



US010758274B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Bess et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 10,758,274 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Sep. 1, 2020**

(54) **SPINAL FIXATION CONSTRUCTS AND RELATED METHODS**

17/7032; A61B 17/7035; A61B 17/7037; A61B 17/7038; A61B 17/7046; A61B 17/7056; A61B 17/842; A61B 17/8605

(71) Applicant: **NuVasive, Inc.**, San Diego, CA (US)

See application file for complete search history.

(72) Inventors: **Robert Shay Bess**, Littleton, CO (US);
Regis W. Haid, Atlanta, GA (US);
Frank Schwab, New York, NY (US);
Christopher Shaffrey, Charlottesville, VA (US)

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

4,448,191 A	5/1984	Rodnyansky et al.
4,641,636 A	2/1987	Cotrel
4,743,260 A	5/1988	Burton
5,000,165 A	3/1991	Watanabe
5,263,954 A	11/1993	Schlapfer et al.
5,267,999 A	12/1993	Olerud
5,271,461 A	12/1993	Decker et al.
5,282,863 A	2/1994	Burton

(Continued)

(73) Assignee: **NuVasive, Inc.**, San Diego, CA (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **14/703,852**

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

(22) Filed: **May 4, 2015**

CN	103767778	5/2014
DE	2821678	11/1979

(Continued)

Primary Examiner — Lynnsy M Summitt

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 61/988,066, filed on May 2, 2014.

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

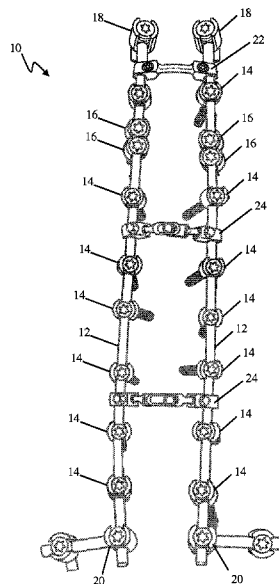
(57) **ABSTRACT**

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **A61B 17/7001** (2013.01); **A61B 17/7019** (2013.01); **A61B 17/7022** (2013.01); **A61B 17/7023** (2013.01); **A61B 17/7032** (2013.01); **A61B 17/7035** (2013.01); **A61B 17/7043** (2013.01)

This disclosure describes a variety of transitional or terminal components that may be implanted as part of a spinal fixation construct to decrease the potential for subsequent development of junctional disease. The fixation construct may extend any number of levels from a single level construct to a long construct spanning multiple spinal levels and multiple spinal regions from the lumbosacral to cervical regions, and with any variety of combination of anchors, rods, and connectors. Terminal and/or transitional components may be utilized at the caudal and/or cephalad ends of the fixation construct to reduce stresses endured by the construct adjacent pathology and prevent or reduce incidence and degree of junctional disease.

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC . A61B 17/70; A61B 17/7001; A61B 17/7002; A61B 17/7011; A61B 17/7013; A61B 17/7014; A61B 17/7019; A61B 17/7022; A61B 17/7026; A61B 17/7031; A61B

19 Claims, 27 Drawing Sheets



(56)

References Cited

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

			9,072,546 B2 *	7/2015	Trieu	A61B 17/7026
			9,173,685 B2 *	11/2015	Lindquist	A61B 17/7049
			9,237,907 B2 *	1/2016	Powers	A61B 17/7022
			9,314,285 B2	4/2016	Reisberg	
			9,320,542 B2	4/2016	Browne	
			9,320,543 B2 *	4/2016	Fanger	A61B 17/7005
			9,486,252 B2	11/2016	Mccarthy	
			9,597,124 B2	3/2017	McCarthy et al.	
			2003/0055427 A1	3/2003	Graf	
			2003/0109880 A1	6/2003	Shirado et al.	
			2003/0171749 A1	9/2003	Le Couedic et al.	
			2003/0220642 A1	11/2003	Freudiger	
			2003/0220643 A1	11/2003	Ferree	
			2004/0002708 A1	1/2004	Ritland	
			2004/0049189 A1	3/2004	Le Couedic et al.	
			2004/0049190 A1	3/2004	Biedermann et al.	
			2004/0073215 A1	4/2004	Carli	
			2004/0143264 A1	7/2004	McAfee	
			2004/0225289 A1	11/2004	Biedermann et al.	
			2004/0236329 A1	11/2004	Panjabi	
			2004/0267260 A1	12/2004	Mack et al.	
			2005/0056979 A1	3/2005	Studer et al.	
			2005/0065514 A1	3/2005	Studer	
			2005/0065516 A1	3/2005	Jahng	
			2005/0085815 A1	4/2005	Harms et al.	
			2005/0090822 A1	4/2005	DiPoto	
			2005/0113927 A1	5/2005	Malek	
			2005/0131405 A1	6/2005	Molz, IV et al.	
			2005/0143737 A1	6/2005	Pafford et al.	
			2005/0143823 A1	6/2005	Boyd et al.	
			2005/0149020 A1	7/2005	Jahng	
			2005/0154390 A1	7/2005	Biedermann et al.	
			2005/0165396 A1	7/2005	Fortin et al.	
			2005/0171543 A1	8/2005	Timm et al.	
			2005/0177156 A1	8/2005	Timm et al.	
			2005/0177157 A1	8/2005	Jahng	
			2005/0182401 A1	8/2005	Timm et al.	
			2005/0203514 A1	9/2005	Jahng et al.	
			2005/0203516 A1	9/2005	Biedermann et al.	
			2005/0203517 A1	9/2005	Jahng et al.	
			2005/0203519 A1	9/2005	Harms et al.	
			2005/0209694 A1	9/2005	Loeb	
			2005/0216003 A1	9/2005	Biedermann et al.	
			2005/0261685 A1	11/2005	Fortin et al.	
			2005/0277920 A1	12/2005	Slivka et al.	
			2005/0277922 A1	12/2005	Trieu et al.	
			2006/0142758 A1	6/2006	Petit	
			2006/0142760 A1	6/2006	McDonnell	
			2007/0233089 A1 *	10/2007	DiPoto	A61B 17/7011 606/279
			2007/0276384 A1	11/2007	Spratt	
			2009/0005815 A1	1/2009	Ely	
			2009/0062868 A1	3/2009	Casutt	
			2009/0248077 A1 *	10/2009	Johns	A61B 17/7011 606/246
			2009/0264933 A1	10/2009	Carls et al.	
			2010/0057126 A1 *	3/2010	Hestad	A61B 17/7032 606/246
			2010/0160967 A1	6/2010	Capozzoli	
			2010/0256691 A1	10/2010	Park	
			2011/0029018 A1 *	2/2011	Carlos	A61B 17/7004 606/246
			2011/0257687 A1	10/2011	Trieu et al.	
			2012/0053640 A1	3/2012	Trieu	
			2012/0109202 A1	5/2012	Kretzer et al.	
			2012/0116462 A1 *	5/2012	Arambula	A61B 17/7037 606/305
			2012/0290013 A1	11/2012	Simonson	
			2013/0072983 A1	3/2013	Lindquist et al.	
			2013/0103097 A1 *	4/2013	May	A61B 17/7032 606/305
			2013/0123854 A1	5/2013	Kondrashov et al.	
			2013/0218207 A1 *	8/2013	Carls	A61B 17/7035 606/278
			2014/0343612 A1	11/2014	Rezach et al.	

(56)

References Cited

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

2015/0230827 A1* 8/2015 Zylber A61B 17/7019
606/264
2016/0015430 A1 1/2016 Buttermann
2016/0183981 A1 6/2016 Schlaepfer et al.

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

DE	4239716	8/1994
DE	102012104978	12/2013
DE	202012012881	5/2014
EP	0667127	8/1995
EP	0669109	8/1995
EP	0677277	10/1995
GB	2382304	5/2003
SU	1136803	1/1985
WO	WO1996015729	5/1996
WO	WO2001045576	6/2001
WO	WO2002102259	12/2002
WO	WO2004024011	3/2004
WO	WO2005037150	4/2005
WO	WO2009028836	3/2009
WO	WO2013182545	12/2013

