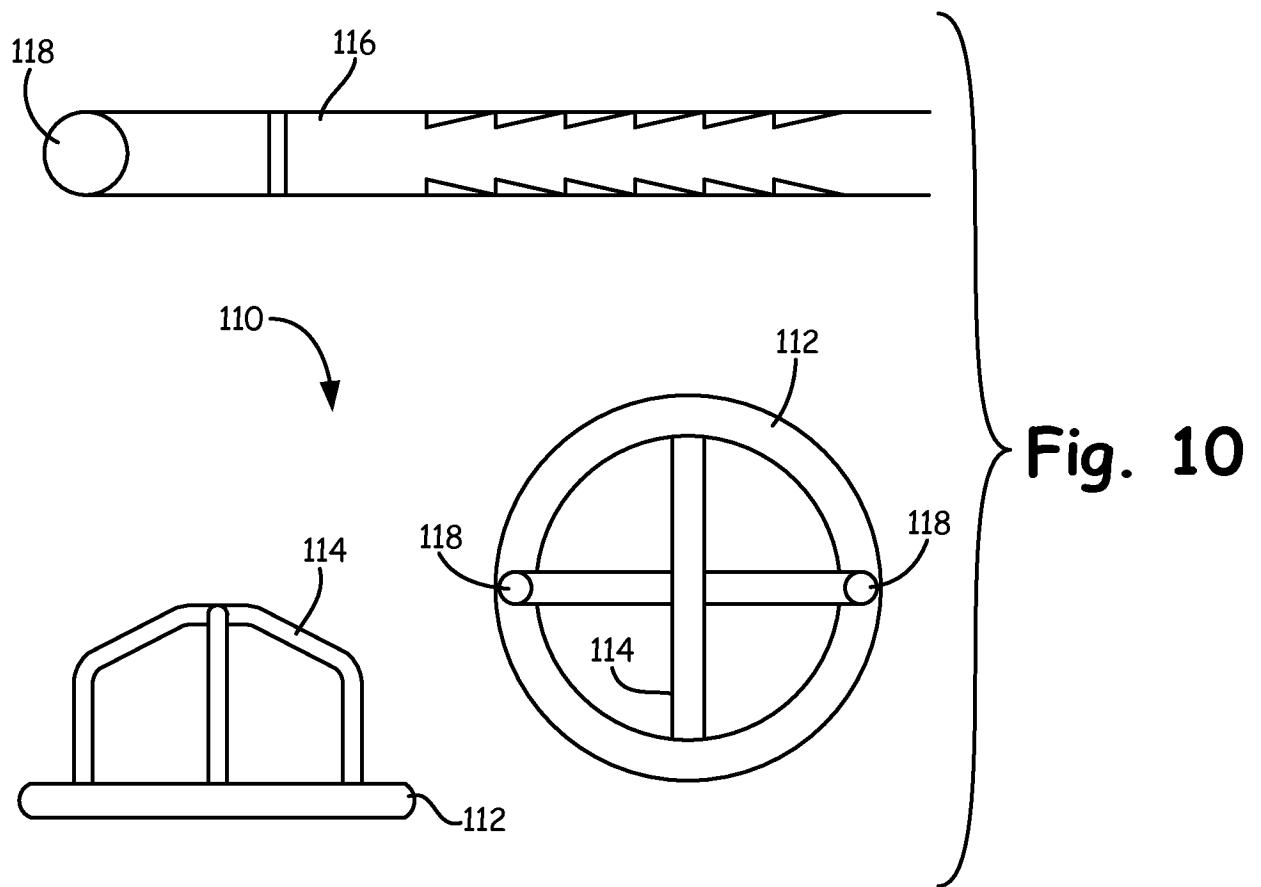


Fig. 8





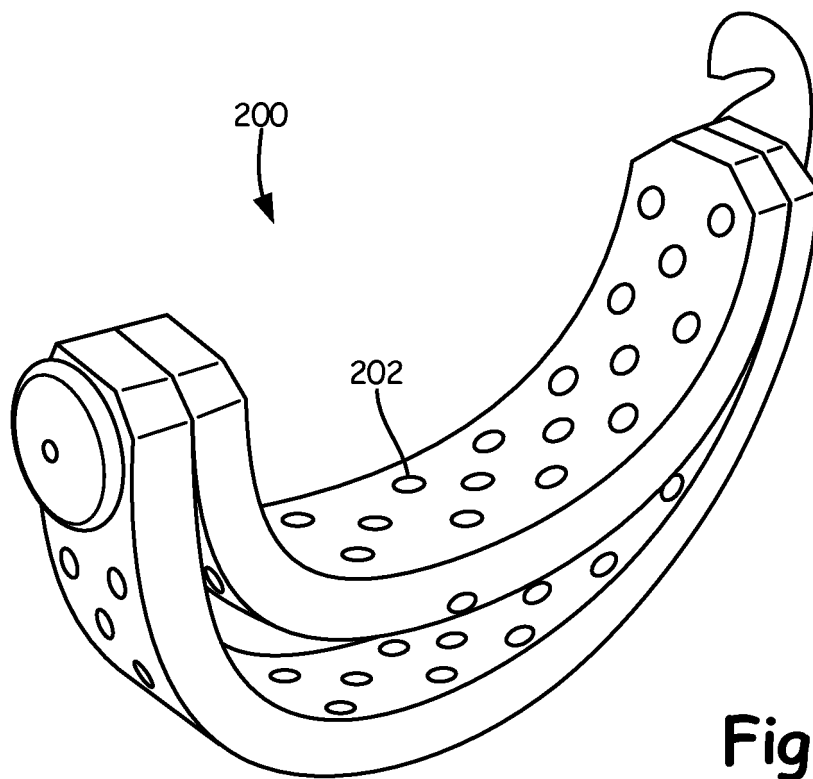


Fig. 11

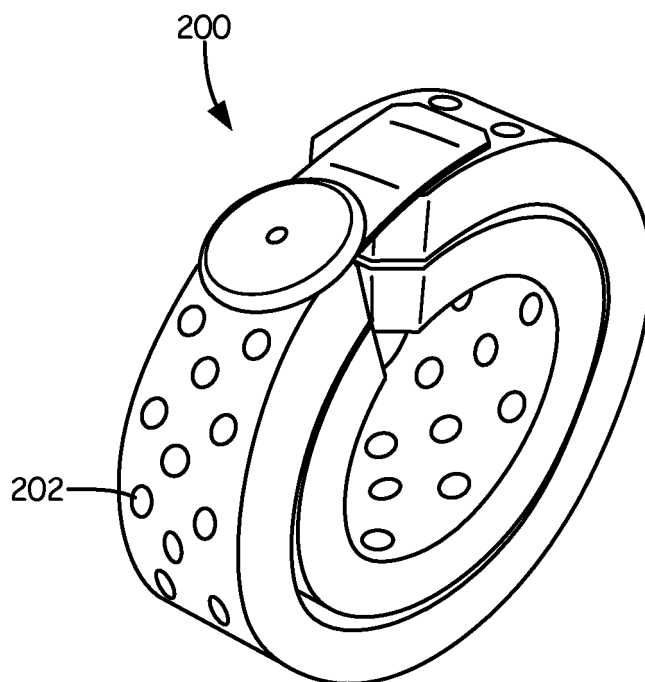


Fig. 12

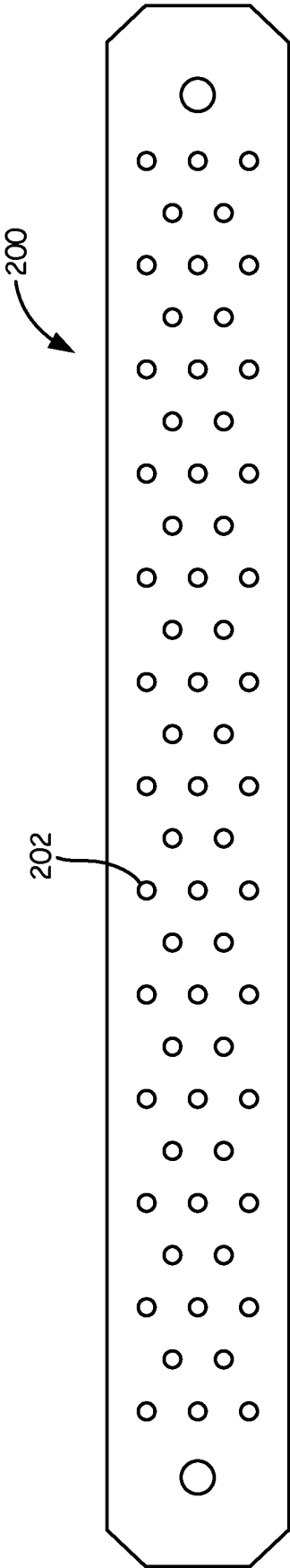


Fig. 13