* cited by examiner

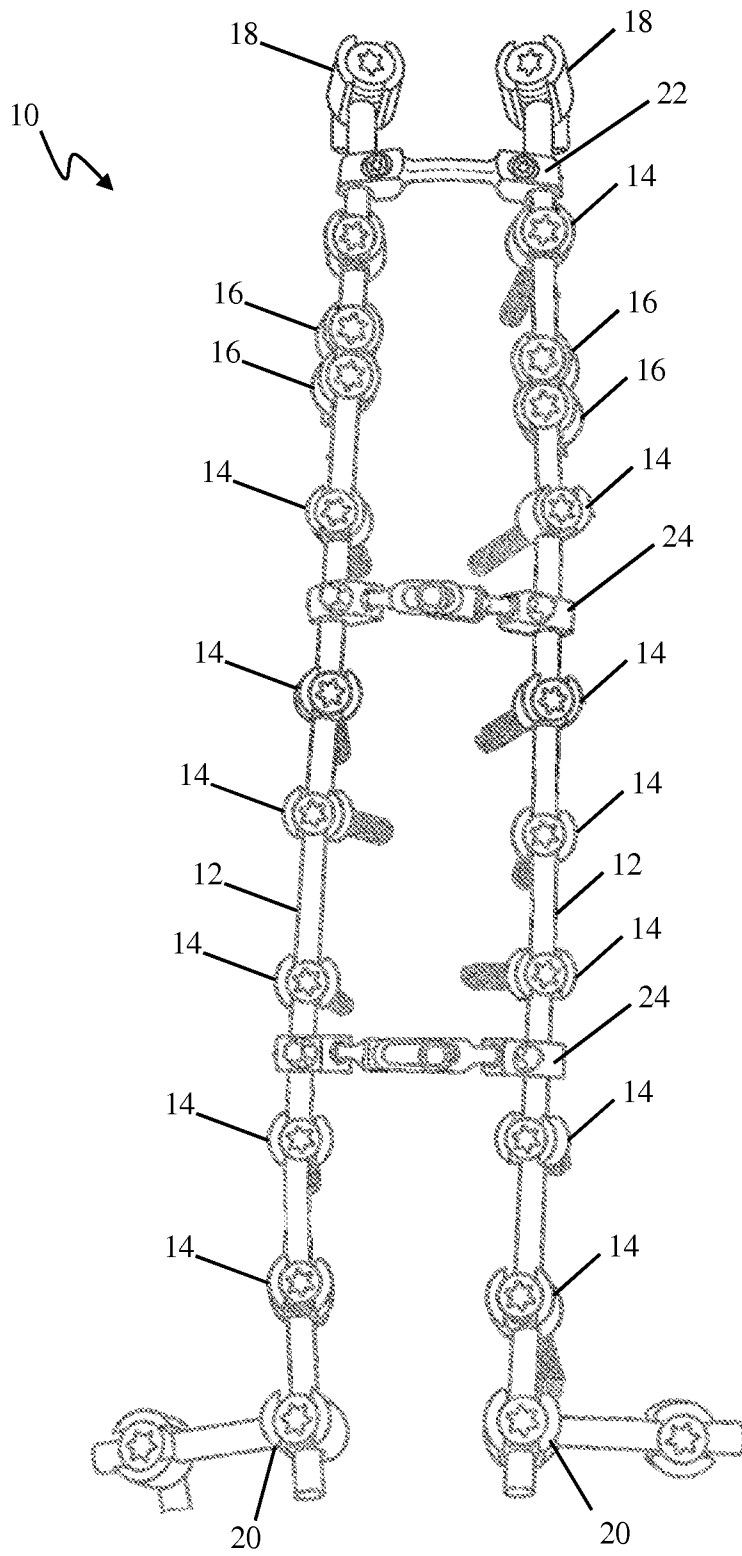


Fig. 1

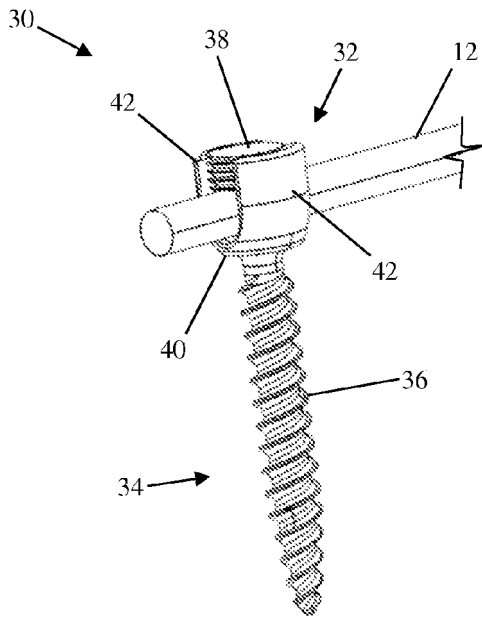


Fig. 2

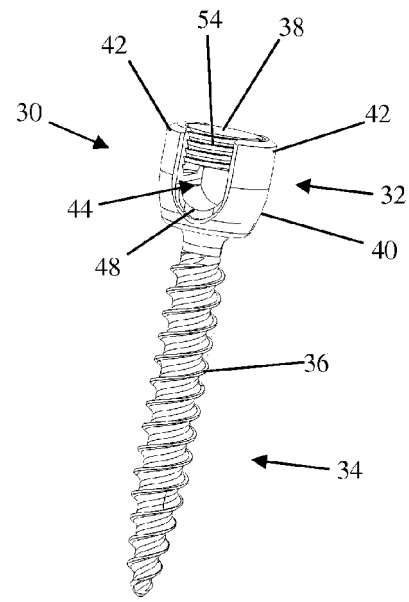


Fig. 3

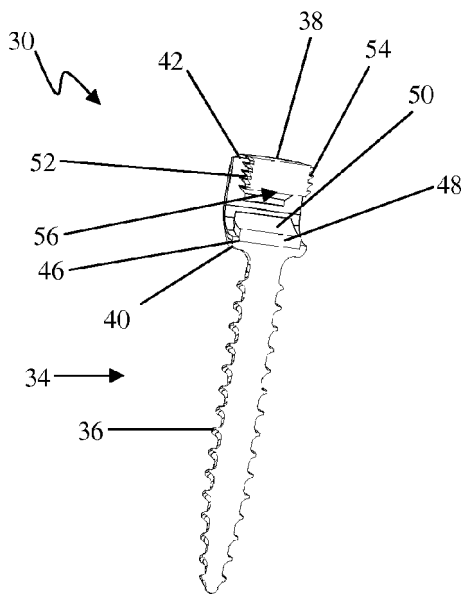


Fig. 4

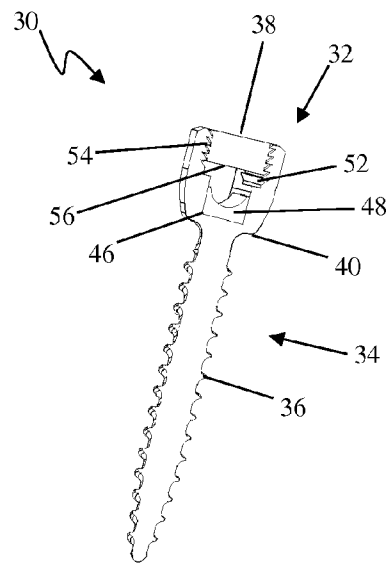


Fig. 5

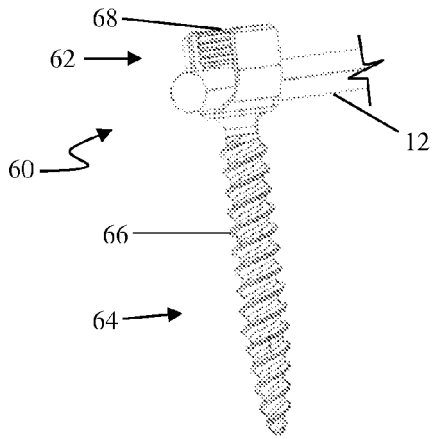


Fig. 6

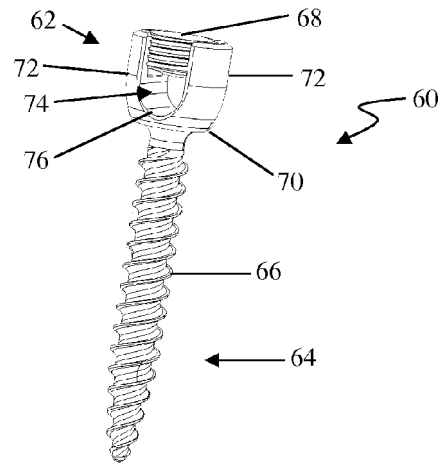


Fig. 7

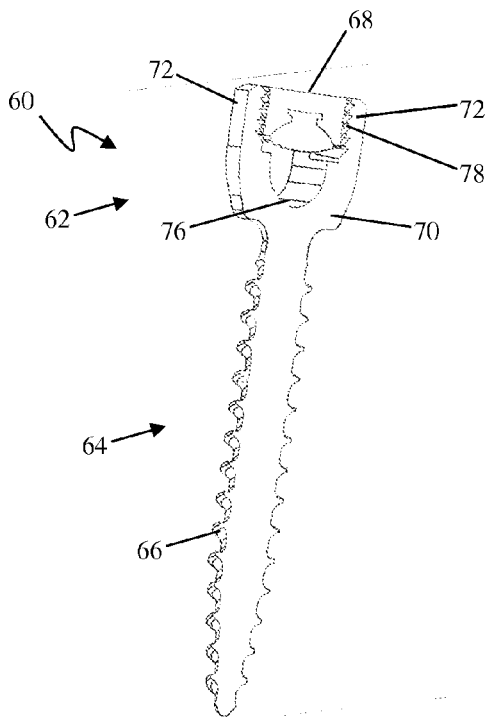


Fig. 8

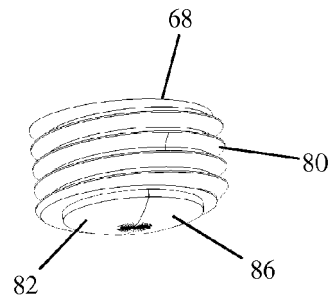


Fig. 9

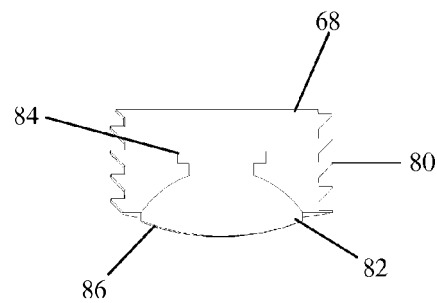


Fig. 10

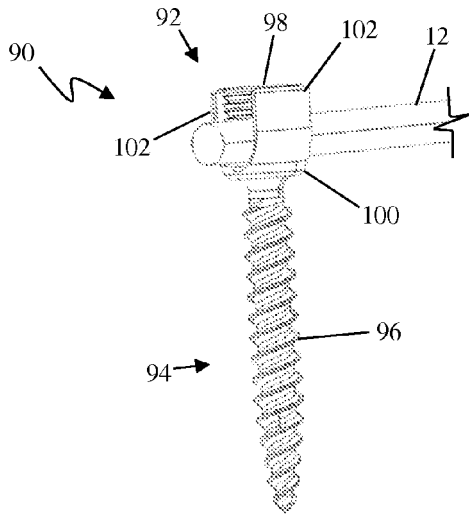


Fig. 11

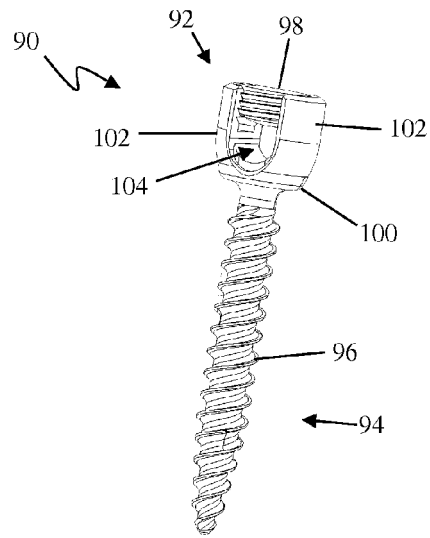


Fig. 12

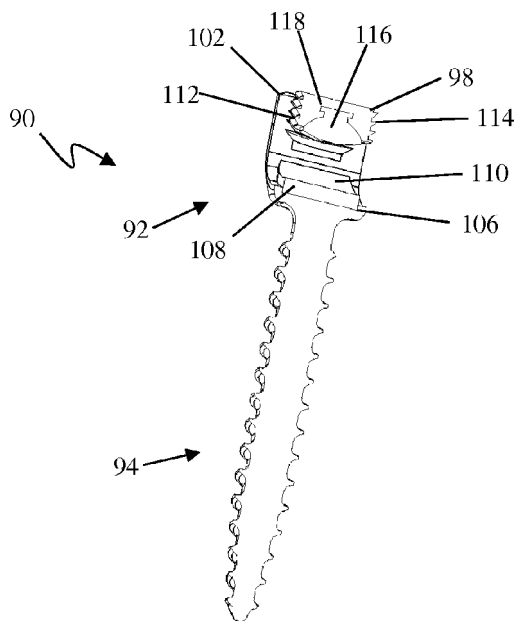


Fig. 13

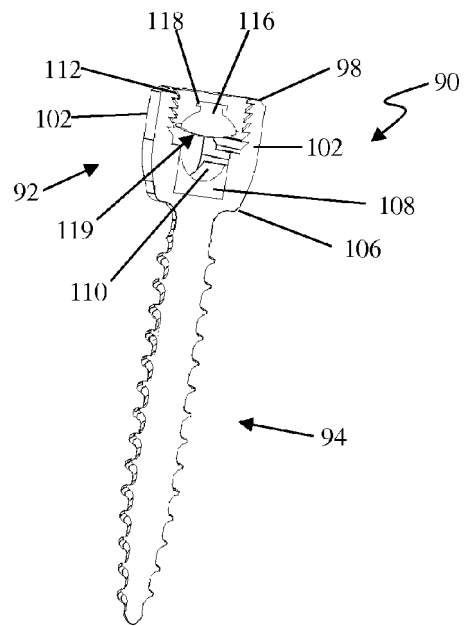


Fig. 14

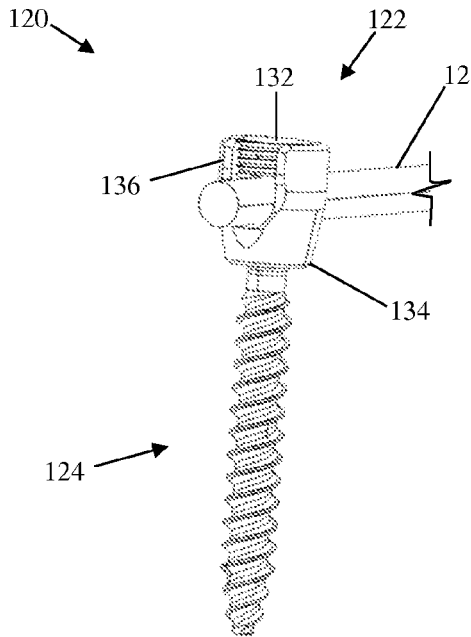


Fig. 15

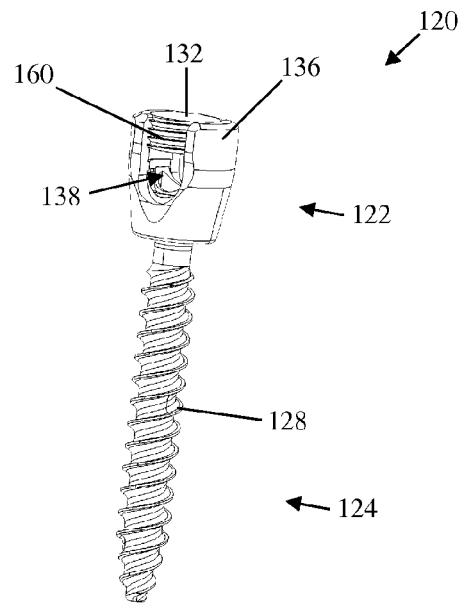


Fig. 16

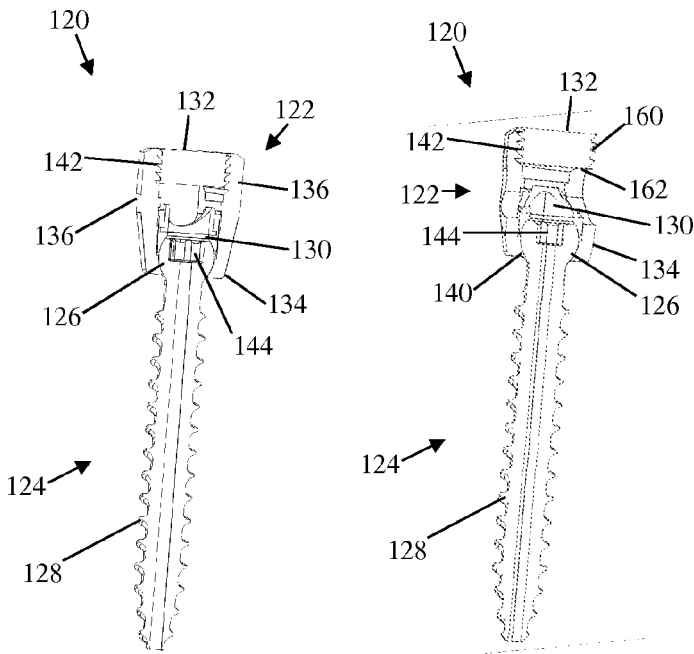


Fig. 17

Fig. 18

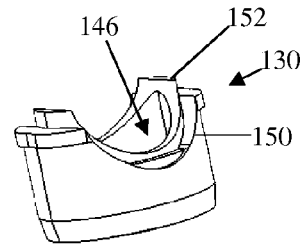


Fig. 19

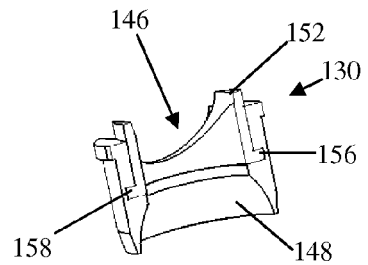


Fig. 20

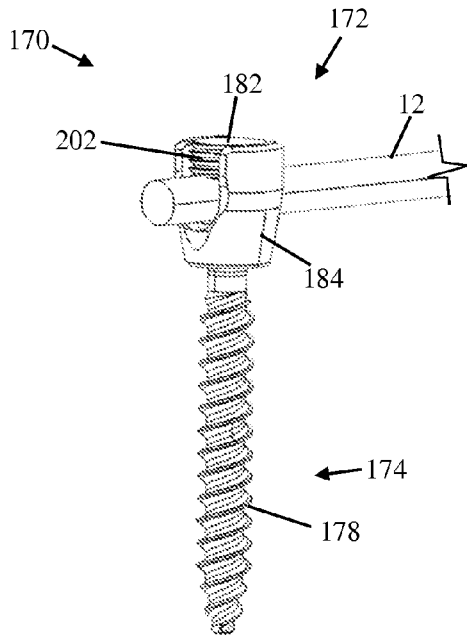


Fig. 21

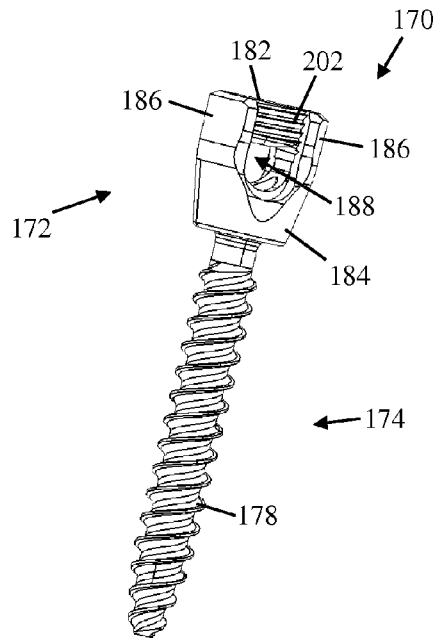


Fig. 22

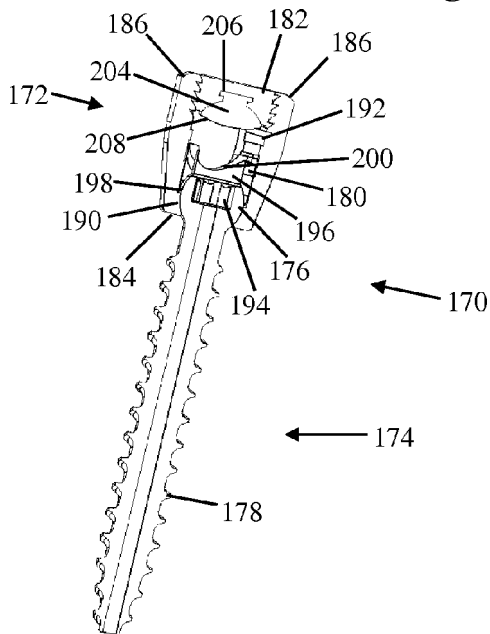


Fig. 23

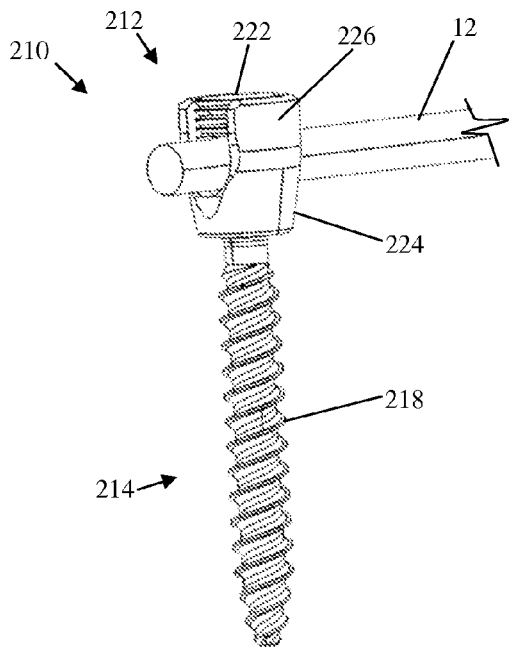


Fig. 24

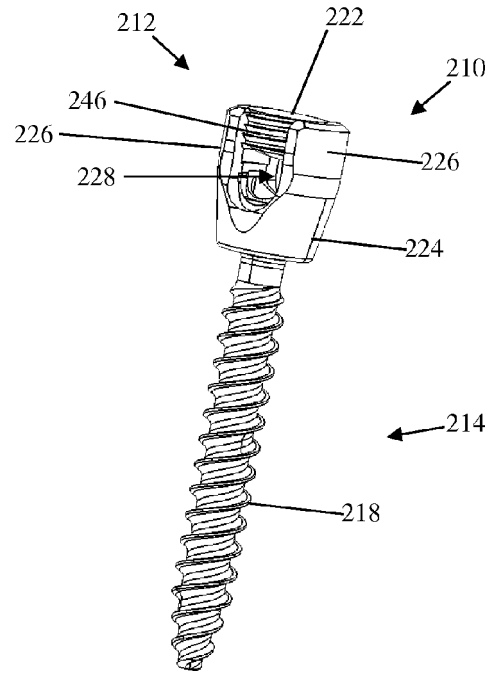


Fig. 25

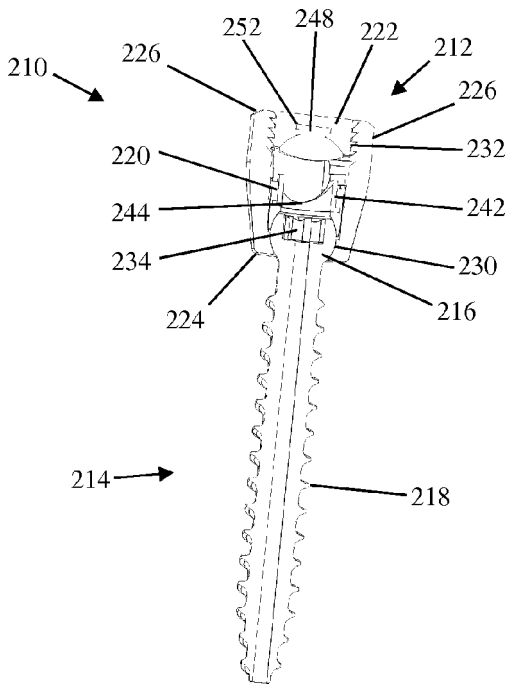


Fig. 26

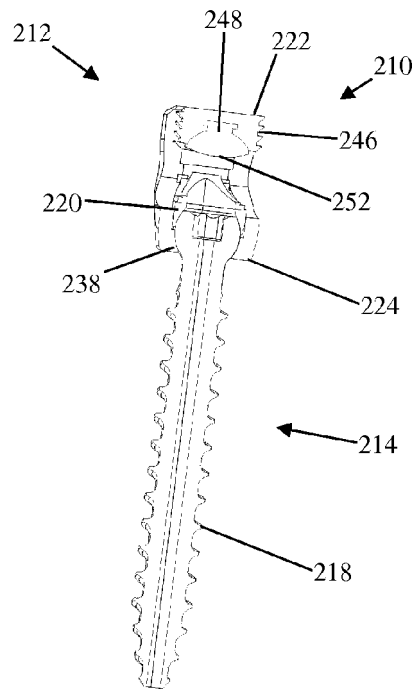


Fig. 27

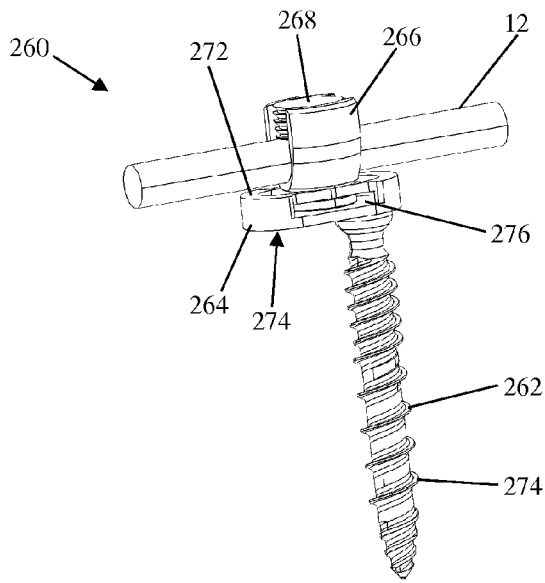


Fig. 28

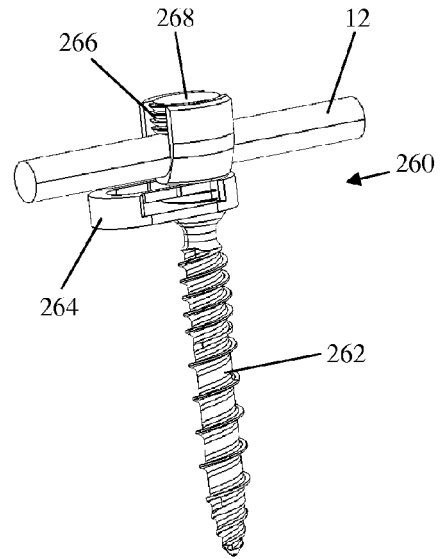


Fig. 29

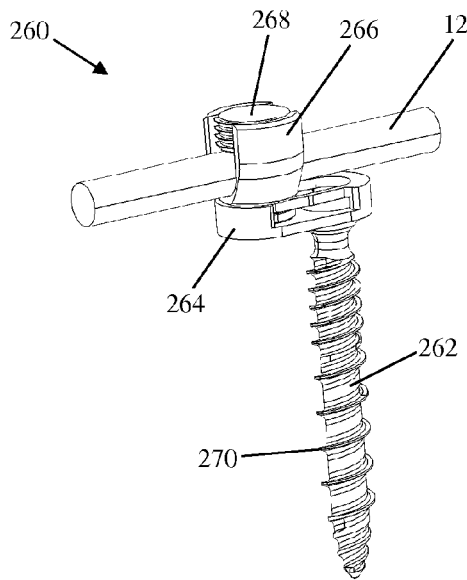


Fig. 30

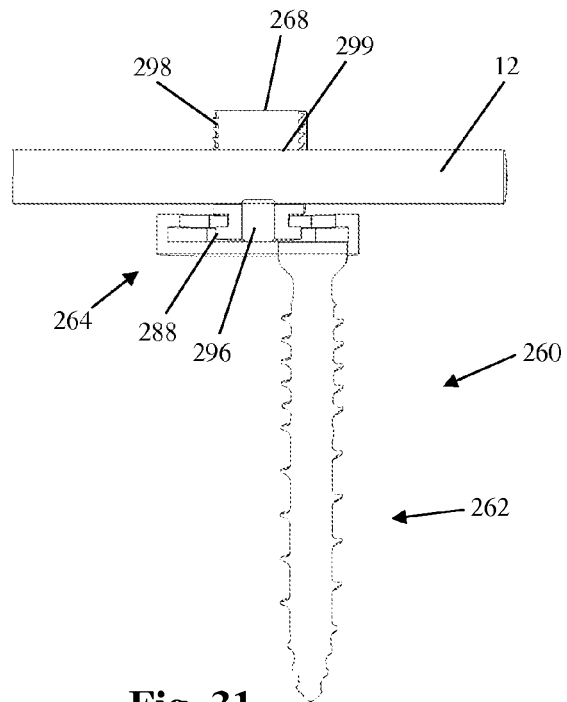


Fig. 31

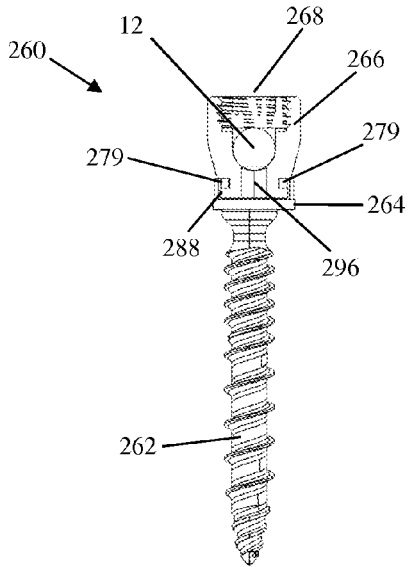


Fig. 32

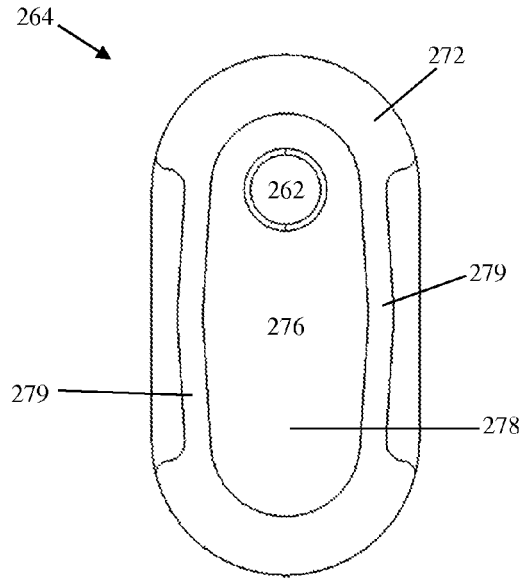


Fig. 33

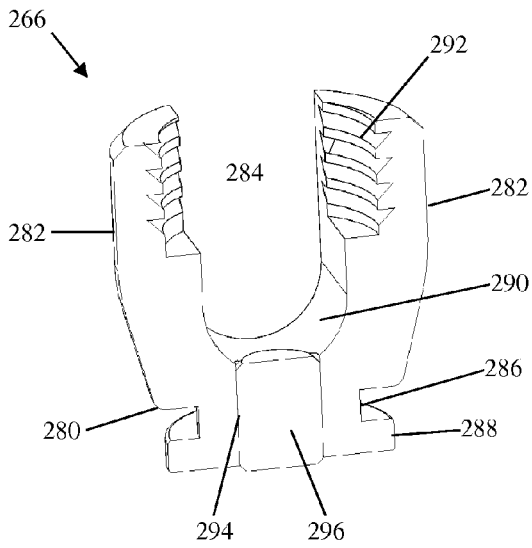


Fig. 34

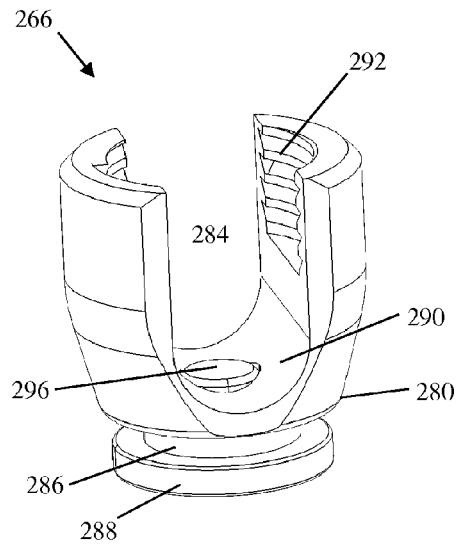


Fig. 35

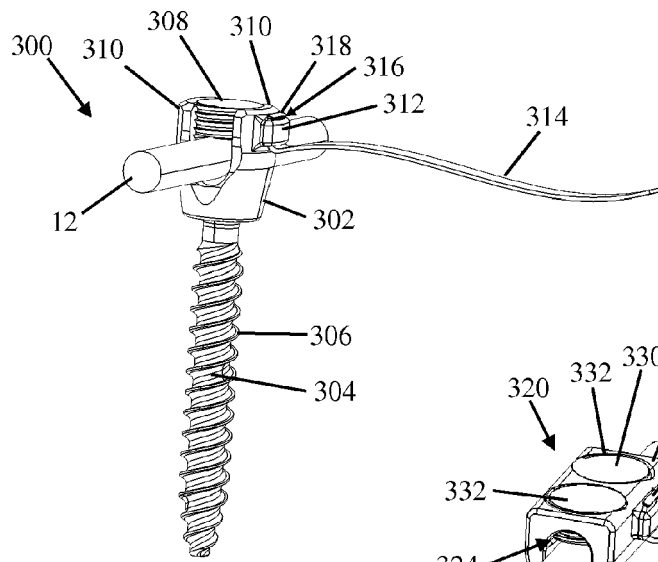


Fig. 36

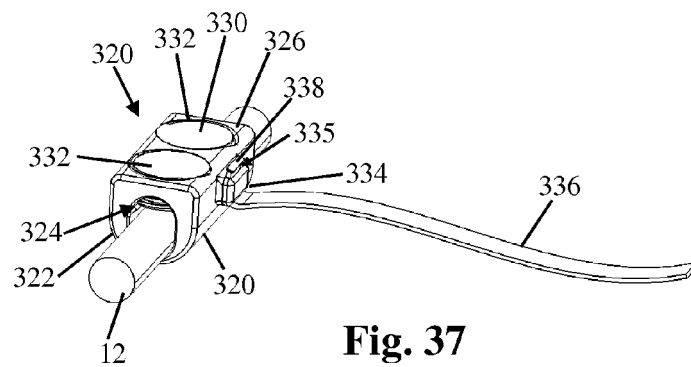


Fig. 37

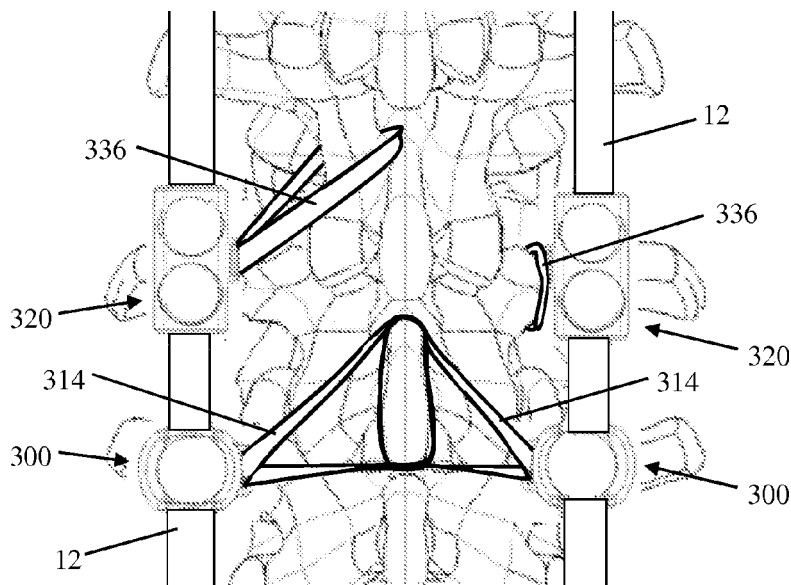


Fig. 38

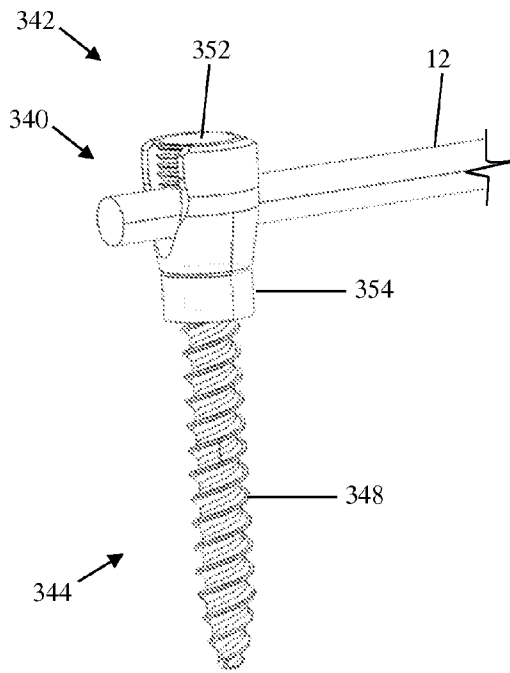


Fig. 39

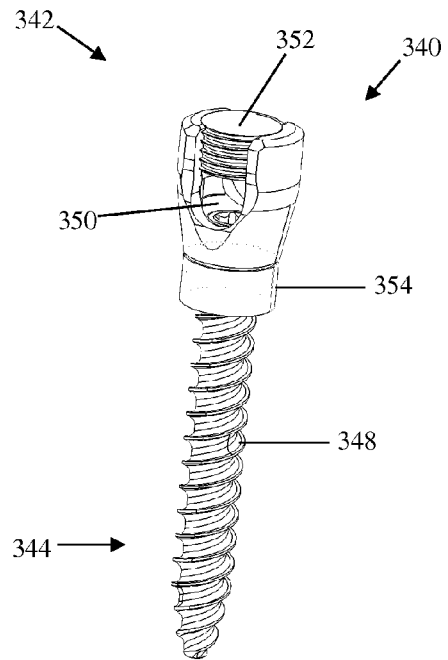


Fig. 40

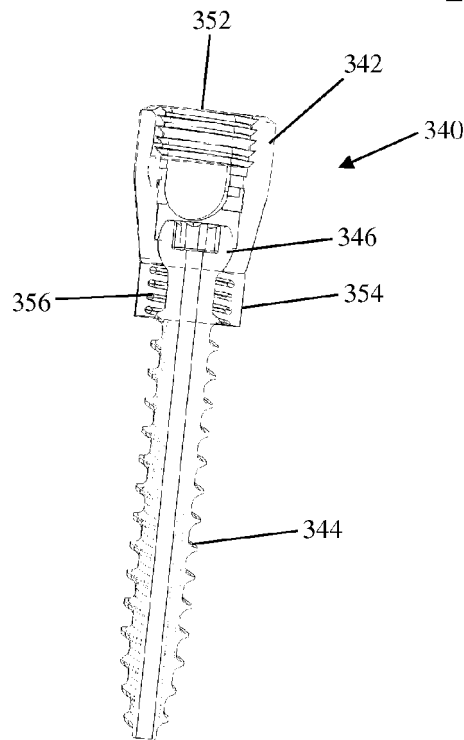


Fig. 41

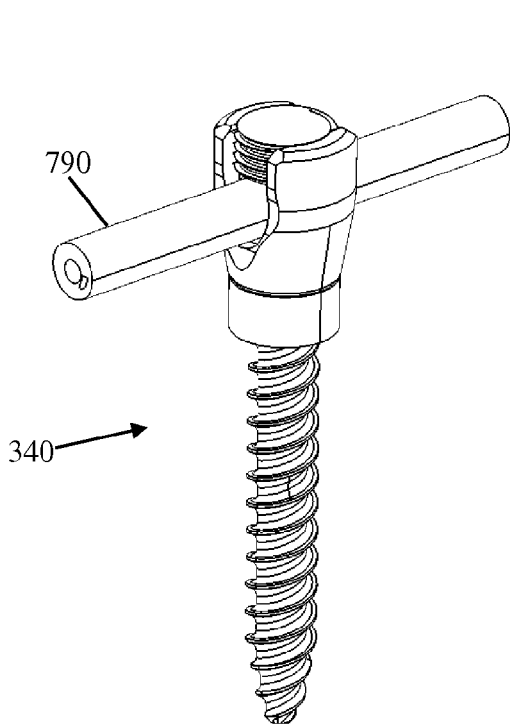


Fig. 42

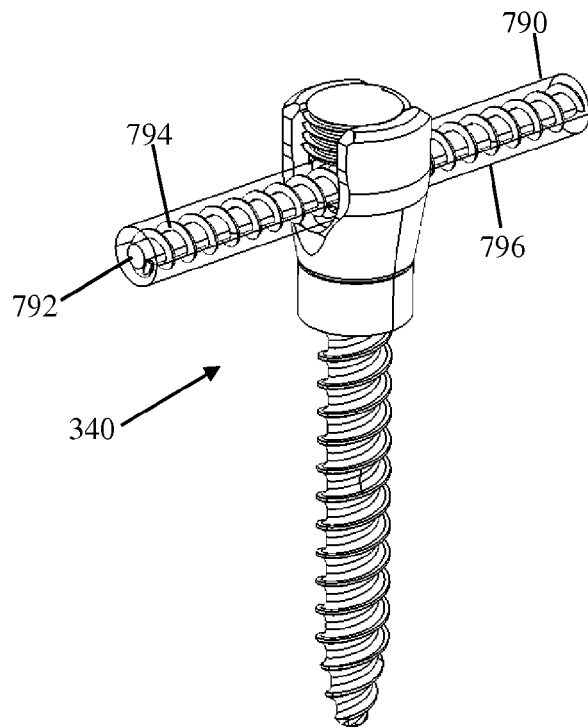


Fig. 43

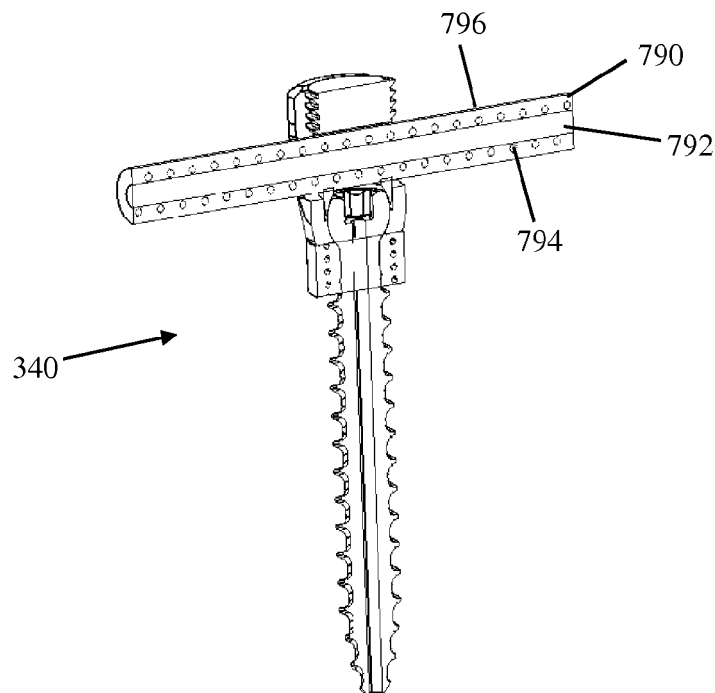


Fig. 44

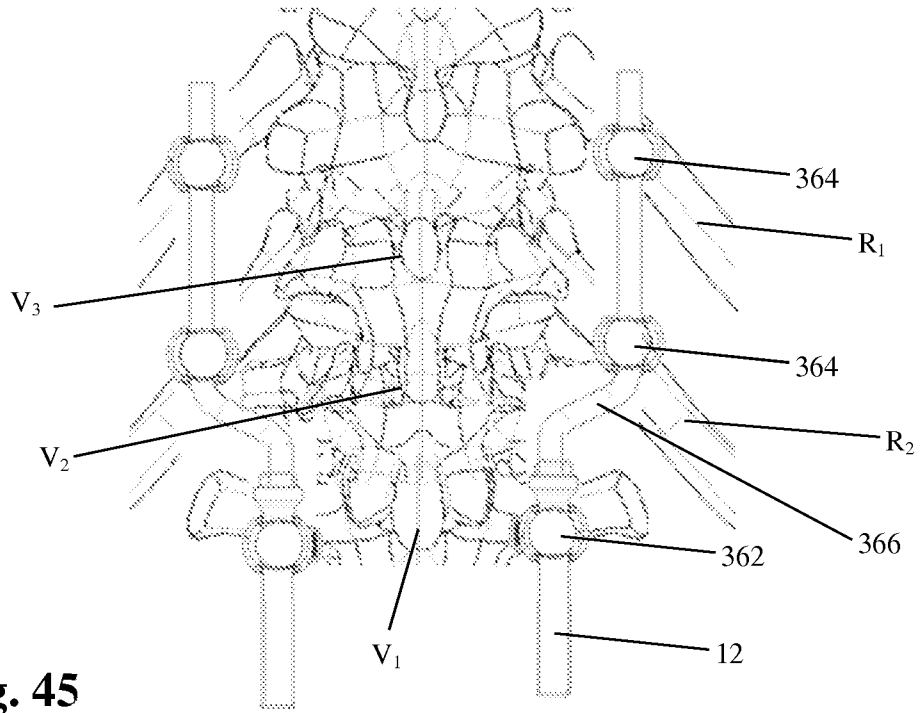


Fig. 45

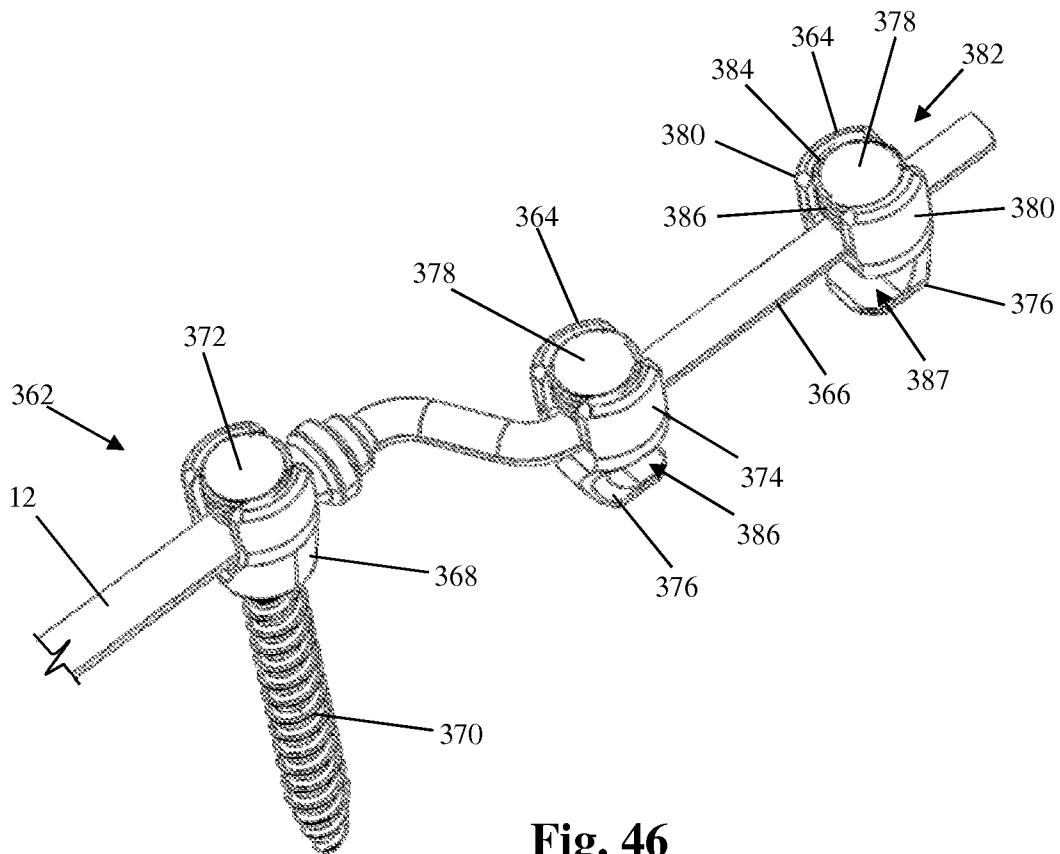


Fig. 46

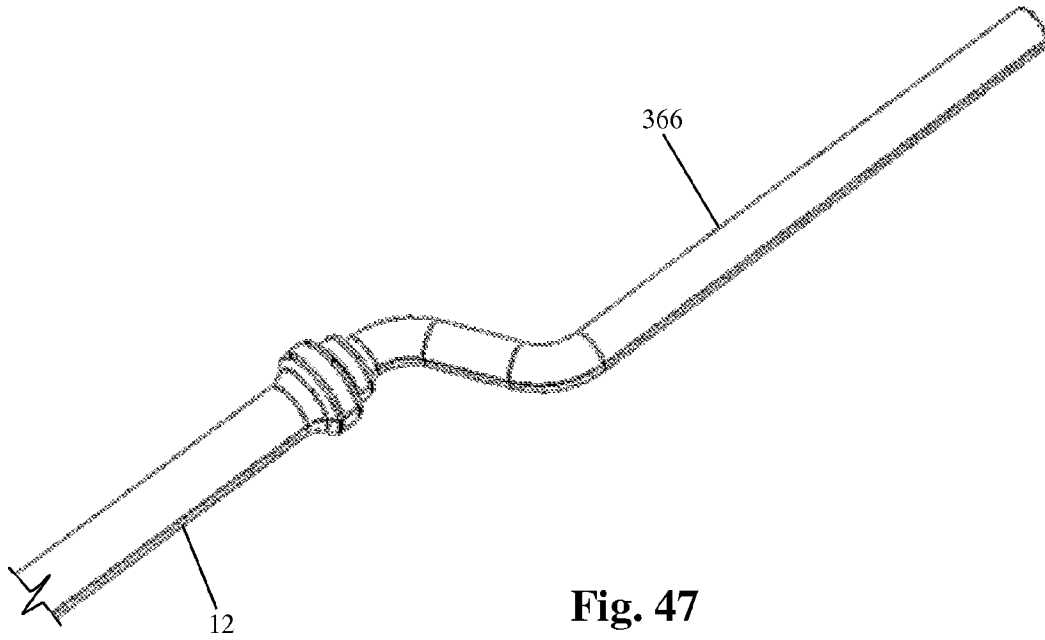


Fig. 47

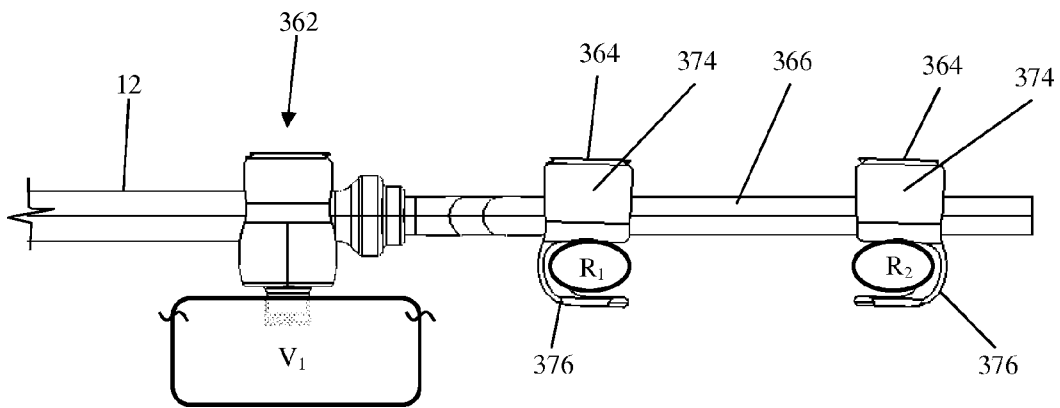


Fig. 48

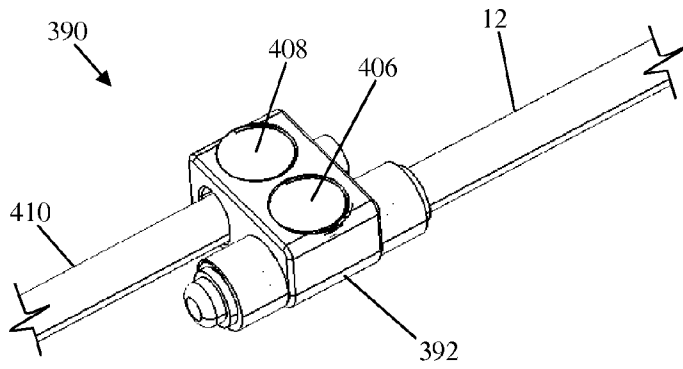


Fig. 49

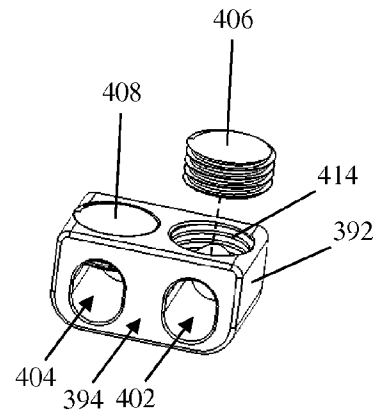


Fig. 50

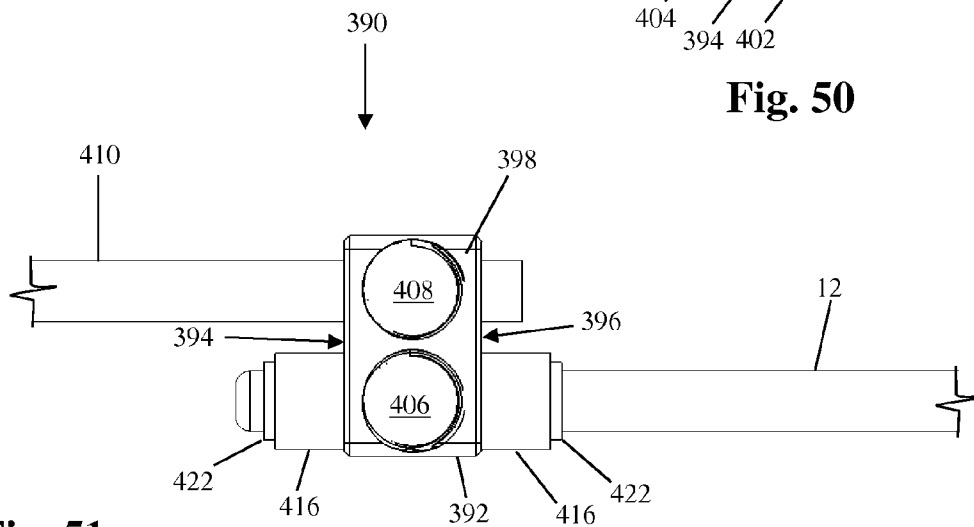


Fig. 51

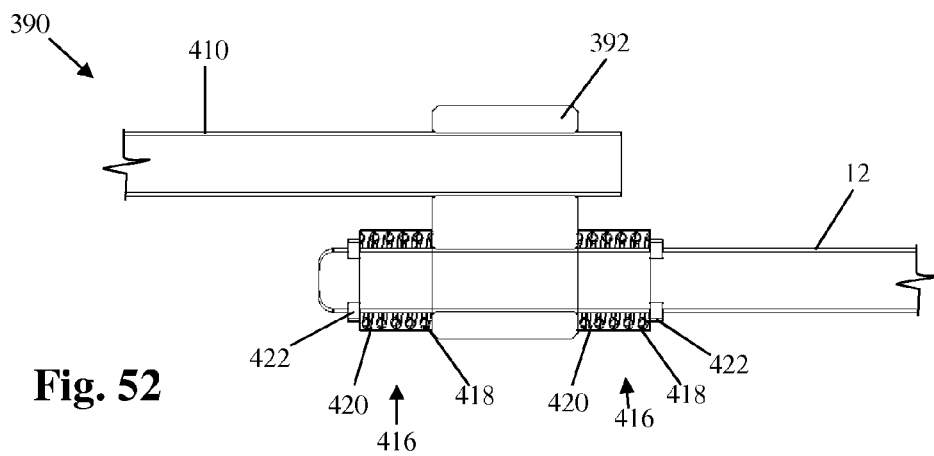


Fig. 52

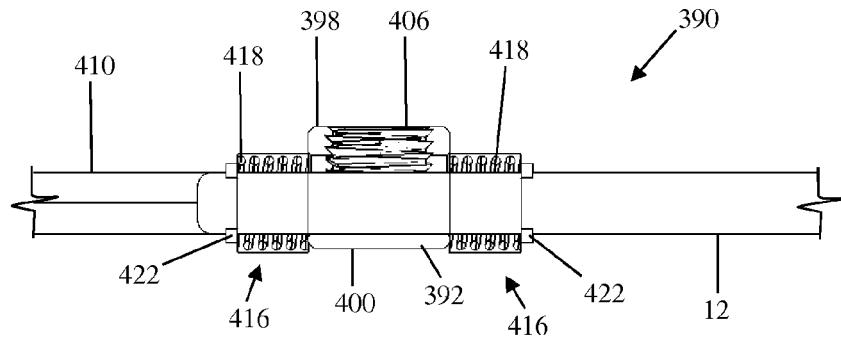


Fig. 53

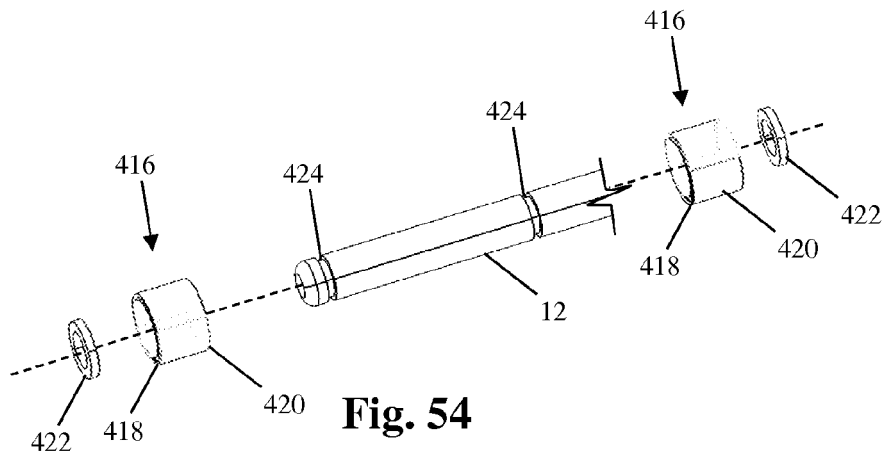


Fig. 54

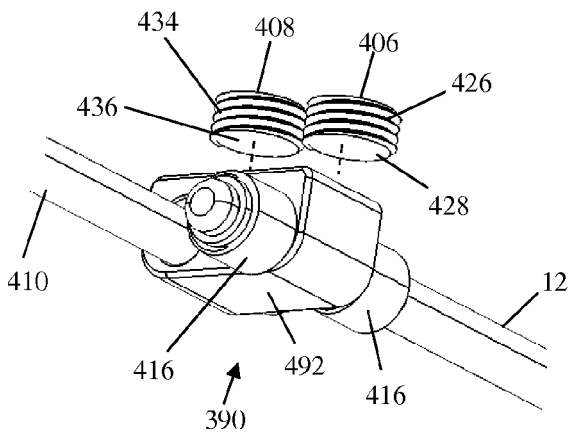


Fig. 55

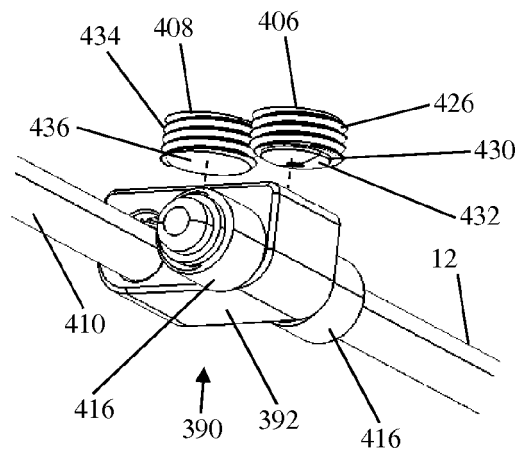


Fig. 56

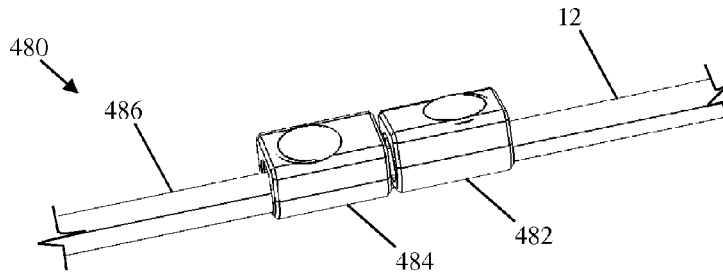


Fig. 62

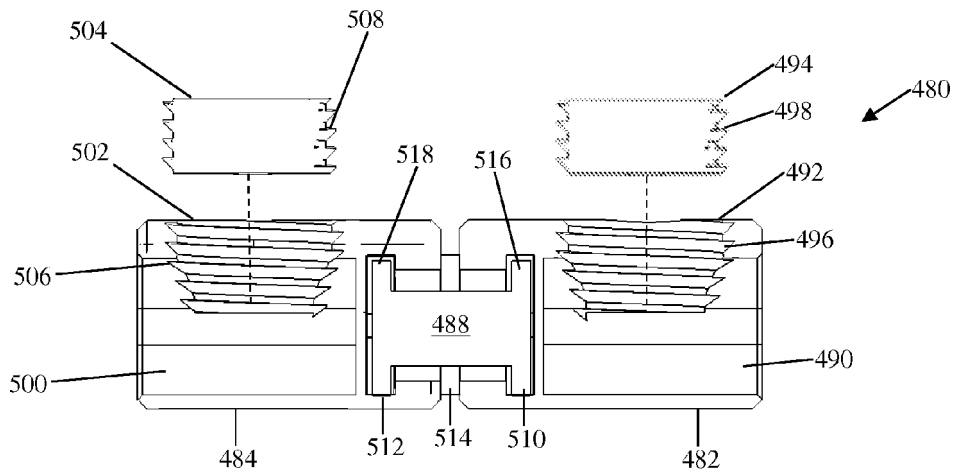


Fig. 63

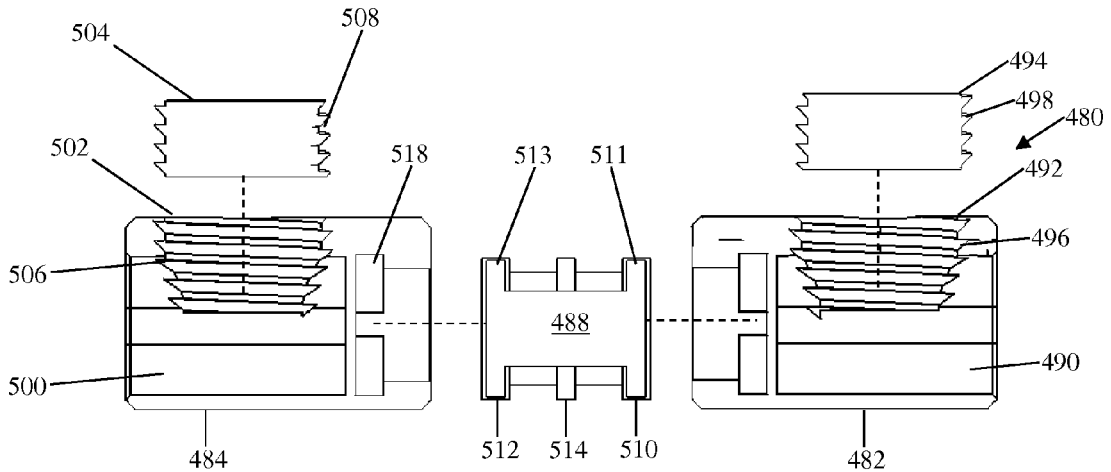


Fig. 64

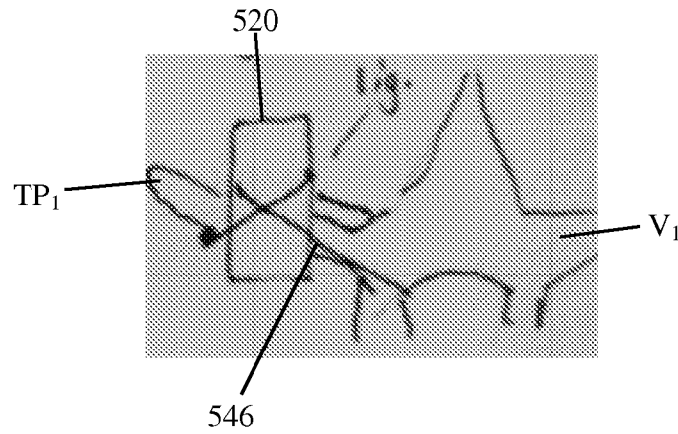


Fig. 65

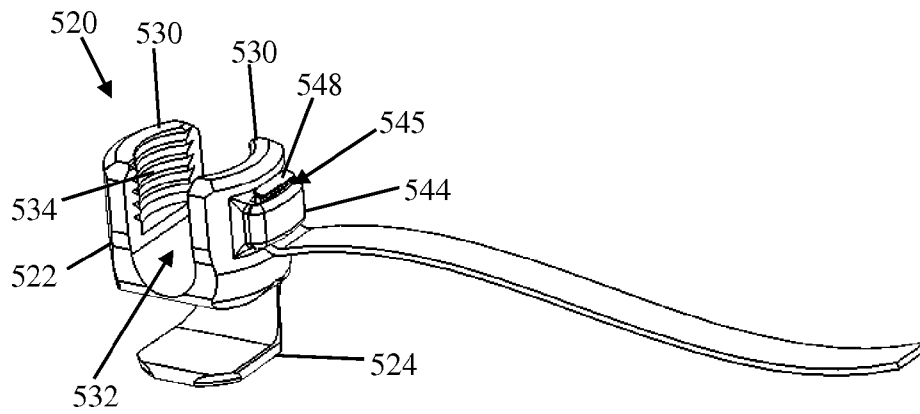


Fig. 66

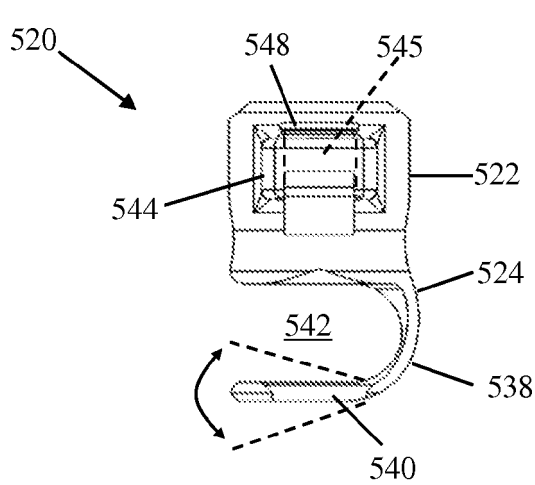


Fig. 67

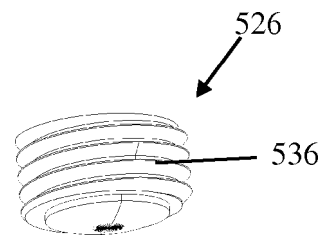


Fig. 68

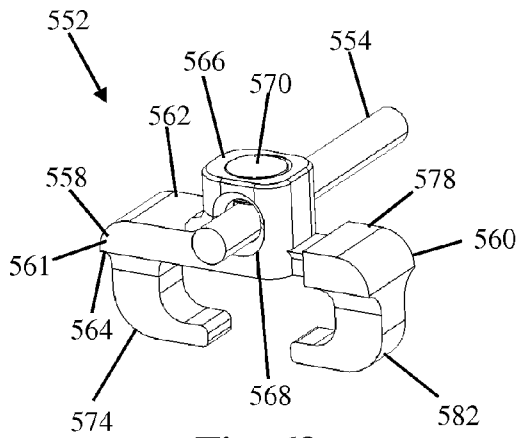


Fig. 69

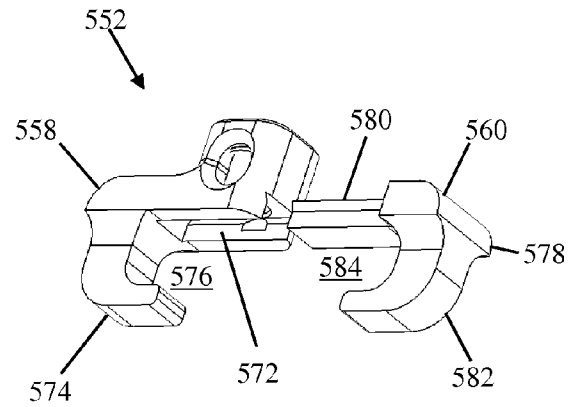


Fig. 70

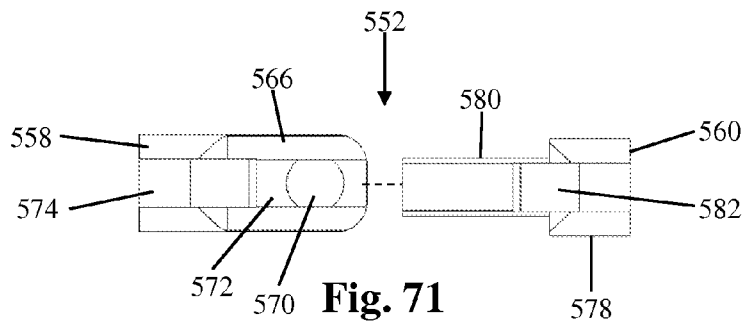


Fig. 71

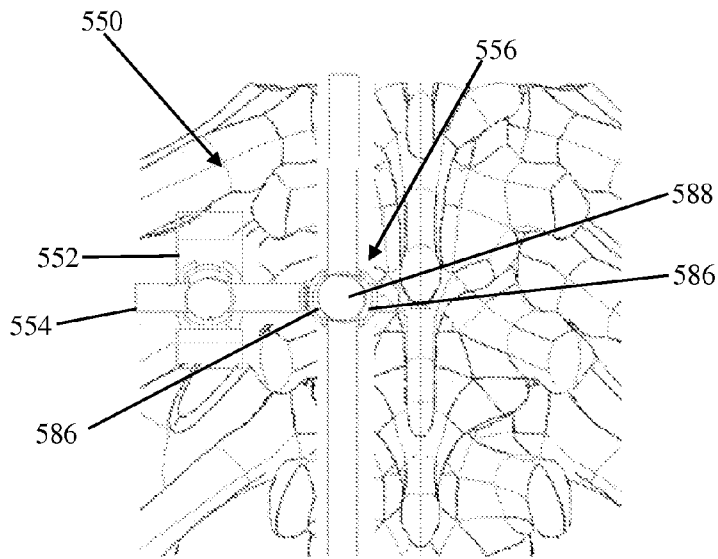


Fig. 72

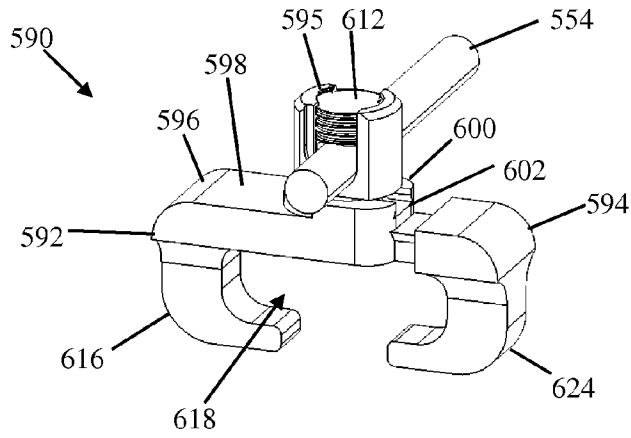


Fig. 73

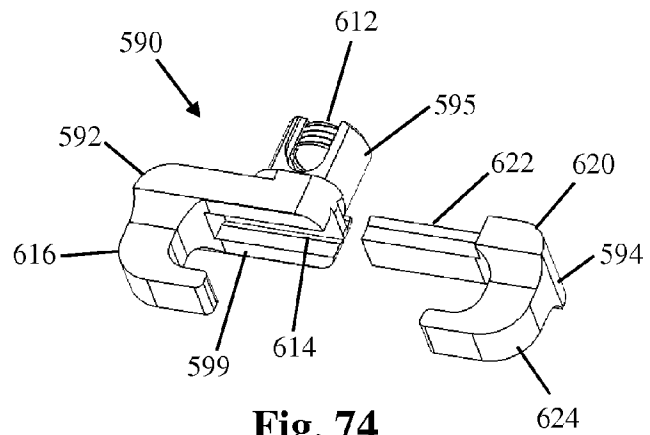


Fig. 74

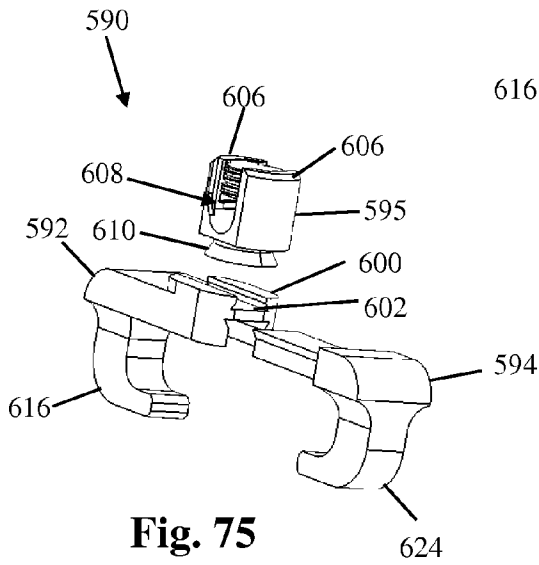


Fig. 75

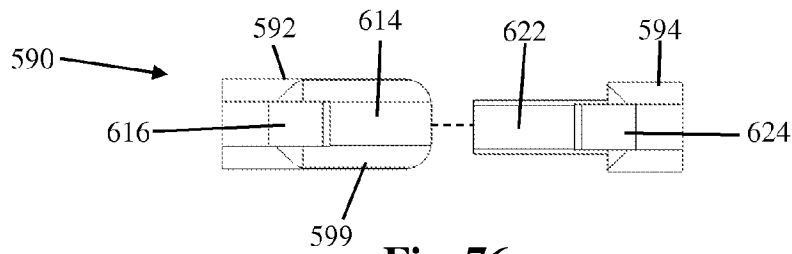


Fig. 76

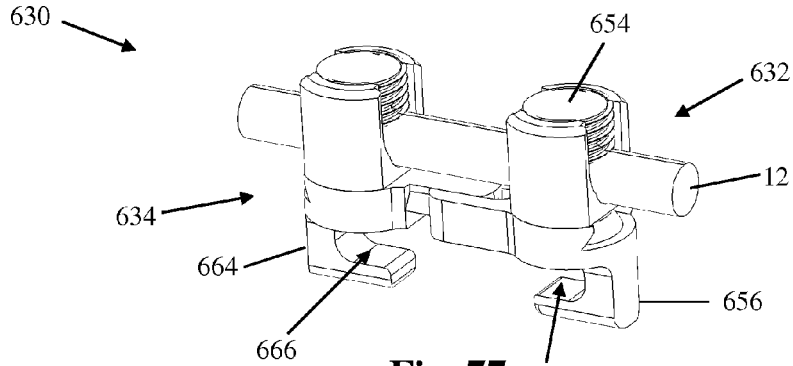


Fig. 77

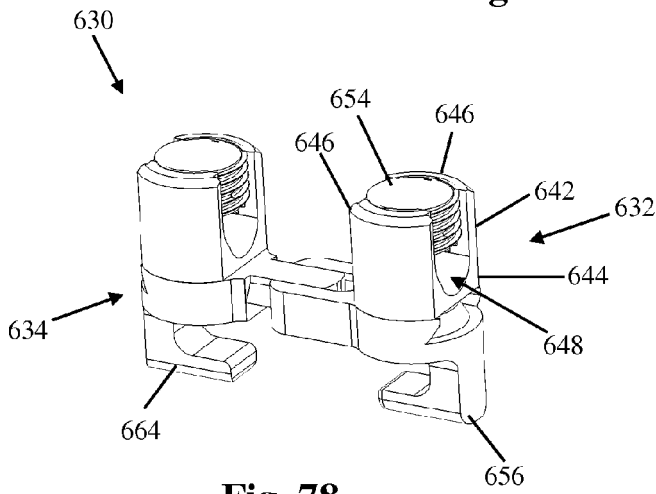


Fig. 78

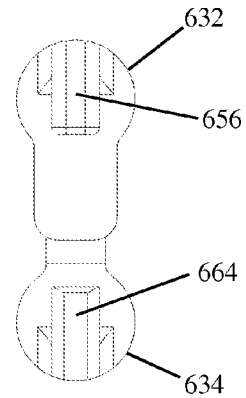


Fig. 80

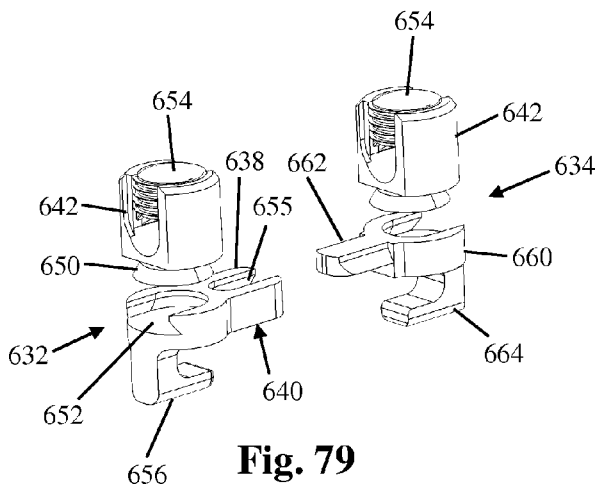


Fig. 79

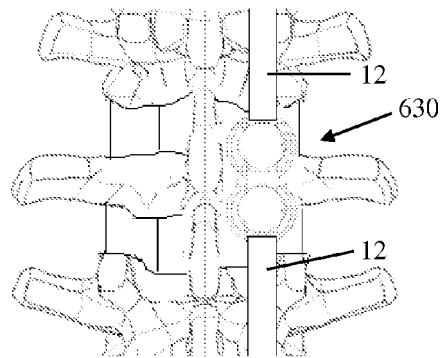


Fig. 81

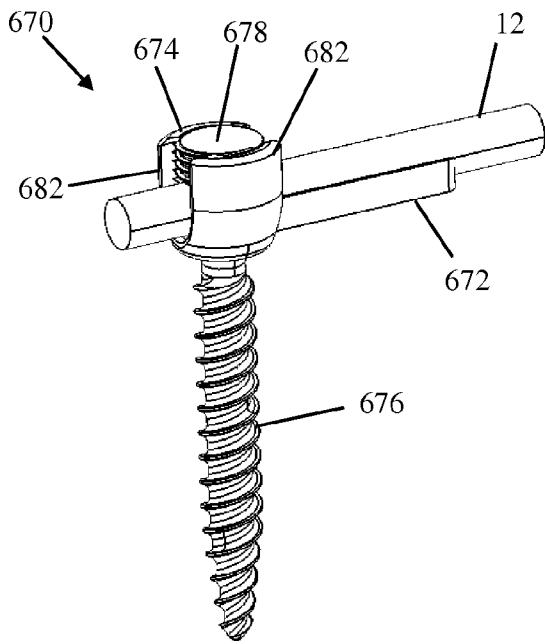


Fig. 82

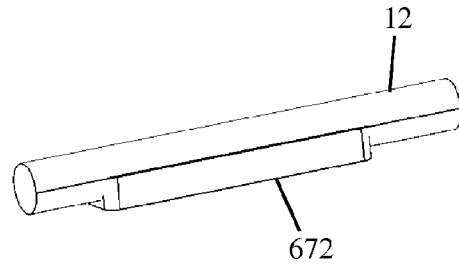


Fig. 83

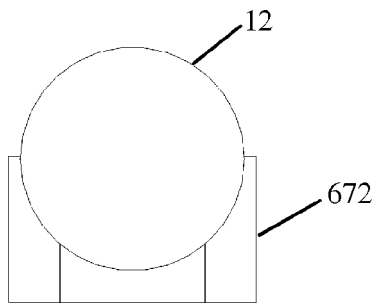


Fig. 84

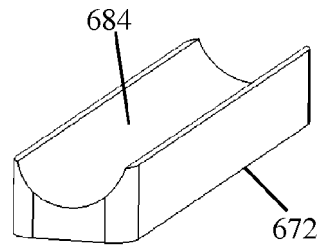


Fig. 85