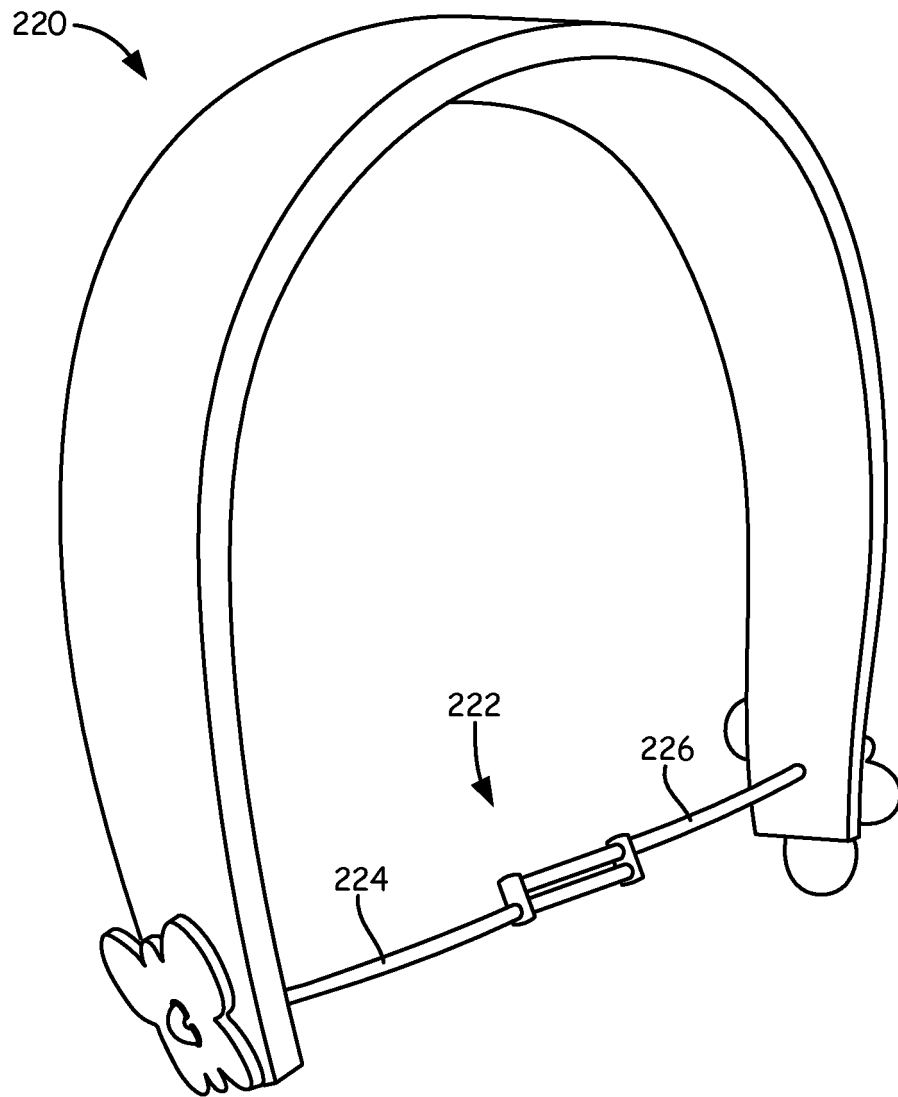


Fig. 14

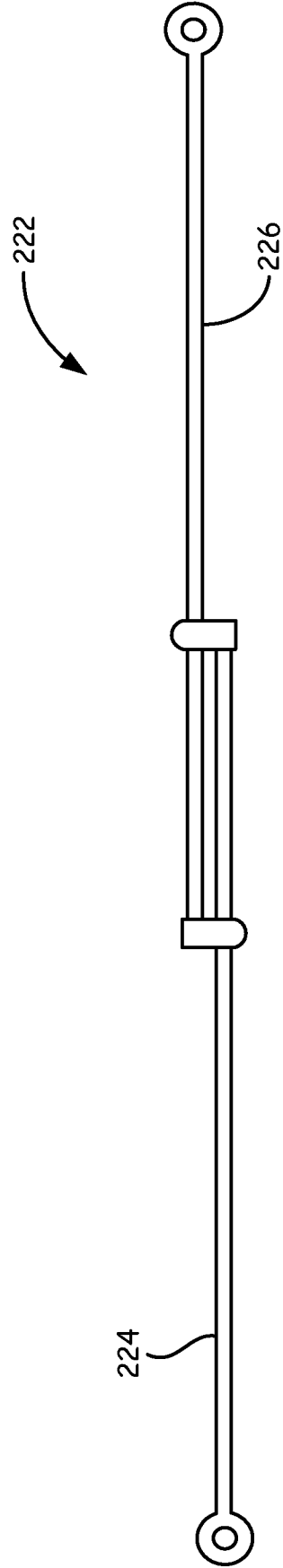


Fig. 15

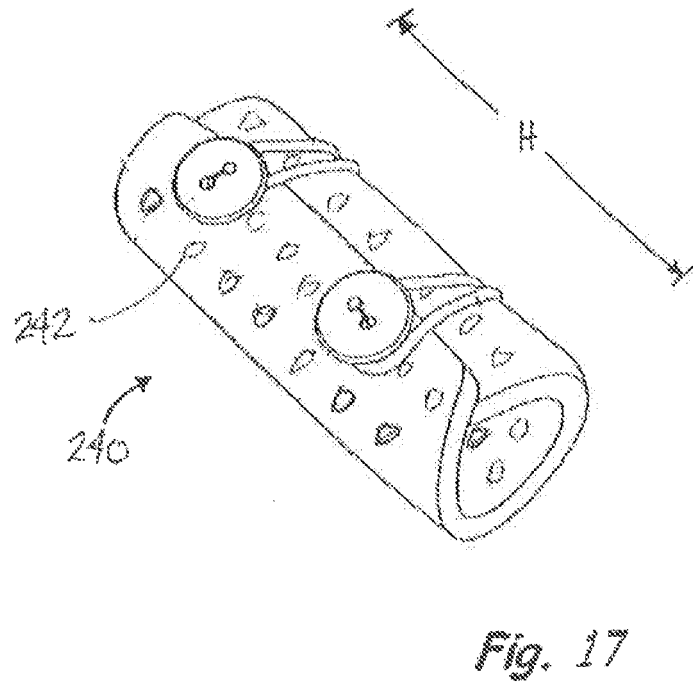
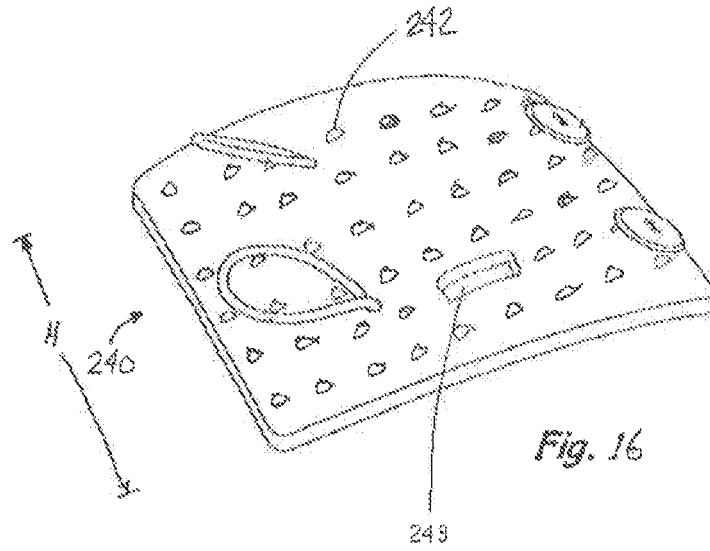
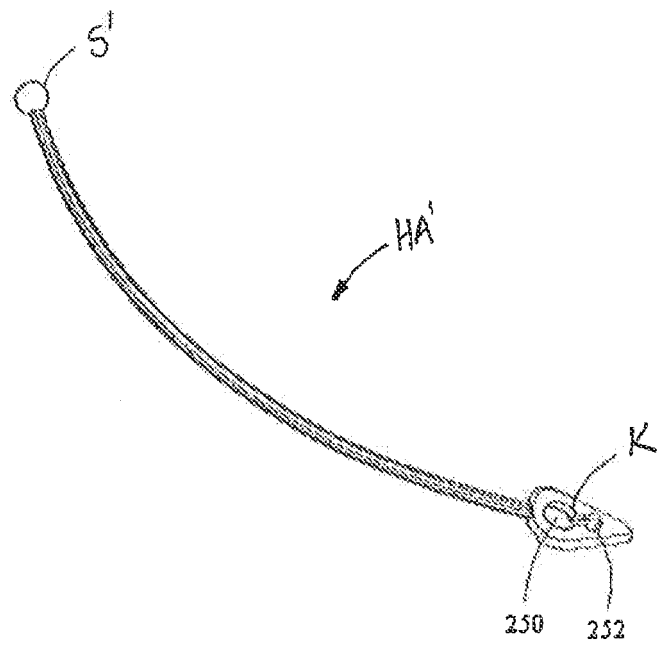


FIG. 18



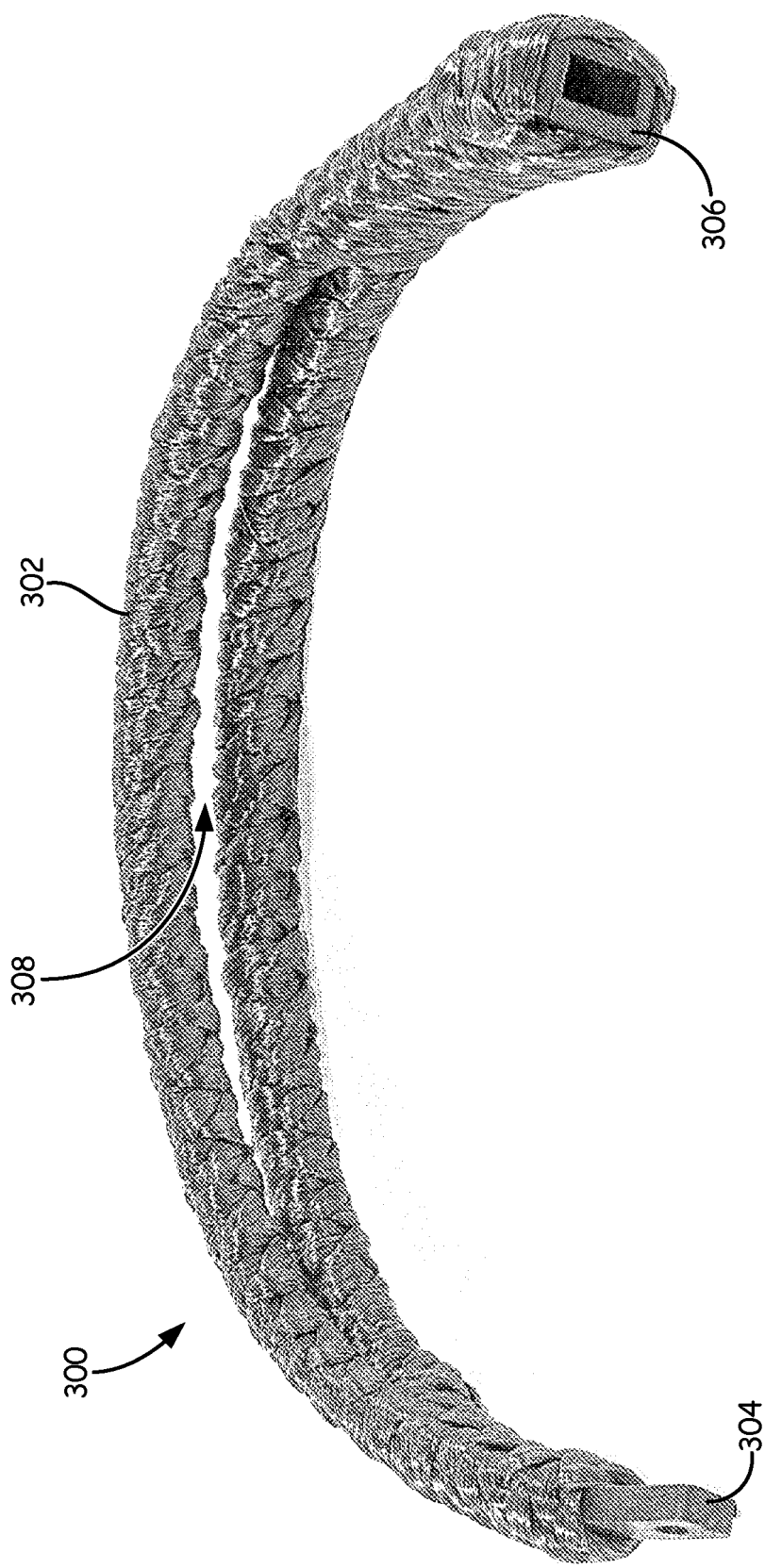


Fig. 19A

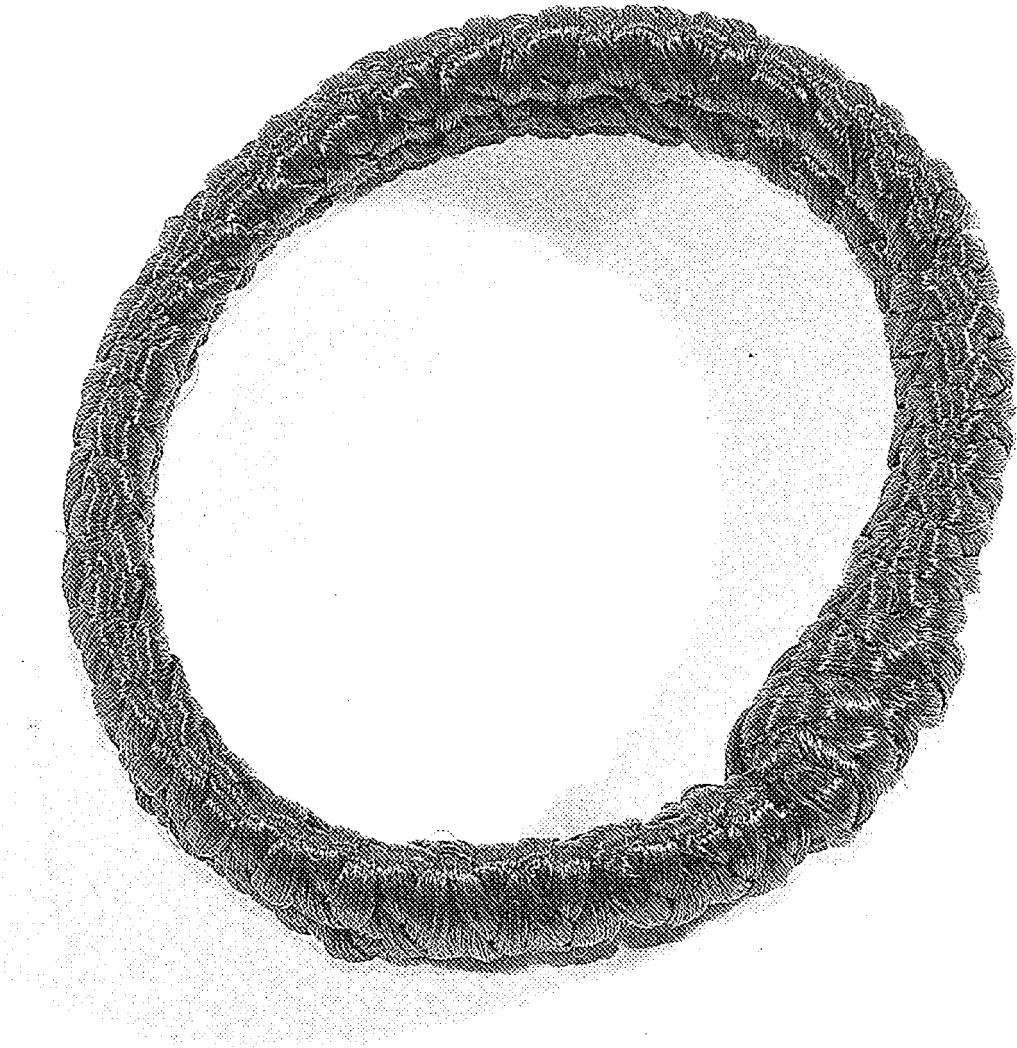


Fig. 19B

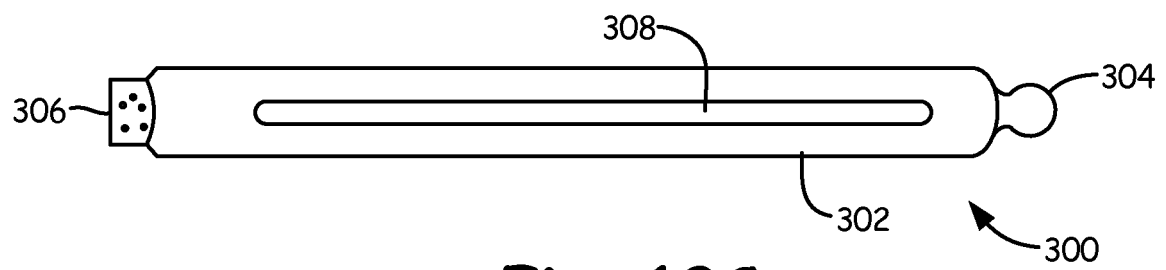


Fig. 19C