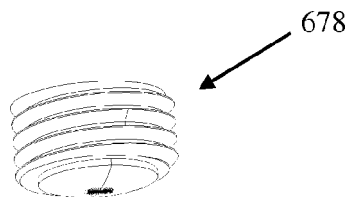


Fig. 86

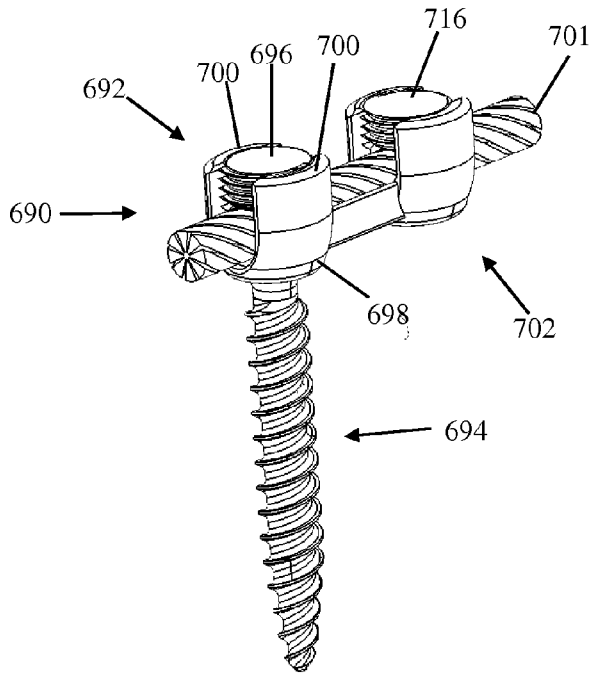


Fig. 87

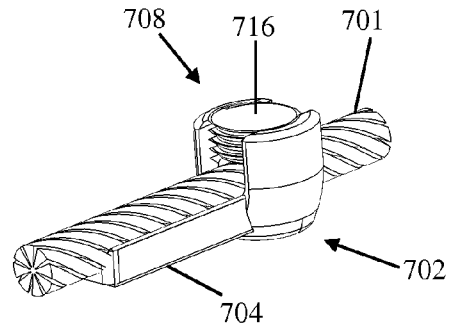


Fig. 88

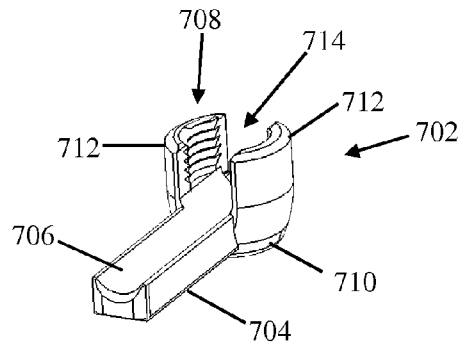


Fig. 89

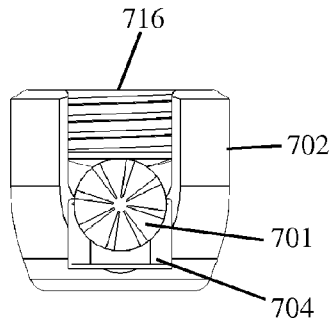


Fig. 90

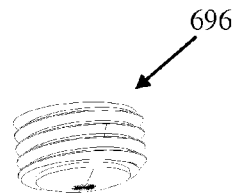


Fig. 91

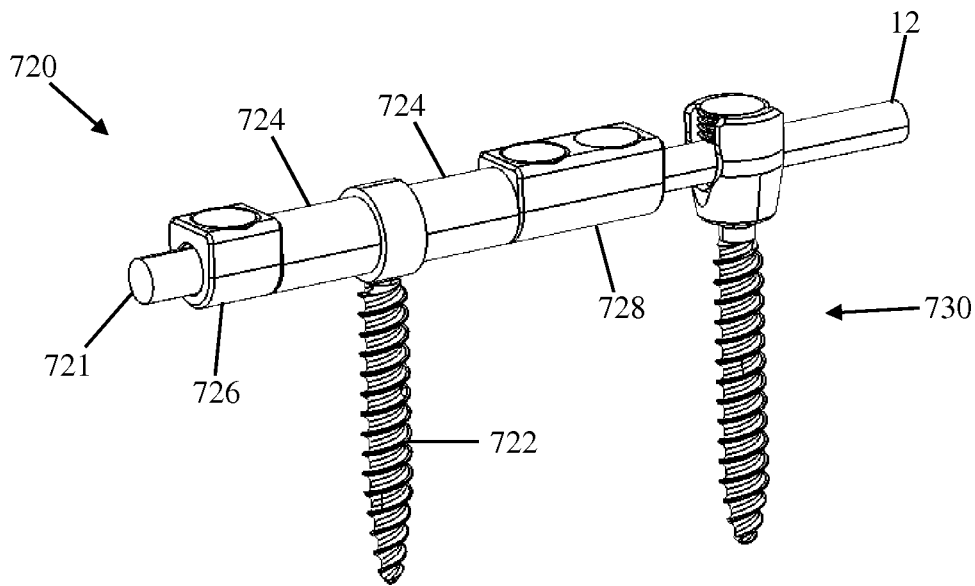


Fig. 92

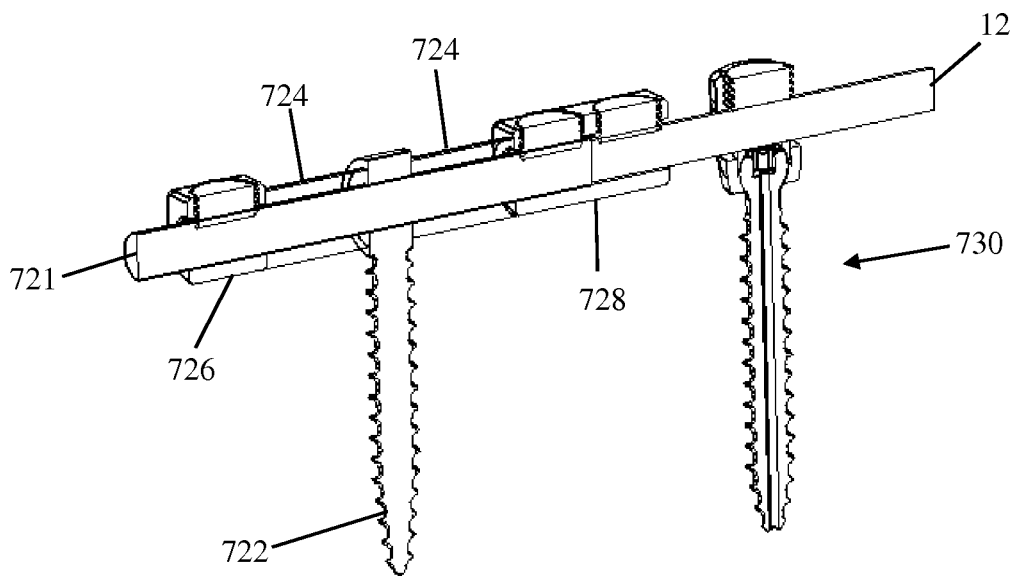


Fig. 93

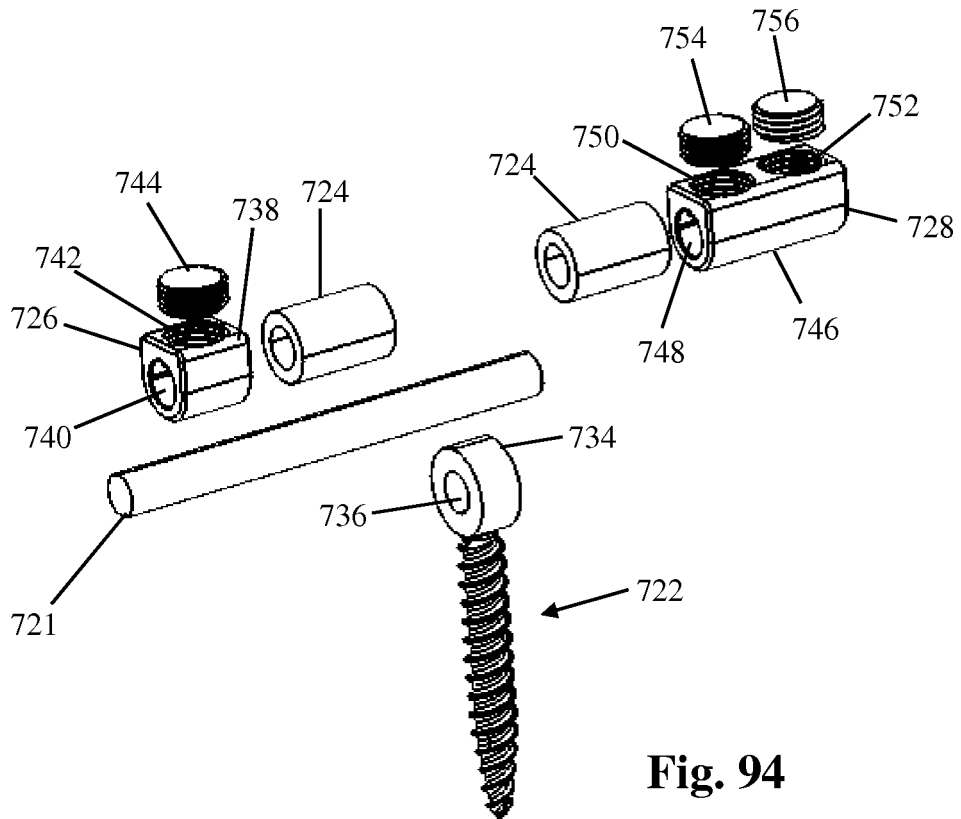


Fig. 94

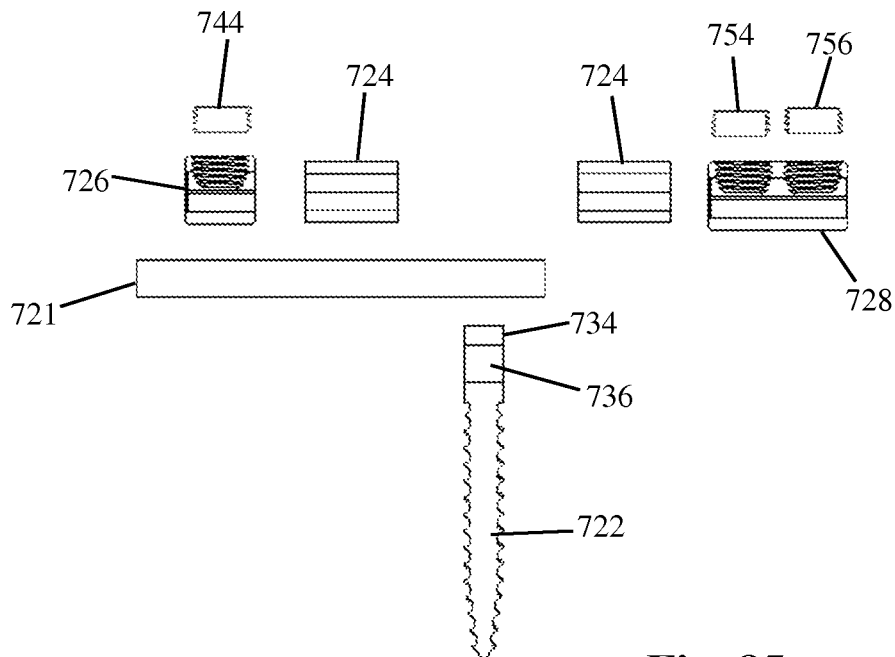


Fig. 95

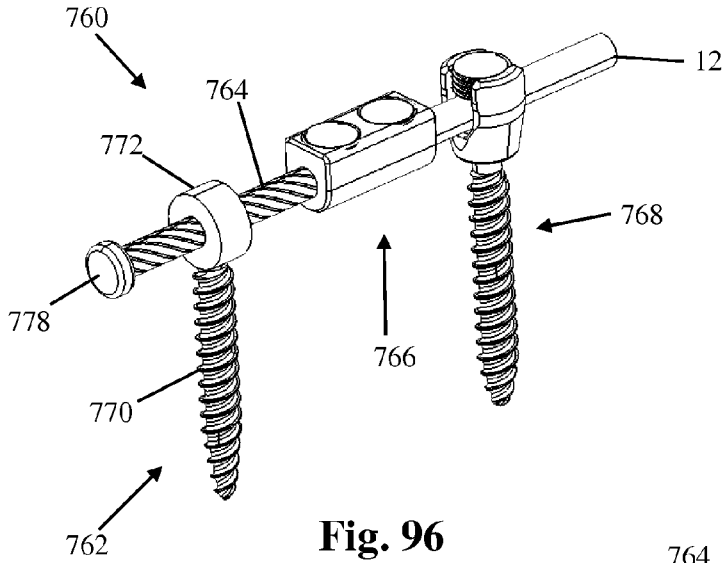


Fig. 96

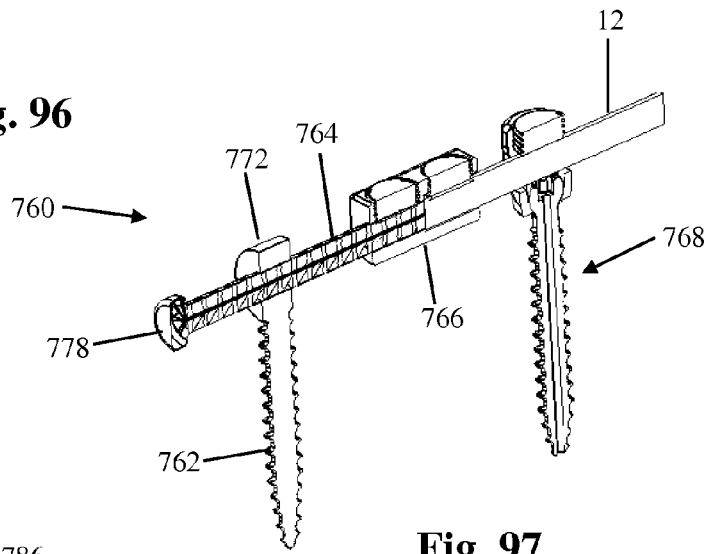


Fig. 97

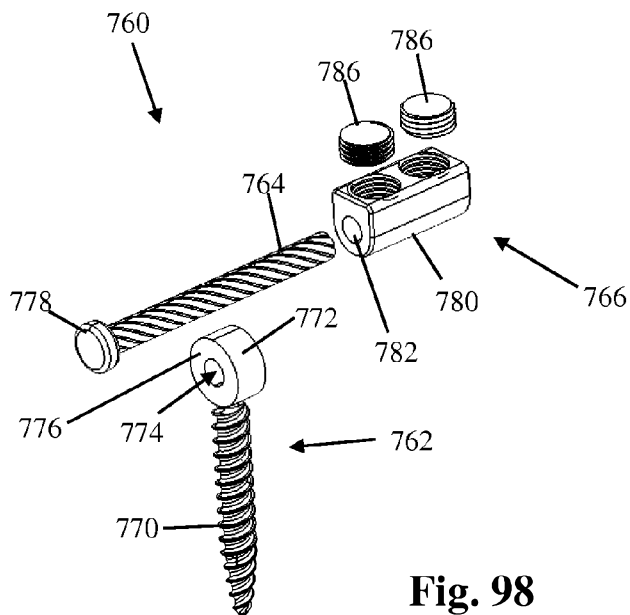


Fig. 98

SPINAL FIXATION CONSTRUCTS AND RELATED METHODS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a non-provisional utility application which claims the benefit of priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) to U.S. Provisional Application 61/988,066, filed on May 2, 2014, the entire contents of which are incorporated by reference into this disclosure as if set forth in its entirety herein.

FIELD

The present application relates generally to implants and methods used with, or forming part of, a spinal fixation construct and directed at preventing the occurrence of or reducing the degree of adjacent segment pathology and failures occurring at either the distal junction (DJK) or proximal junction (PJK).

BACKGROUND

The spine is formed of a column of vertebra that extends between the cranium and pelvis. The three major sections of the spine are known as the cervical, thoracic and lumbar regions. There are 7 cervical vertebrae (C1-C7), 12 thoracic vertebrae (T1-T12), and 5 lumbar vertebrae (L1-L5), with each of the 24 vertebrae being separated from each other by an intervertebral disc. A series of about 9 fused vertebrae extend from the lumbar region of the spine and make up the sacral and coccygeal regions of the vertebral column. The natural curvature of the spine includes a combination of lordosis and kyphosis. Specifically, the cervical and lumbar portions of the spine exhibit a natural lordotic curvature, meaning that they are set in a curve that is anteriorly convex (and posteriorly concave). The thoracic portion of the spine has a naturally kyphotic curvature, meaning that it is set in a curve that is anteriorly concave (and posteriorly convex).

The main functions of the spine are to provide skeletal support and protect the spinal cord. Even slight disruptions to either the intervertebral discs or vertebrae can result in serious discomfort as well as compression of nerve fibers either within the spinal cord or extending from the spinal cord. If a disruption to the spine becomes severe enough, severe pain, disability and damage to a nerve or part of the spinal cord may occur and can result in partial to total loss of bodily functions (e.g., walking, talking, breathing, etc.). Therefore, it is of great interest and concern to be able to both correct and prevent any ailments of the spine.

Fixation systems are often surgically implanted to stabilize or immobilize a portion of the spine. They are generally utilized during spinal fusion procedures to immobilize the applicable vertebrae until bone growth occurs to effect the fusion and/or to correct vertebral alignment issues. Fixation systems often use a combination of rods, plates, pedicle screws, and bone hooks to attach a fixation construct to the affected vertebrae. The configuration required for each procedure and patient varies due to the ailment being treated, the specific method of treatment (e.g. surgical approach, etc. . . .) and the patient's specific anatomical characteristics.

Depending upon the pathology presented, correction of spinal ailments may involve only one vertebral level (i.e. a single intervertebral disc and the two vertebral bodies adjacent that intervertebral disc) or multiple spinal levels. An extreme example of a multiple level treatment relates to

deformity correction (e.g. scoliosis correction) in which a screw and rod construct is implanted along a significant length of the spine in an attempt to forcibly correct or maintain a desired spinal alignment.