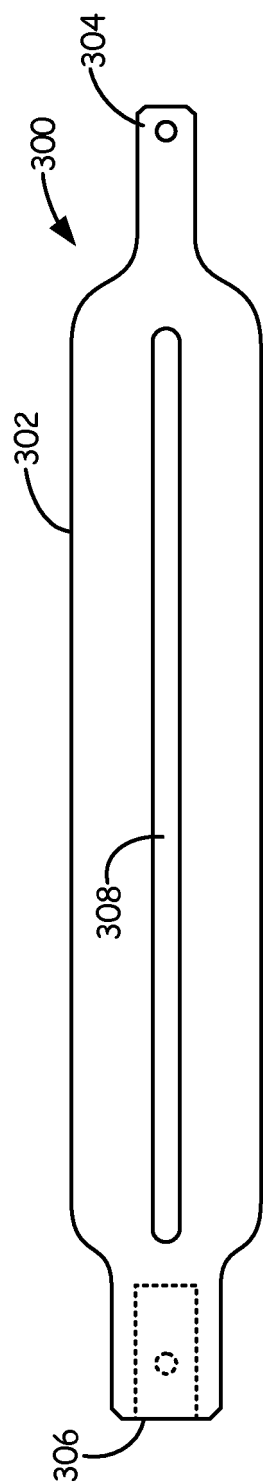


Fig. 19D

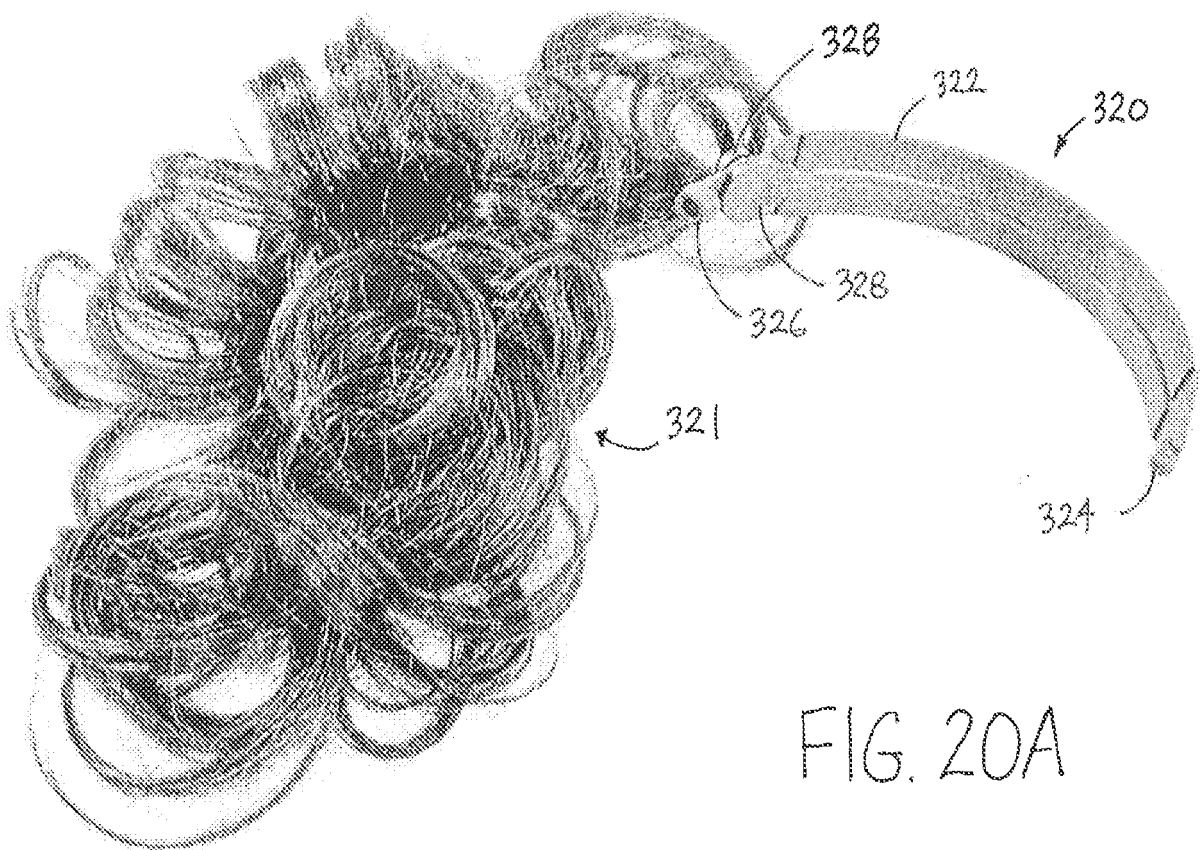


FIG. 20B

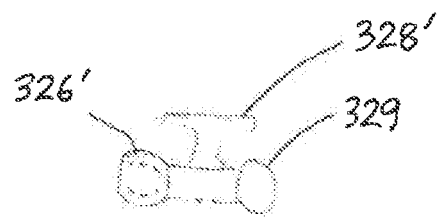
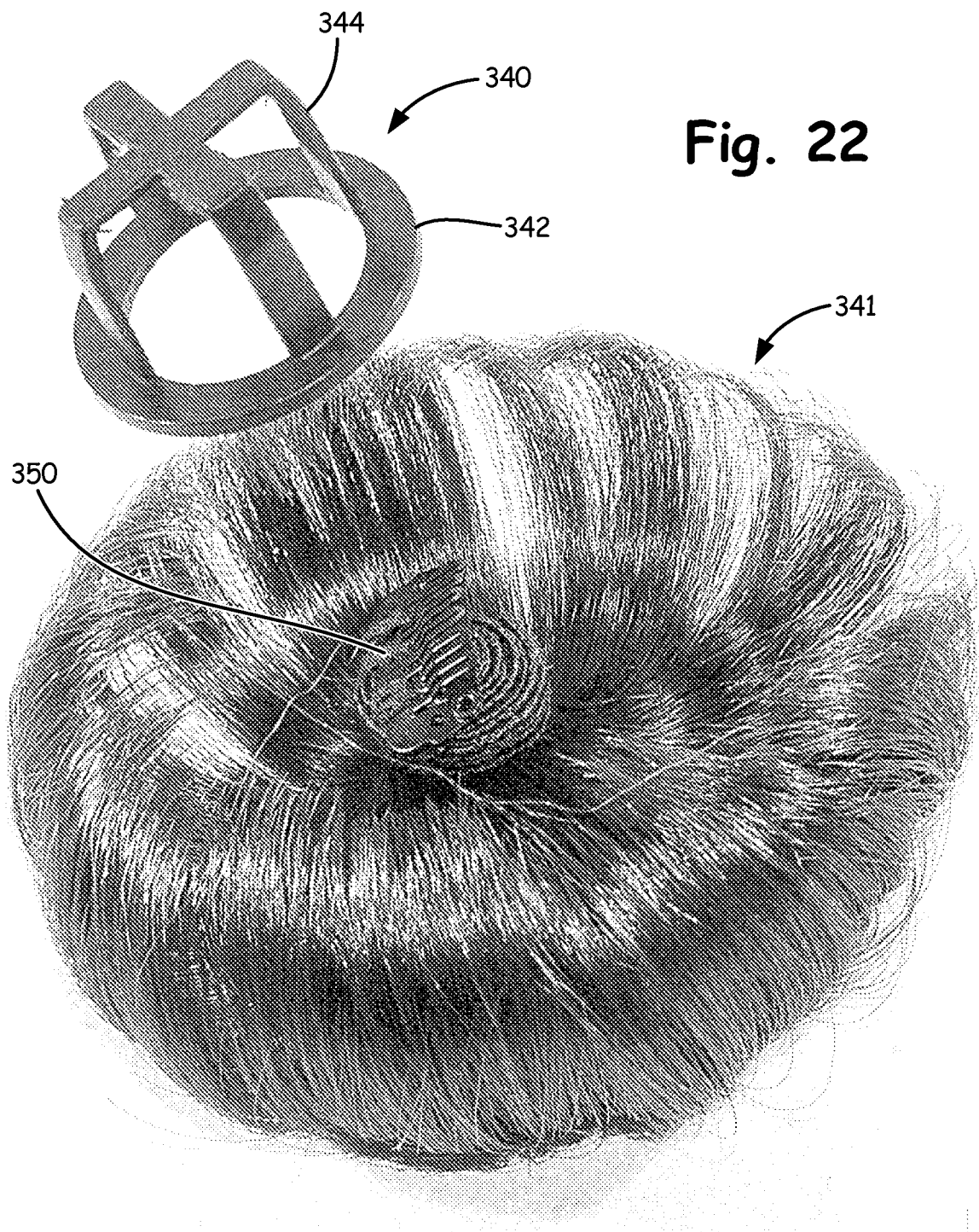