Whatever the treatment, the goal remains to improve the quality of life for the patient. In the vast majority of cases this goal is achieved, however in some instances patients who receive implants to treat the primary pathology develop a secondary condition called junctional disease. Most commonly this occurs at the proximal or cephalad area of spinal instrumentation and is then termed adjacent segment pathology. Clinical Adjacent Segment Pathology (CASP) refers to clinical symptoms and signs related to adjacent segment pathology. Radiographic Adjacent Segment Pathology (RASP) refers to radiographic changes that occur at the adjacent segment. A subcategory of CASP and RASP that occurs at the proximal end of the instrumentation is termed proximal junctional kyphosis (PJK). PJK may be defined in several manners and commonly is specified as kyphosis measured from one segment cephalad to the upper end instrumented vertebra to the proximal instrumented vertebra with abnormal value defined as 10 degrees or greater. In practice this often means that the patient's head and/or shoulders tend to fall forward to a greater degree than should normally occur. Sometimes the degree is significant.

Adjacent segment pathology can occur as either a degenerative, traumatic or catastrophic condition and sometimes as a result from a combination of factors. Degenerative conditions are ones that occur over a period of time, normally 5 or 6 years but can occur at an accelerated rate particularly with altered mechanics related to spinal fusion. As a result the patient's head and/or shoulder region(s) fall forward gradually over time. Traumatic and catastrophic conditions occur as a generally sudden shifting of the vertebral body immediately cephalad to the upper end instrumented vertebra and can lead to sudden changes in spinal alignment with marked symptoms noted by the patient.

Whether the condition is degenerative, traumatic or catastrophic, the exact cause of adjacent segment pathology is uncertain. Generally, it is believed that adjacent segment pathology and more specifically PJK is a result of excess strain and stress on the proximal instrumented spinal segment which is then at least partially transferred to the bone structures, disc, ligaments and other soft tissues, causing a loss of normal structural integrity and mechanical properties. The resultant effect can be a forward (i.e. kyphotic) shift of the adjacent non-instrumented vertebral body. One such theory is that this strain and stress is caused by suboptimal alignment and/or balance of the screw and rod construct. Another theory is that the rigidity of the screw and rod construct causes the problem in that the transition from a motion-restrained segment to a motion-unrestrained segment is too much for the non-instrumented (unrestrained) segment to handle over time. Yet another theory speculates that the specific level at which the proximal instrumented vertebra is located is of vital importance in that some levels may be better suited to handle a proximal termination of a fixation construct than others.

Thus there remains a need for continued improvements and new systems for spinal fixation with a specific goal of preventing the occurrence of or reducing the degree of adjacent segment pathology and failures occurring at either the distal junction (DJK) or proximal junction (PJK). The implants and techniques described herein are directed towards overcoming these challenges and others associated with posterior spinal fixation.

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE DRAWINGS

Many advantages of the present invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art with a reading of this specification in conjunction with the attached drawings, wherein like reference numerals are applied to like elements and wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of one example of a vertebral fixation system including various elements described in this disclosure;

FIGS. 2 and 3 are perspective views of one example of a fixed angle bone anchor forming part of the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 4 and 5 are perspective sectional views of the bone anchor of FIG. 2;

FIGS. 6 and 7 are perspective views of another example of a fixed angle bone anchor forming part of the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 8 is a perspective sectional view of the bone anchor of FIG. 6;

FIGS. 9 and 10 are perspective and sectional views, respectively, of a locking element forming part of the bone anchor of FIG. 6;

FIGS. 11 and 12 are perspective views of still another example of a fixed angle bone anchor forming part of the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 13 and 14 are perspective sectional views of the bone anchor of FIG. 11;

FIGS. 15 and 16 are perspective views of one example of a polyaxial bone anchor forming part of the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 17 and 18 are perspective sectional views of the bone anchor of FIG. 15;

FIGS. 19 and 20 are perspective and sectional views, respectively, of a rod seat insert forming part of the bone anchor of FIG. 15;

FIGS. 21 and 22 are perspective views of another example of a polyaxial bone anchor forming part of the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 23 is a perspective sectional view of the bone anchor of FIG. 21;

FIGS. 24 and 25 are perspective views of another example of a fixed angle bone anchor forming part of the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 26 and 27 are perspective sectional views of the bone anchor of FIG. 24;

FIGS. 28-30 are perspective views of an example of a bone anchor having a translating tulip configured for use with and forming part of the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 31 and 32 are sectional views of the bone anchor of FIG. 28;

FIG. 33 is a plan view of a translation base forming part of the bone anchor of FIG. 28;

FIGS. 34 and 35 are sectional and perspective views, respectively, of a rod-receiving member forming part of the bone anchor of FIG. 28;

FIG. 36 is a perspective view of an example of a bone anchor with attached tether configured for use with and forming part of the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 37 is a perspective view of an example of a rod attachment with attached tether configured for use with and forming part of the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 38 is a plan view of the bone anchor of FIG. 36 and the rod attachment of FIG. 37 in use on a human spine;

FIGS. 39 and 40 are perspective view of still another example of a bone anchor suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 41 is a sectional view of the bone anchor of FIG. 39;

FIGS. 42 and 43 are perspective view, respectively, of the bone anchor of FIG. 39 in use with an example of a flexible rod suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 44 is a sectional view of the bone anchor and flexible rod combination of FIG. 42;

FIG. 45 is a plan view of a portion of a spine with an implanted transition apparatus suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 46 is a perspective view of the transition apparatus of FIG. 45;

FIG. 47 is a perspective view of a rod-cord hybrid forming part of the transition apparatus of FIG. 45;

FIG. 48 is a side plan view of the transition apparatus of FIG. 45;

FIG. 49 is a perspective view of another example of a transition apparatus suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 50 is a perspective view of a housing unit forming part of the transition apparatus of FIG. 49;

FIGS. 51 and 52 are plan and top sectional views, respectively, of the transition apparatus of FIG. 49;

FIG. 53 is a side sectional view of the transition apparatus of FIG. 49;

FIG. 54 is an exploded view of a spinal rod terminus forming part of the transition apparatus of FIG. 49;

FIGS. 55 and 56 are perspective views of the transition apparatus of FIG. 49;

FIG. 57 is a perspective view of yet another transition apparatus suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 58 and 59 are plan views of the transition apparatus of FIG. 57;