Fig. 21



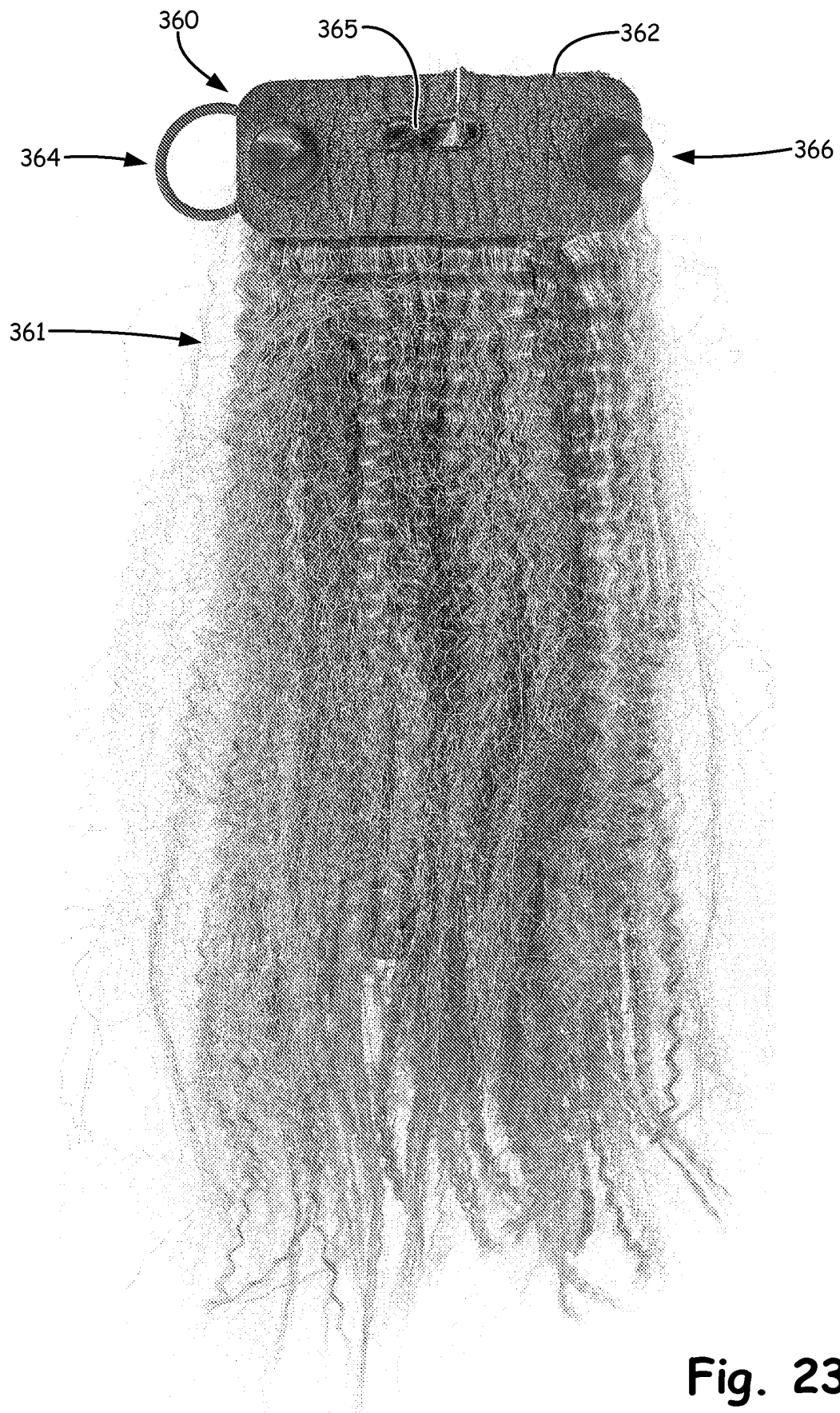


Fig. 23

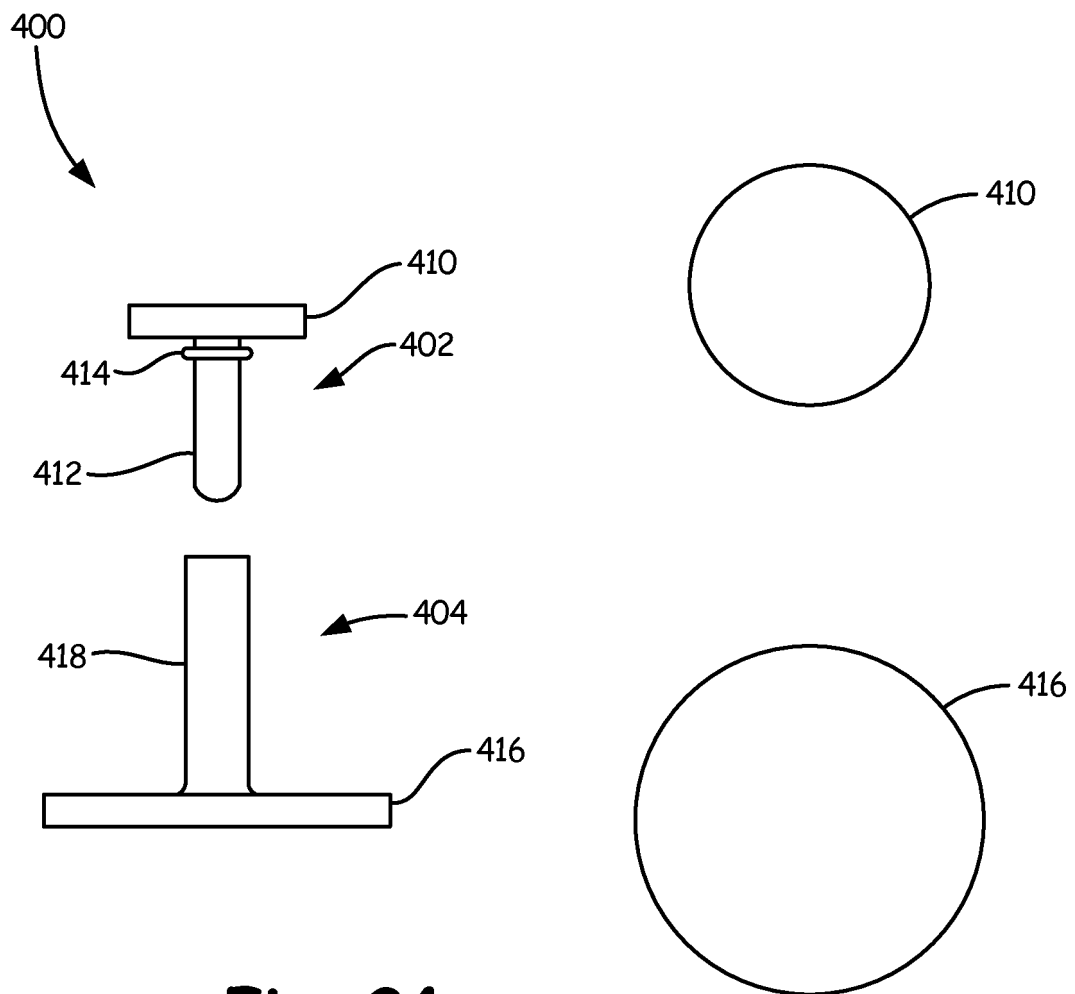


Fig. 24