FIG. 60 is an exploded perspective view of the transition apparatus of FIG. 57;

FIG. 61 is an exploded sectional view of the transition apparatus of FIG. 57;

FIG. 62 is a perspective view of another example of a transition apparatus suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 63 is a partially exploded sectional view of the transition apparatus of FIG. 62;

FIG. 64 is an exploded sectional view of the transition apparatus of FIG. 62;

FIG. 65 is a plan view of a partial spine with another example of a bone anchor suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1 attached thereto;

FIG. 66 is a perspective view of the bone anchor of FIG. 65;

FIG. 67 is a side plan view of the bone anchor of FIG. 65;

FIG. 68 is a perspective view of a locking element forming part of the bone anchor of FIG. 65;

FIGS. 69 and 70 are perspective views of an example of a rib clamp forming part of a bone anchor suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 71 is an exploded plan view of the rib clamp of FIG. 69;

FIG. 72 is a plan view of the bone anchor of FIG. 69 implanted within a human spine;

FIGS. 73-75 are perspective views of an alternative example of a rib clamp forming part of the bone anchor of FIG. 72;

FIG. 76 is an exploded plan view of the rib clamp of FIG. 73;

FIGS. 77 and 78 are perspective views of another example of a bone anchor forming part of the vertebral fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 79 is an exploded perspective view of the bone anchor of FIG. 77;

FIG. 80 is a plan view of the bone anchor of FIG. 77;

FIG. 81 is a plan view of the bone anchor of FIG. 77 implanted within a human spine;

FIG. 82 is a perspective view of an example of a bone anchor having a rod bumper configured for use with the spinal fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 83 and 84 are perspective and plan views, respectively, of the spinal rod and rod bumper of FIG. 82;

FIG. 85 is a perspective view of the rod bumper of FIG. 82;

FIG. 86 is a perspective view of a locking element forming part of the bone anchor of FIG. 82;

FIG. 87 is a perspective view of an alternative example of a bone anchor and rod bumper combination configured for use with the spinal fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 88 and 89 are perspective and plan views, respectively, of the spinal rod and rod bumper of FIG. 87;

FIG. 90 is a perspective view of the rod bumper of FIG. 87;

FIG. 91 is a perspective view of a locking element forming part of the bone anchor of FIG. 87;

FIGS. 92 and 93 are perspective and sectional views, respectively of an example of a fixation assembly including an elastomeric bumper configured for use with the spinal fixation system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 94 is an exploded view of the fixation assembly of FIG. 92;

FIG. 95 is an exploded perspective view of the fixation assembly of FIG. 92;

FIGS. 96 and 97 are perspective and sectional views, respectively, of another example of a fixation assembly including cable and a flexion stop configured for use with the spinal fixation system of FIG. 1; and

FIG. 98 is an exploded view of the fixation assembly of FIG. 96.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Illustrative embodiments of the invention are described below. In the interest of clarity, not all features of an actual implementation are described in this specification. It will of course be appreciated that in the development of any such actual embodiment, numerous implementation-specific decisions must be made to achieve the developers' specific goals, such as compliance with system-related and business-related constraints, which will vary from one implementation to another. Moreover, it will be appreciated that such a development effort might be complex and time-consuming, but would nevertheless be a routine undertaking for those of ordinary skill in the art having the benefit of this disclosure. The vertebral fixation system and methods described herein boast a variety of inventive features and components that warrant patent protection, both individually and in combination.

This disclosure describes a variety of transitional or terminal components that may be implanted as part of a spinal fixation construct to decrease the potential for subsequent development of junctional disease or failure. In the examples shown only the cephalad most level (for terminal

hardware) or levels (for multilevel transitional hardware) of the fixation construct (e.g. those utilizing the exemplary components described herein) are illustrated. It should be appreciated, however, that the entire fixation construct may extend any number of levels from a single level construct to a long construct spanning multiple spinal levels and multiple spinal regions from the lumbosacral to cervical regions (such as the example construct illustrated in FIG. 1), and with any variety of combinations of known anchors, rods, and connectors. It should also be appreciated that the exemplary terminal and/or transitional components may additionally or alternatively be utilized at the caudal end of the fixation construct. Moreover, although the vertebral fixation systems described herein may be used along any aspect of the spine (e.g. anterior, posterior, antero-lateral, posterolateral) they are particularly suited for implantation along a posterior aspect of the spine.

FIG. 1 illustrates an example of a vertebral fixation system 10 of the type that is used with the devices and methods described in this disclosure. By way of example, the vertebral fixation system 10 is a screw-and-rod construct adapted for implantation along the posterior aspect of the human spinal column. The vertebral fixation system 10 includes a pair of elongate rods 12 dimensioned to span multiple vertebral levels, a plurality of threaded bone anchors 14, a plurality of hook-type bone anchors 16, and a plurality of transverse connectors 22, 24 dimensioned to rigidly engage each of the elongate rods 12 so as to hold each rod in place relative to the other. The transverse connectors 22, 24 may be provided as fixed connectors 22 or adjustable connectors 24, in any quantity that is required by the surgeon performing the implantation surgery. Proximal bone anchors 18 are provided at the proximal (cephalad) terminus of the assembly. Distal bone anchors 20 are provided at the distal (caudal) terminus of the assembly. It is contemplated that any of the examples of bone anchors and other transition assemblies described herein may be substituted for the proximal bone anchors 18 and/or distal bone anchors 20 which are traditionally rigid and identical to the other bone anchors used throughout the construct. It is also contemplated that the examples of flexible transition segments described herein may replace existing hardware at the proximal and/or distal terminus of the vertebral fixation system 10 such that there is no additional surgical footprint realized. It is further contemplated that the examples of flexible transition segments described herein may augment existing hardware at the proximal and/or distal terminus of the vertebral fixation system 10 such that there is additional added surgical footprint realized. This may be more applicable with the various embodiments to that can be installed with minimal disruption of additional muscle tissue and/or ligament structure. Finally, as previously noted junctional disease or failure can be a problem at either the proximal terminus or the distal terminus (or both) of vertebral fixation systems. Therefore, although the various examples disclosed herein may be described in terms of proximal terminus and proximal joint disease (for ease of disclosure) it is to be understood that any of the example embodiments are also applicable and may be used at the distal terminus of the vertebral fixation system without deviating from the scope of this disclosure.

FIGS. 2-5 illustrate a first example of a bone anchor configured for use with the vertebral fixation system 10 described above. By way of example, the bone anchor 30 is a fixed angle screw having a housing 32 for capturing and locking therein a spinal rod 12, a shank 34 including a thread

feature 36 suitable for stable fixation to vertebral bone, and a locking element 38 configured for locking the spinal rod 12 within the housing 32.

The housing 32 has a base 40 that mates (or is integrally formed) with the shank 34 and a pair of upstanding arms 42 separated by and partially defining a rod channel 44 sized and configured to receive the spinal rod 12 therein. The base includes a recess 46 formed within the rod channel and configured to receive a rod seat 48. The rod seat 48 is a block of material sized and dimensioned to snugly fit within the recess 46 and having a concave surface 50 that forms the lower portion of the rod channel 44. The concave surface 50 is configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod 12 and provide a seat for the spinal rod 12. Significantly, the rod seat 48 of the instant example may be formed of a semi-rigid elastomeric material that allows for some movement (e.g. vertical shifting, axial rotation, pivoting, and/or translation) of the spinal rod 12 within the housing 32 while maintaining a frictional association with the spinal rod 12 (and thus preventing unrestricted movement of the rod). The upstanding arms 42 include a locking element engagement feature 52 disposed on the interior face of each arm 42. The locking element engagement feature 52 mates with a complementary housing engagement feature 54 on the locking element 38, described in further detail below.

The locking element 38 is attachable to the housing 32 after the spinal rod 12 has been seated within the rod channel 44. In the example presently described, the locking element 38 comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature 54 and a rod engagement surface 56. The housing engagement feature 54 complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature 46 of the upstanding arms 42. The rod engagement surface 56 is configured to engage the spinal rod 12 and may be planar, convex, or concave. By way of example, the locking element 38 is made of a rigid material (e.g. titanium).

In use, after the spinal rod 12 has been seated within the rod channel 44, the locking element 38 is inserted between the upstanding arms 42 such that the housing engagement feature 54 on the locking element 38 engages the locking element engagement features 46 on each of the upstanding arms 42. The locking element 38 is then advanced via rotation to exert a force on the spinal rod 12 and frictionally lock the spinal rod 12 within the housing 32 (and between the locking element 38 and the rod seat 48). After implantation, the semi-rigid nature of the elastomeric rod seat 48 will allow the construct to absorb some force and experience some potential alignment correction that may occur from natural shifting of the patient's body, thereby potentially alleviating some conditions that may lead to junctional disease or failure (e.g. PJK, DJK, etc.).

In the instant example (and others described below), the housing 32 and shank 34 are provided in a fixed relationship so that no relative movement is possible between them. This may be achieved by way of example through secure mating of separate parts or by a single part having an integral housing 32 and shank. Alternatively, the housing 32 and shank 34 may be mated with a polyaxial engagement such that the housing 32 can pivot relative to the shank 34 in any direction. The engagement may also be such that the pivoting movement may be inhibited in one or more directions. By way of example, the housing 32 and shank 34 may be mated with a uniplanar engagement such that the housing 32 pivots relative to the shank 32 in a single plane. Many of these alternative examples are described in further detail below.

FIGS. 6-8 illustrate another example of a bone anchor configured for use with the vertebral fixation system 10 described above. By way of example, the bone anchor 60 is a fixed angle screw having a housing 62 for capturing and locking therein a spinal rod 12, a shank 64 including a thread feature 66 suitable for stable fixation to vertebral bone, and a locking element 68 configured for locking the spinal rod 12 within the housing 62.

The housing 62 has a base 70 that mates (or is integrally formed) with the shank 64 and a pair of upstanding arms 72 separated by and partially defining a rod channel 74 sized and configured to receive the spinal rod 12 therein. The base includes a rod seat 76 comprising an upward-facing concave surface that forms the lower portion of the rod channel 74. The rod seat 76 is configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod 12 and provide a seat for the spinal rod 12. In the instant example, the rod seat 76 is composed of the same rigid material as the bone anchor 60 (e.g. titanium). The upstanding arms 72 include a locking element engagement feature 78 disposed on the interior face of each arm 72. The locking element engagement feature 78 mates with a complementary housing engagement feature 80 on the locking element 68, described in further detail below.

FIGS. 9 and 10 illustrate the locking element 68 in greater detail. The locking element 68 is attachable to the housing 62 after the spinal rod 12 has been seated within the rod channel 64. In the example presently described, the locking element 68 comprises a set screw having a housing engagement feature 80 and a rod engagement insert 82. The housing engagement feature 80 complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature 78 of the upstanding arms 72. The rod engagement insert 82 is a block of material sized and dimensioned to snugly fit within a recess 84 formed within the locking element 68 and having a convex surface 86 that forms the upper boundary of the rod channel 74 when the locking element 68 is mated with the housing 62. The convex surface 86 is configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod 12 and exert a force on the spinal rod 12 to enable the frictional lock. By way of example, the locking element 38 is made of a rigid material (e.g. titanium). Significantly, the rod engagement insert 82 of the instant example may be formed of a semi-rigid elastomeric material that allows for some movement (e.g. vertical shifting, axial rotation, pivoting, and/or translation) of the spinal rod 12 within the housing 62 while maintaining a frictional association with the spinal rod 12 (and thus preventing unrestricted movement of the rod). The rod engagement insert 82 is secured within the recess 84 via a physical barrier (i.e. flange and lip interaction) however other methods of securing the rod engagement insert 82 within the recess 84 are possible.

In use, after the spinal rod 12 has been seated within the rod channel 74, the locking element 68 is inserted between the upstanding arms 72 such that the housing engagement feature 80 on the locking element 68 engages the locking element engagement features 78 on each of the upstanding arms 72. The locking element 68 is then advanced via rotation to exert a force on the spinal rod 12 and frictionally lock the spinal rod 12 within the housing 62 (and between the locking element 68 and the rod seat 76). After implantation, the semi-rigid nature of the elastomeric rod engagement insert 82 will allow the construct to absorb some force and experience some potential alignment correction that may occur from natural shifting of the patient's body, thereby potentially alleviating some conditions that may lead to junctional disease or failure (e.g. PJK, DJK, etc.).

FIGS. 11-14 illustrate another example of a bone anchor configured for use with the vertebral fixation system 10 described above. By way of example, the bone anchor 90 is a fixed angle screw having a housing 92 for capturing and locking therein a spinal rod 12, a shank 96 including a thread feature 96 suitable for stable fixation to vertebral bone, and a locking element 98 configured for locking the spinal rod 12 within the housing 92.

The housing 92 has a base 100 that mates (or is integrally formed) with the shank 94 and a pair of upstanding arms 102 separated by and partially defining a rod channel 104 sized and configured to receive the spinal rod 12 therein. The base includes a recess 106 formed within the rod channel and configured to receive a rod seat 108. The rod seat 108 is a block of material sized and dimensioned to snugly fit within the recess 106 and having a concave surface 110 that forms the lower portion of the rod channel 104. The concave surface 110 is configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod 12 and provide a seat for the spinal rod 12. Significantly, the rod seat 108 of the instant example may be formed of a semi-rigid elastomeric material that allows for some movement (e.g. vertical shifting, axial rotation, pivoting, and/or translation) of the spinal rod 12 within the housing 92 while maintaining a frictional association with the spinal rod 12 (and thus preventing unrestricted movement of the rod). The upstanding arms 102 include a locking element engagement feature 112 disposed on the interior face of each arm 102. The locking element engagement feature 112 mates with a complementary housing engagement feature 114 on the locking element 98, described in further detail below.

The locking element 98 is attachable to the housing 92 after the spinal rod 12 has been seated within the rod channel 104. In the example presently described, the locking element 98 comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature 114 and a rod engagement insert 116. The housing engagement feature 114 complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature 112 of the upstanding arms 102. The rod engagement insert 116 is a block of material sized and dimensioned to snugly fit within a recess 118 formed within the locking element 98 and having a convex surface 119 that forms the upper boundary of the rod channel 104 when the locking element 98 is mated with the housing 92. The convex surface 119 is configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod 12 and exert a force on the spinal rod 12 to enable the frictional lock. By way of example, the locking element 98 is made of a rigid material (e.g. titanium). Significantly, the rod engagement insert 116 of the instant example may be formed of a semi-rigid elastomeric material that allows for some movement (e.g. vertical shifting, axial rotation, pivoting, and/or translation) of the spinal rod 12 within the housing 92 while maintaining a frictional association with the spinal rod 12 (and thus preventing unrestricted movement of the rod). The rod engagement insert 116 is secured within the recess 118 via a physical barrier (i.e. flange and lip interaction) however other methods of securing the rod engagement insert 116 within the recess 118 are possible.

In use, after the spinal rod 12 has been seated within the rod channel 104, the locking element 98 is inserted between the upstanding arms 102 such that the housing engagement feature 114 on the locking element 98 engages the locking element engagement features 112 on each of the upstanding arms 102. The locking element 98 is then advanced via rotation to exert a force on the spinal rod 12 and frictionally lock the spinal rod 12 within the housing 92 (and between the locking element 98 and the rod seat 108). After implan-

tation, the semi-rigid nature of both the elastomeric rod seat 108 and the rod engagement insert 116 will allow the construct to absorb some force and experience some potential alignment correction that may occur from natural shifting of the patient's body, thereby potentially alleviating some conditions that may lead to junctional disease or failure (e.g. PJK, DJK, etc.).

FIGS. 15-20 illustrate another example of a bone anchor configured for use with the vertebral fixation system 10 described above. By way of example, the bone anchor 120 is a polyaxial screw having a housing 122 for capturing and locking therein a spinal rod 12, a shank 124 including a generally spherical head 126 and a thread feature 128 suitable for stable fixation to vertebral bone, a seat member 130, and a locking element 132 configured for locking the spinal rod 12 within the housing 122.

The housing 122 has a base 134 that mates with the shank 124 and a pair of upstanding arms 136 separated by and partially defining a rod channel 138 sized and configured to receive the spinal rod 12 therein. The base 134 includes a recess 140 having a concave surface sized and dimensioned to receive the spherical head 126 of the shank 124. The spherical head 126 is able to rotate and pivot within the recess 140 such that the shank 124 may be disposed at any number of a plurality of angles relative to the housing 122. The upstanding arms 136 include a locking element engagement feature 142 disposed on the interior face of each arm 136. The locking element engagement feature 142 mates with a complementary housing engagement feature 160 on the locking element 132, described in further detail below.

The shank 124 further includes a driver recess 144 positioned at the top of the head 126 such that the driver recess 144 is accessible from the rod channel 138 prior to insertion of the locking element 132. The driver recess 144 is configured to engage a driver instrument (not shown) to enable implantation of the bone anchor 120 into a vertebral bone.

Referring to FIGS. 19 and 20, the seat member 130 is generally cylindrical in shape and has a lumen 146 extending longitudinally therethrough to allow passage of a driver instrument so that the driver instrument may engage the driver recess 144 of the shank 124. The lower portion of the lumen 146 has a concave surface 148 configured to receive and engage at least a portion of the generally spherical head 126 of the shank 124. The seat member 130 also includes a pair of opposing concave recesses 150 on the upper portion of the seat member 130. When properly assembled, the concave recesses 150 are aligned with and form part of the rod channel 138 for receiving the spinal rod 12.

The seat member 130 further includes a rod seat 152 disposed within the upper portion of the lumen 146. The rod seat 152 is a block of material sized and dimensioned to snugly fit within the lumen 146 and having a pair of concave surfaces 154 that form part of the lower portion of the rod channel 138. The concave surfaces 154 are configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod 12 and provide a seat for the spinal rod 12. Significantly, the rod seat 152 of the instant example may be formed of a semi-rigid elastomeric material that allows for some movement (e.g. vertical shifting, axial rotation, pivoting, and/or translation) of the spinal rod 12 within the housing 122 while maintaining a frictional association with the spinal rod 12 (and thus preventing unrestricted movement of the rod). By way of example, the rod seat 152 is secured within the lumen 146 via a physical barrier interaction (i.e. a flange 156 on the rod seat 152 that is received within a recess 158 disposed within the lumen 146).

11

The locking element **132** is attachable to the housing **122** after the spinal rod **12** has been seated within the rod channel **138**. In the example presently described, the locking element **132** comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature **160** and a rod engagement surface **162**. The housing engagement feature **160** complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature **142** of the upstanding arms **136**. The rod engagement surface **162** is configured to engage the spinal rod **12** and may be planar, convex, or concave. By way of example, the locking element **38** is made of a rigid material (e.g. titanium).

In use, after the spinal rod **12** has been seated within the rod channel **138**, the locking element **132** is inserted between the upstanding arms **136** such that the housing engagement feature **160** on the locking element **132** engages the locking element engagement features **142** on each of the upstanding arms **136**. The locking element **132** is then advanced via rotation to exert a force on the spinal rod **12** and frictionally lock the spinal rod **12** within the housing **122** (and between the locking element **132** and the rod seat **152**). After implantation, the semi-rigid nature of the elastomeric rod seat **152** will allow the construct to absorb some force and experience some potential alignment correction that may occur from natural shifting of the patient's body, thereby potentially alleviating some conditions that may lead to junctional disease or failure (e.g. PJK, DJK, etc.).

FIGS. **21-23** illustrate another example of a bone anchor configured for use with the vertebral fixation system **10** described above. By way of example, the bone anchor **170** is a polyaxial screw having a housing **172** for capturing and locking therein a spinal rod **12**, a shank **174** including a generally spherical head **176** and a thread feature **178** suitable for stable fixation to vertebral bone, a seat member **180**, and a locking element **182** configured for locking the spinal rod **12** within the housing **172**.

The housing **172** has a base **184** that mates with the shank **174** and a pair of upstanding arms **186** separated by and partially defining a rod channel **188** sized and configured to receive the spinal rod **12** therein. The base **184** includes a recess **190** having a concave surface sized and dimensioned to receive the spherical head **176** of the shank **174**. The spherical head **176** is able to rotate and pivot within the recess **190** such that the shank **174** may be disposed at any number of a plurality of angles relative to the housing **172**. The upstanding arms **186** include a locking element engagement feature **192** disposed on the interior face of each arm **186**. The locking element engagement feature **192** mates with a complementary housing engagement feature **202** on the locking element **182**, described in further detail below.