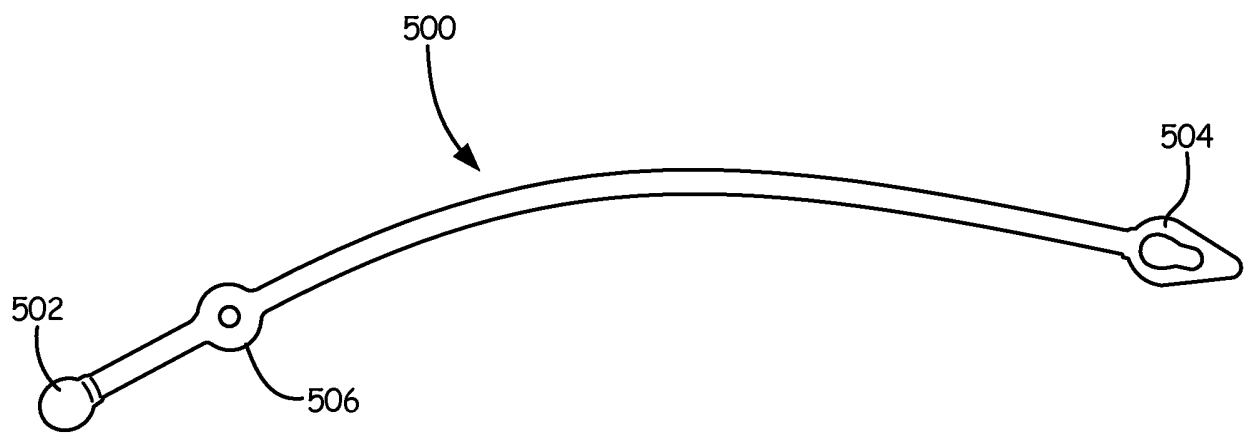


Fig. 25

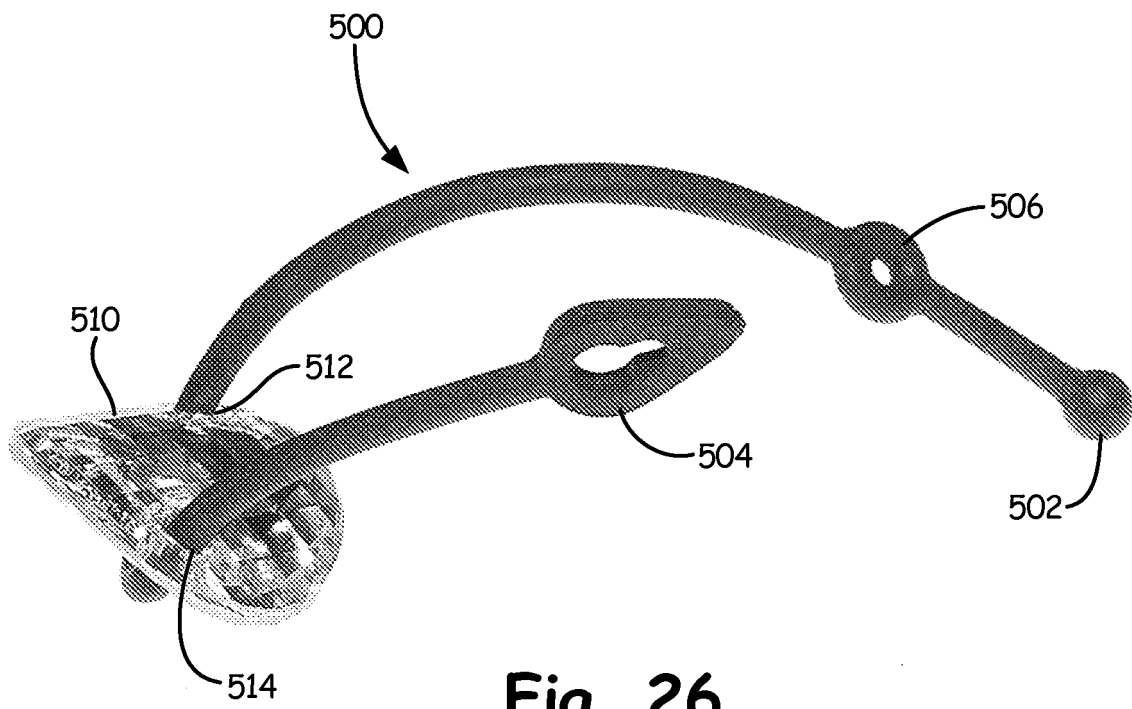
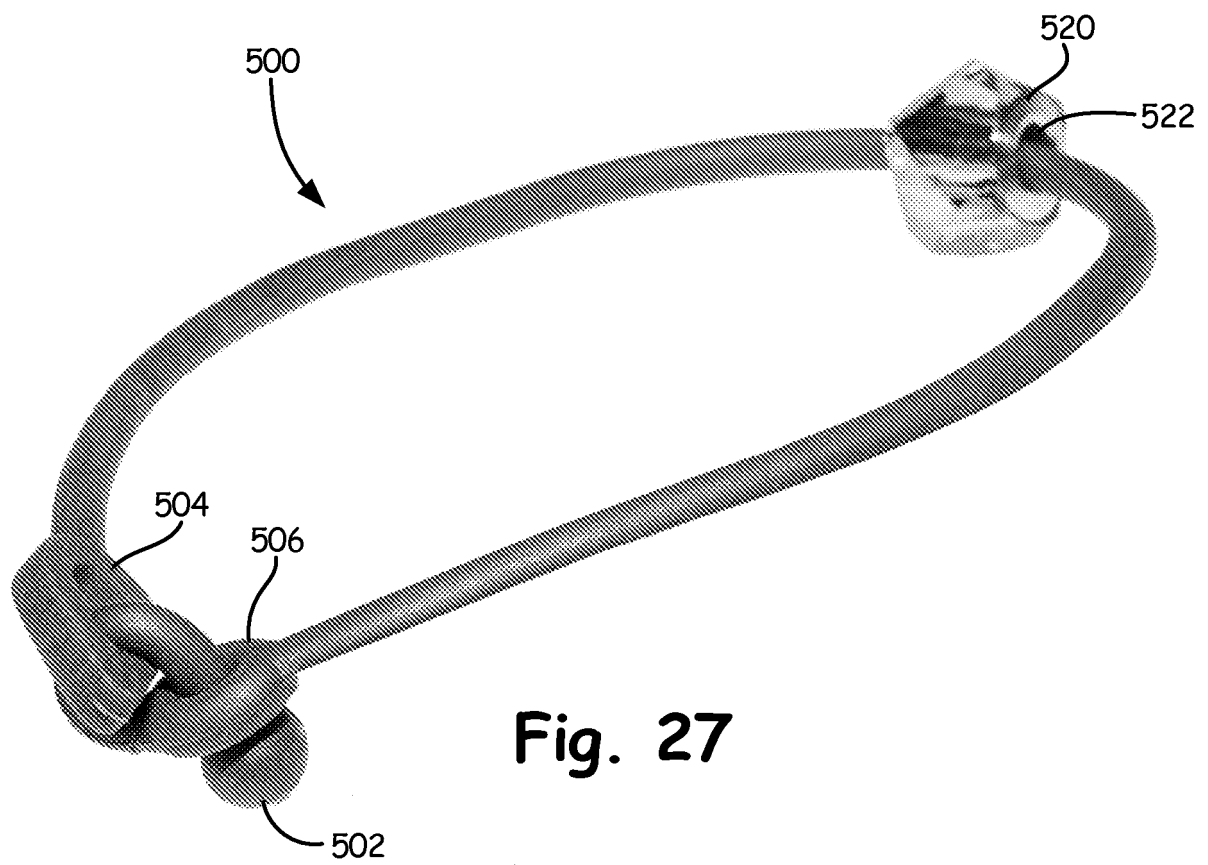


Fig. 26



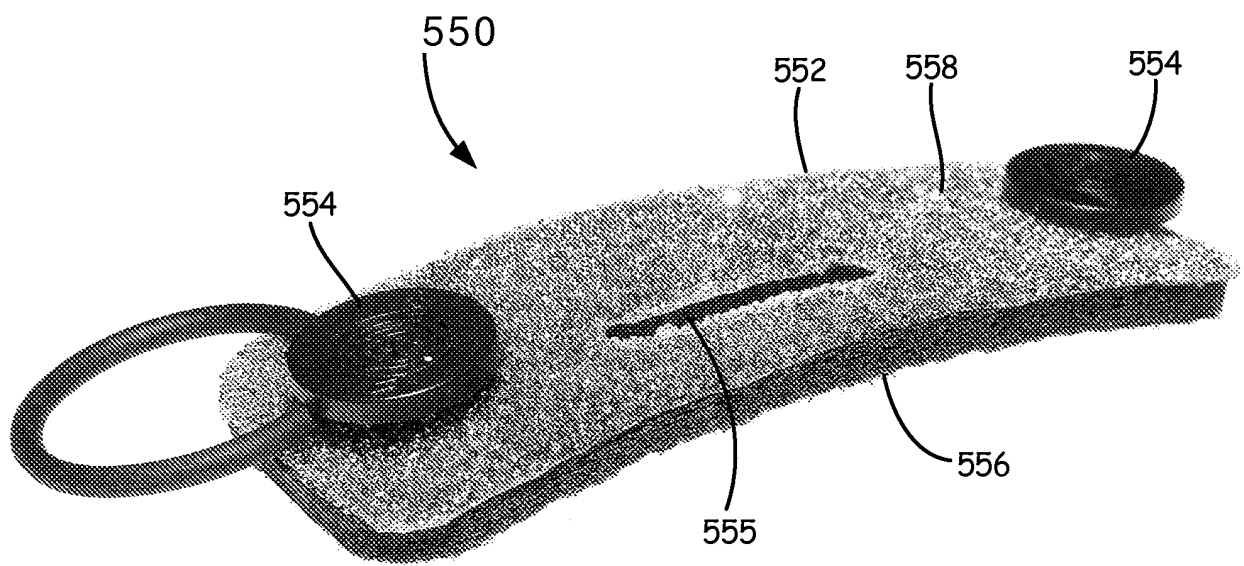


Fig. 28

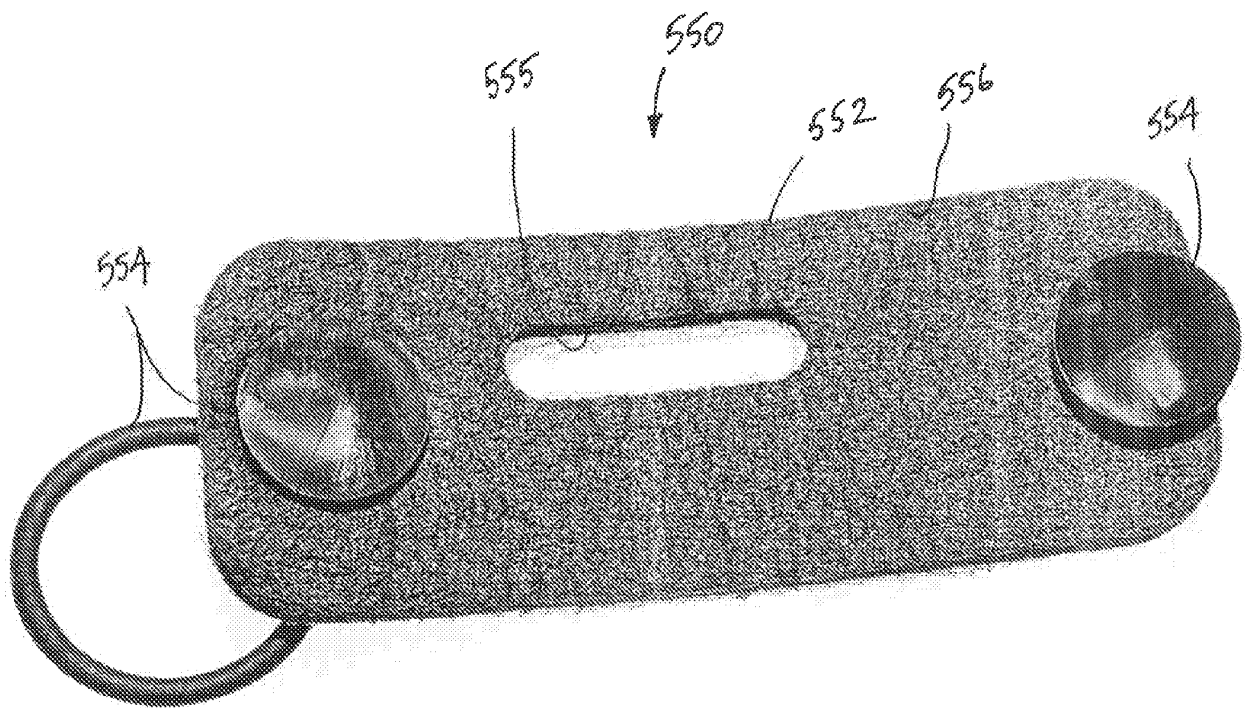


FIG. 29

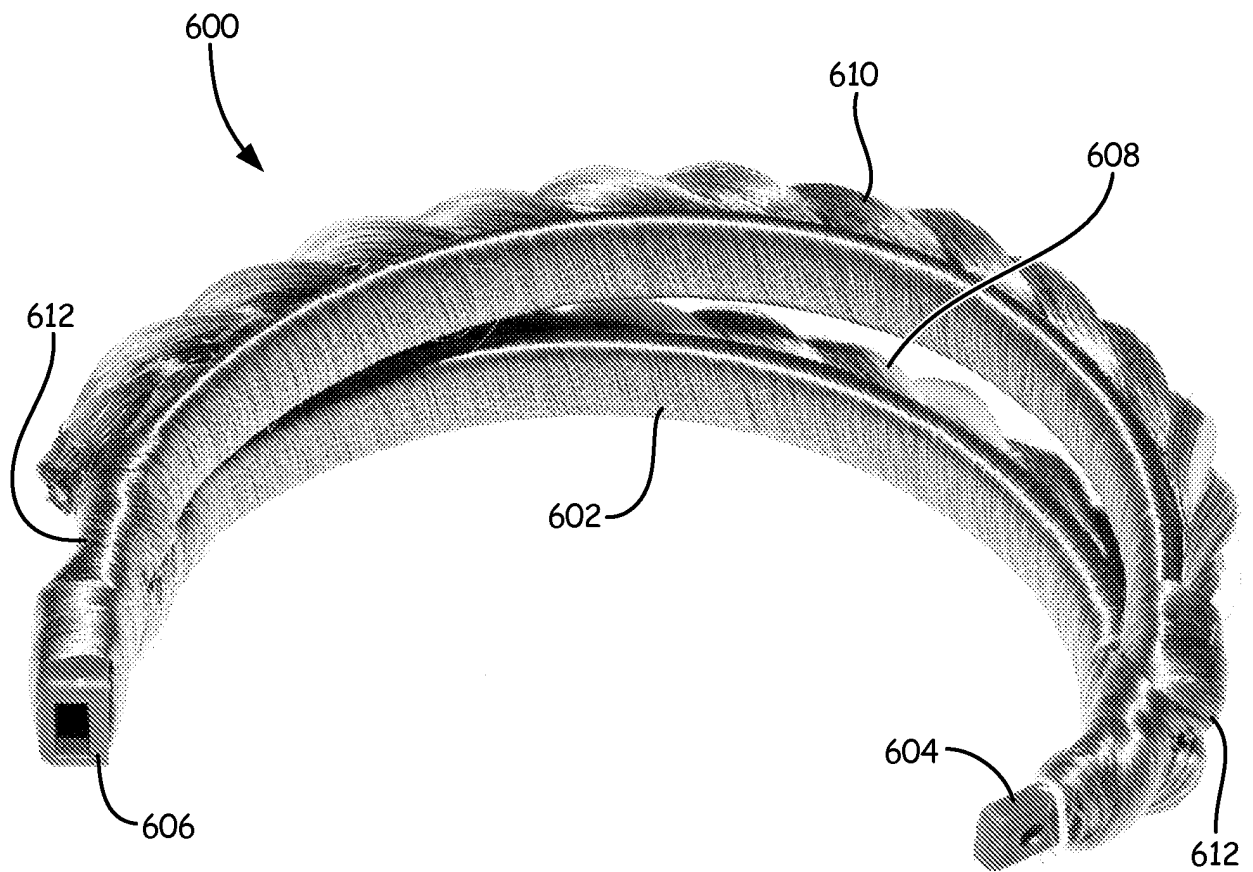
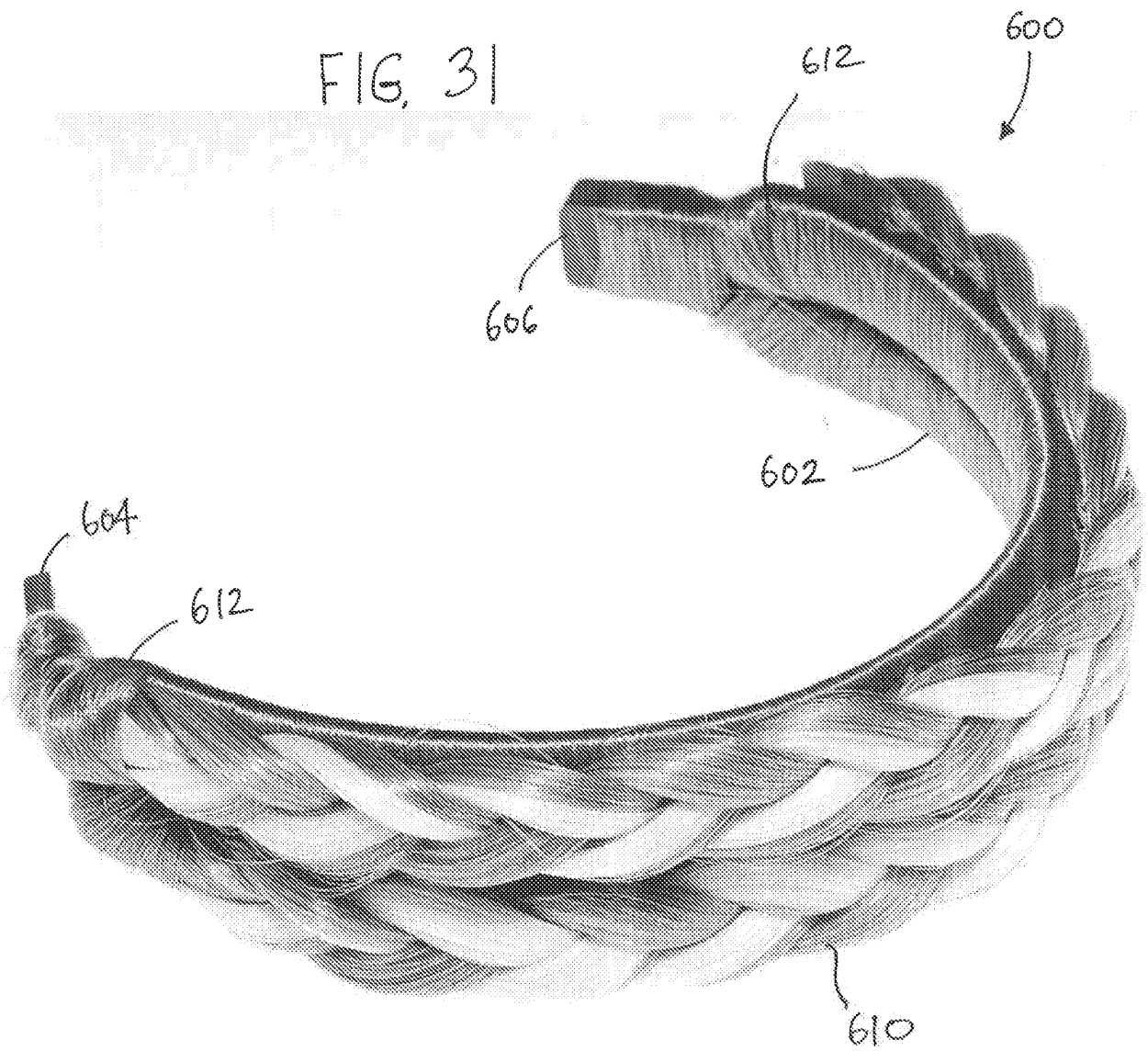


Fig. 30



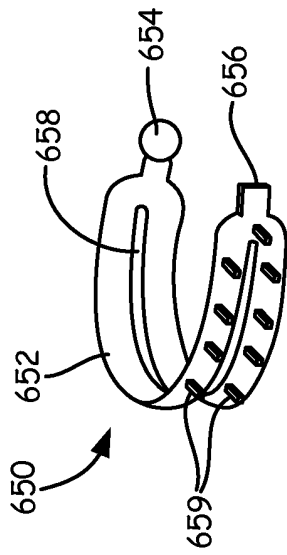


Fig. 32A

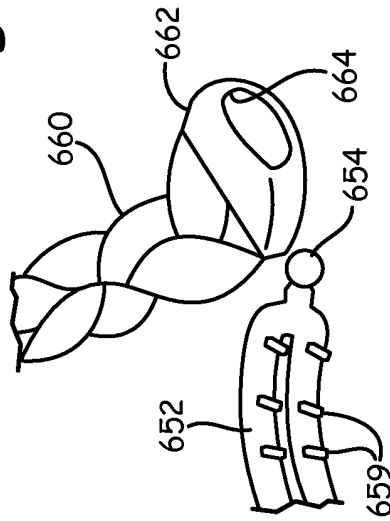


Fig. 32B

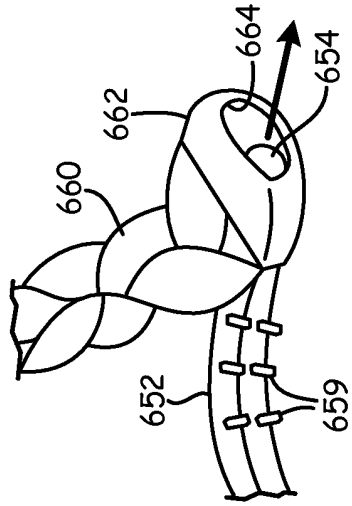


Fig. 32C

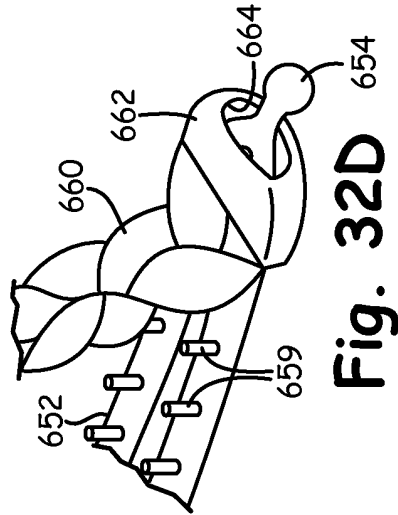


Fig. 32D

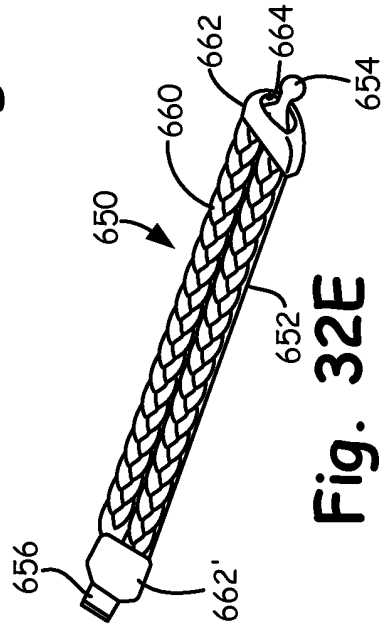


Fig. 32E

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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