The shank **174** further includes a driver recess **194** positioned at the top of the head **176** such that the driver recess **194** is accessible from the rod channel **138** prior to insertion of the locking element **182**. The driver recess **194** is configured to engage a driver instrument (not shown) to enable implantation of the bone anchor **170** into a vertebral bone.

The seat member **180** is generally cylindrical in shape and has a lumen **146** extending longitudinally therethrough to allow passage of a driver instrument so that the driver instrument may engage the driver recess **194** of the shank **174**. The lower portion of the lumen **196** has a concave surface **198** configured to receive and engage at least a portion of the generally spherical head **176** of the shank **174**. The seat member **180** also includes a rod seat **200** in the form of a pair of opposing concave recesses on the upper portion of the seat member **180**. The concave surfaces **200** are

12

configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod **12** and provide a seat for the spinal rod **12**.

The locking element **182** is attachable to the housing **172** after the spinal rod **12** has been seated within the rod channel **188**. In the example presently described, the locking element **182** comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature **202** and a rod engagement insert **204**. The housing engagement feature **202** complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature **192** of the upstanding arms **186**. The rod engagement insert **204** is a block of material sized and dimensioned to snugly fit within a recess **206** formed within the locking element **182** and having a convex surface **208** that forms the upper boundary of the rod channel **188** when the locking element **182** is mated with the housing **172**. The convex surface **208** is configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod **12** and exert a force on the spinal rod **12** to enable the frictional lock. By way of example, the locking element **182** is made of a rigid material (e.g. titanium). Significantly, the rod engagement insert **204** of the instant example may be formed of a semi-rigid elastomeric material that allows for some movement (e.g. vertical shifting, axial rotation, pivoting, and/or translation) of the spinal rod **12** within the housing **172** while maintaining a frictional association with the spinal rod **12** (and thus preventing unrestricted movement of the rod). The rod engagement insert **204** is secured within the recess **206** via a physical barrier (i.e. flange and lip interaction) however other methods of securing the rod engagement insert **204** within the recess **206** are possible.

In use, after the spinal rod **12** has been seated within the rod channel **188**, the locking element **182** is inserted between the upstanding arms **186** such that the housing engagement feature **202** on the locking element **182** engages the locking element engagement features **192** on each of the upstanding arms **186**. The locking element **182** is then advanced via rotation to exert a force on the spinal rod **12** and frictionally lock the spinal rod **12** within the housing **172** (and between the locking element **182** and the rod seat **200**). After implantation, the semi-rigid nature of the elastomeric rod engagement insert **204** will allow the construct to absorb some force and experience some potential alignment correction that may occur from natural shifting of the patient's body, thereby potentially alleviating some conditions that may lead to junctional disease or failure (e.g. PJK, DJK, etc.).

FIGS. **24-27** illustrate another example of a bone anchor configured for use with the vertebral fixation system **10** described above. By way of example, the bone anchor **210** is a polyaxial screw having a housing **212** for capturing and locking therein a spinal rod **12**, a shank **214** including a generally spherical head **216** and a thread feature **218** suitable for stable fixation to vertebral bone, a seat member **220**, and a locking element **222** configured for locking the spinal rod **12** within the housing **212**.

The housing **212** has a base **224** that mates with the shank **214** and a pair of upstanding arms **226** separated by and partially defining a rod channel **228** sized and configured to receive the spinal rod **12** therein. The base **224** includes a recess **230** having a concave surface sized and dimensioned to receive the spherical head **216** of the shank **214**. The spherical head **216** is able to rotate and pivot within the recess **230** such that the shank **214** may be disposed at any number of a plurality of angles relative to the housing **212**. The upstanding arms **226** include a locking element engagement feature **232** disposed on the interior face of each arm **226**. The locking element engagement feature **232** mates

13

with a complementary housing engagement feature **246** on the locking element **222**, described in further detail below.

The shank **214** further includes a driver recess **234** positioned at the top of the head **216** such that the driver recess **234** is accessible from the rod channel **228** prior to insertion of the locking element **222**. The driver recess **234** is configured to engage a driver instrument (not shown) to enable implantation of the bone anchor **210** into a vertebral bone.

The seat member **220** is identical to the seat member **130** described in reference to FIGS. **19** and **20**. The seat member **220** is generally cylindrical in shape and has a lumen extending longitudinally therethrough to allow passage of a driver instrument so that the driver instrument may engage the driver recess **234** of the shank **214**. The lower portion of the lumen has a concave surface **238** configured to receive and engage at least a portion of the generally spherical head **216** of the shank **214**. The seat member **220** also includes a pair of opposing concave recesses on the upper portion of the seat member. When properly assembled, the concave recesses are aligned with and form part of the rod channel **228** for receiving the spinal rod **12**.

The seat member **220** further includes a rod seat **242** disposed within the upper portion of the lumen. The rod seat **242** is a block of material sized and dimensioned to snugly fit within the lumen and having a pair of concave surfaces **244** that form part of the lower portion of the rod channel **228**. The concave surfaces **244** are configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod **12** and provide a seat for the spinal rod **12**. Significantly, the rod seat **242** of the instant example may be formed of a semi-rigid elastomeric material that allows for some movement (e.g. vertical shifting, axial rotation, pivoting, and/or translation) of the spinal rod **12** within the housing **212** while maintaining a frictional association with the spinal rod **12** (and thus preventing unrestricted movement of the rod). By way of example, the rod seat **242** is secured within the lumen via a physical barrier interaction (i.e. a flange on the rod seat that is received within a recess disposed within the lumen).

The locking element **222** is attachable to the housing **212** after the spinal rod **12** has been seated within the rod channel **228**. In the example presently described, the locking element **222** comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature **246** and a rod engagement insert **248**. The housing engagement feature **246** complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature **232** of the upstanding arms **226**. The rod engagement insert **248** is a block of material sized and dimensioned to snugly fit within a recess **250** formed within the locking element **222** and having a convex surface **252** that forms the upper boundary of the rod channel **188** when the locking element **222** is mated with the housing **212**. The convex surface **252** is configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod **12** and exert a force on the spinal rod **12** to enable the frictional lock. By way of example, the locking element **222** is made of a rigid material (e.g. titanium). Significantly, the rod engagement insert **248** of the instant example may be formed of a semi-rigid elastomeric material that allows for some movement (e.g. vertical shifting, axial rotation, pivoting, and/or translation) of the spinal rod **12** within the housing **212** while maintaining a frictional association with the spinal rod **12** (and thus preventing unrestricted movement of the rod). The rod engagement insert **248** is secured within the recess **250** via a physical barrier (i.e. flange and lip interaction) however other methods of securing the rod engagement insert **248** within the recess **250** are possible.

14

In use, after the spinal rod **12** has been seated within the rod channel **228**, the locking element **222** is inserted between the upstanding arms **226** such that the housing engagement feature **246** on the locking element **222** engages the locking element engagement features **232** on each of the upstanding arms **226**. The locking element **222** is then advanced via rotation to exert a force on the spinal rod **12** and frictionally lock the spinal rod **12** within the housing **212** (and between the locking element **222** and the rod seat **242**). After implantation, the semi-rigid nature of the elastomeric rod seat **242** and the elastomeric rod engagement insert **248** will allow the construct to absorb some force and experience some potential alignment correction that may occur from natural shifting of the patient's body, thereby potentially alleviating some conditions that may lead to junctional disease or failure (e.g. PJK, DJK, etc.).

FIGS. **28-35** illustrate another example of a bone anchor assembly configured for use with the vertebral fixation system **10** described above. By way of example, the bone anchor assembly **260** includes a bone anchor **262**, a translation body **264**, a rod-receiving member **266**, and a locking element **268**. As will be explained below, the bone anchor assembly **260** is semi-adjustable after implantation (e.g. allows for controlled motion) in that the rod-receiving member **266** has some freedom to translate and/or rotate relative to the translation body **264** to accommodate natural shifting that may occur. By way of example, FIGS. **28-30** illustrate the bone anchor assembly **260** with the rod-receiving member **266** in three different translational positions.

The bone anchor **262** extends generally perpendicularly from the bottom surface of the translation body **264** and has a thread feature **270** suitable for stable fixation to vertebral bone. The translation body **264** has a generally elliptical footprint (illustrated in FIG. **33**) however other shapes are possible. The translation body **264** has a top surface **272**, a bottom surface **274**, and a translation surface **276** configured to engage the rod-receiving member **266** and allow translation in a proximal-distal direction. The top surface **272** is generally planar however other shapes including but not limited to convex are possible. The top surface **272** has an elongated recess **278** having a T-shaped cross-section formed therein that limits the degree of translation. By way of example, the elongated recess **278** may be generally elliptical in shape but may also be tapered in that it is wider in the center of the recess than it is at either end. This tapered shaped functions to provide greater resistance to incremental translation as the rod-receiving member **266** approaches the outer ends of the recess **278** in either direction. The recess **278** further includes a pair of overhangs **279** that give the recess **278** its T-shaped cross-section and also function to retain the cylindrical flange **288** of the rod-receiving member **266** within the recess **278**. The translation surface **276** comprises the bottom surface of the elongated recess **278** and may be planar or slightly convex.

Referring to FIGS. **34** and **35**, the rod-receiving member **266** includes a base **280** and a pair of upstanding arms **282** separated by a rod channel **284**. The base **280** includes a protrusion **286** extending away from the base **280** and a cylindrical flange **288** positioned at the end of the protrusion **286**. The protrusion **286** has a generally cylindrical shape and has a diameter that is less than the diameter of the cylindrical flange **288**. The result is that the protrusion **286** and flange **288** when taken together have a generally T-shaped cross section. The protrusion **286** and flange **288** fit within the recess **278** of the fixation body **264** and are configured to allow multiple degrees of movement of the

rod-receiving member **266** relative to the fixation body **264**. More specifically, the cylindrical shapes of both the protrusion **286** and flange **288** allow axial rotation of the rod-receiving member, and a generally planar bottom surface **290** of the flange **288** allows for smooth translation of the flange **288** (and thus the rod-receiving member **266**) within the recess **264**. The upper surface **290** of the base **280** is a concave, semi-cylindrical surface having a generally arcuate cross-section. The upper surface **290** forms the distal end of the rod channel **284** and forms a cradle that receives the spinal rod **12** during implantation. The upstanding arms **282** are equipped with a locking element engagement feature **292** disposed on the interior face of each arm **282**. The locking element engagement feature **292** mates with a housing engagement feature **298** on the locking element **268**.

The base **280** has a hollow lumen **294** formed therein and configured to receive an elastomeric plug therein. In the example shown in FIGS. **34** and **35**, both the hollow lumen **294** and the elastomeric plug **296** have generally cylindrical cross sections, however other shapes are possible. The elastomeric plug **296** has a length that is at least slightly greater than the length of the hollow lumen **294** so that the ends of the elastomeric plug **296** are in continuous contact with both the spinal rod **12** and the translation surface **276** of the translation body **264**. After implantation, the semi-rigid nature of the elastomeric plug **296** will allow the construct to absorb some force and experience some potential alignment correction that may occur from natural shifting of the patient's body, thereby potentially alleviating some conditions that may lead to junctional disease or failure (e.g. PJK, DJK, etc.).

The locking element **268** is attachable to the upstanding arms **282** after the spinal rod **12** has been seated within the rod channel **284**. In the example presently described, the locking element **268** comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature **298** and a rod engagement surface **299**. The housing engagement feature **298** complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature **292** of the upstanding arms **282**. The rod engagement surface **299** is configured to engage the spinal rod **12** and may be planar, convex, or concave. By way of example, the locking element **268** is made of a rigid material (e.g. titanium).

FIGS. **36-38** illustrate an example utilizing tethers connected to bone anchors and/or rods to strengthen, reconstruct, and/or otherwise emulate ligaments that may have been damaged or removed during implantation of the vertebral fixation system **10**. For example, a tether connected to a bone anchor may be wrapped around the facet, transverse process, lamina, rib and/or spinous process to provide further stability to the construct. As another example, a tether may be attached to a rod at or near the proximal terminus of the vertebral fixation system **10** in lieu of bone screws to alleviate or eliminate factors that may cause junctional disease or failure (e.g. PJK, DJK, etc.).

FIG. **36** illustrates an example of a bone anchor **300** with an attached tether suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system **10**. By way of example, the bone anchor **300** may be either a fixed angle screw or polyaxial screw. The bone anchor **300** includes a housing **302** for capturing and locking therein a spinal rod **12**, a shank **304** including a thread feature **306** suitable for stable fixation to vertebral bone, and a locking element **308** configured for locking the spinal rod **12** within the housing **302**. The bone anchor **300** is substantially similar to the various examples of bone anchors described throughout this disclosure such that repeat description of the housing **302**, shank **304**, and locking element **308** beyond what is necessary to describe the

additional tether feature specific to this example embodiment is not necessary. It is to be understood that any feature of any other example embodiment described herein may be included in this (and any other) example embodiment without reservation either alone or in combination.

The housing **302** has a pair of upstanding arms **310** separated by and partially defining a rod channel sized and configured to receive the spinal rod **12** therein. At least one of the upstanding arms **310** includes a tether connector **312** extending outwardly away from the arm **310** and configured to fixedly receive a tether **314** therein. By way of example, the tether connector **312** comprises a post member having a lumen **316** formed therein that is sized to receive at least a portion of the tether **314**. The tether **314** may be formed of any material suitable for medical use. For example, the tether may be made from allograft tendon, autograft tendon, braided, woven, or embroidered polyethylene, braided, woven, or embroidered polyester, PEEK, or PEKK. In some instances the tether **314** may be formed of elastic material. The tether **314** of the instant example has a stop element **318** attached to or otherwise forming the proximal end of the tether **314**. The stop element **318** buffers against the tether connector **312** and acts as a physical barrier to prevent the proximal end of the tether **314** from passing through the lumen **316**. In this way the tether **314** is secured to the tether connector **312**. By way of example, the stop element may be formed by a knot, a clamp, or a crimp. Additionally the stop element may be in the form of a connection loop created when the proximal end of the tether is reattached to itself (e.g. via clamp, crimp, adhesive, braiding, weaving, and/or embroidery) distal of the tether connector **312**. Other attachment methods of securing the tether **314** to the tether connector **312** are possible, including but not limited to adhesive, spot welding, set screw, and the like. The tether **314** may be formed of any length necessary to secure the bone anchor **300** to surrounding bone structure. By way of example, the tether may be wrapped around (or, through a hole formed therein) one or more of a lamina(s), transverse process(s), spinous process(s), and rib(s). After wrapping around the bone, the tether may be attached back to itself (e.g. via knot, clamp, crimp, etc. . . .), a second tether connector on the housing **302**, or a tether connector on another bone anchor (e.g. a contralateral anchor) or alternate connector, such as the rod connector **320** described below. Alternatively, the tether may be anchored directly to the lamina(s), transverse process(s), spinous process(s), or rib(s) (for example, with a suture anchor, staple, or similar device).

FIG. **37** illustrates an example of a rod attachment **320** with attached tether suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system **10**. The rod attachment **320** includes a housing **322** having a lumen **324** extending longitudinally therethrough configured to receive at least a portion of the spinal rod **12**. By way of example, the housing **322** includes one side comprising a generally planar surface **326** and another side comprising a generally arcuate surface **328**. The generally planar surface **326** includes at least one aperture **330** for receiving a locking element **332**. In the instant example, the generally planar surface **326** includes a pair of apertures **330** and thus the rod attachment **320** has a pair of locking elements **332**. The locking elements **332** are substantially similar to the locking elements described in the various examples above and further description need not be repeated. The rod attachment **320** further includes a tether connector **334** extending outwardly and configured to fixedly receive a tether **336** therein. The tether connector **334** comprises a post member having a lumen **335** formed therein that is sized to receive at least a portion of the tether

336. The tether **336** of the instant example has a stop element **338** attached to or otherwise forming the proximal end of the tether **336**. By way of example, the stop element may be formed by a knot, a clamp, or a crimp. Additionally the stop element **338** may be in the form of a connection loop created when the proximal end of the tether is reattached to itself (e.g. via clamp, crimp, adhesive, braiding, weaving, and/or embroidery) distal of the tether connector **334**. Other attachment methods of securing the tether **336** to the tether connector **334** are possible, including but not limited to adhesive, spot welding, set screw, and the like. The tether **336** may be formed of any length necessary to secure the rod, via rod connector **320**, to surrounding bone structure. By way of example, the tether may be wrapped around (or, through a hole formed therein) one or more of a lamina(s), transverse process(s), spinous process(s), and rib(s). After wrapping around the bone, the tether may be attached back to itself (e.g. via knot, clamp, crimp, etc. . . .), a second tether connector on the housing **322**, or a tether connector on another bone anchor or rod connector connector, such as the rod connector **320** described below. Alternatively, the tether may be anchored directly to the lamina(s), transverse process(s), spinous process(s), or rib(s) (for example, with a suture anchor, staple, or similar device).

FIG. **38** illustrates the bone anchor **300** and rod attachment **320** in use after implantation in a human spine. By way of example, as shown the tethers are wrapped around a lamina, transverse process, and a spinous process. It will be appreciated that the tether may be wrapped around one of, or any combination of, one or more lamina, transverse processes, spinous processes, and ribs.

FIGS. **39-44** illustrate another example of a bone anchor **340** suitable for use with the vertebral fixation system **10**. In the embodiment shown by way of example in the attached Figs., the bone anchor **340** is substantially similar to any of the polyaxial bone screw example embodiments described above such that features described above may be applied to this example without reservation either alone or in combination. The bone anchor **340** includes a housing **342** for capturing and locking therein a spinal rod **12**, a shank **344** including a generally spherical head **346** and a thread feature **348** suitable for stable fixation to vertebral bone, a seat member **350**, and a locking element **352** configured for locking the spinal rod **12** within the housing **342**.

The bone anchor **340** further includes a collar **354** positioned at the top of the shank **344** just below the head **346** such that the collar **354** is flushly engaged with the housing **342**. By way of example only, the collar **354** may be composed of an elastomeric material and may also have a spring **356** disposed therein that is biased toward the housing **342**. The collar **354** functions to convert the otherwise fixed relationship between shank and head upon locking of a rod with a setscrew into a limited range permanent polyaxial bone screw. Once the bone anchor **340** has been implanted into the spine as a part of the vertebral fixation system **10** it may experience realignment pressure (of the type that causes DJK and PJK). Under such a circumstance, the elastomeric collar **354** and/or spring **356** are capable of allowing controlled movement of the housing **342**, for example adjustment of the angle formed between the housing member **342** and shank **344**, controlled minimal translation along the spinal rod **12**, and/or further compression of the collar **354** if adjustment is needed in that direction.

In some instances it may be beneficial if the spinal rod itself was capable of compression, distraction, and/or rotation in response to realignment pressure. FIGS. **42-44** illustrate the bone anchor **340** used with one example of a

flexible rod **790**. By way of example, the flexible rod **790** includes an interior rod **792**, a spring coil **794**, and an elastomeric sheath **796**. The interior rod **792** has a narrow diameter and may be composed of any material that allows for some flexibility (e.g. Nitinol, PEEK, PEKK, etc.). The spring coil **794** is disposed around the interior rod **792** and may extend beyond the proximal terminus of the interior rod **792**. The elastomeric sheath **796** is disposed around the interior rod **792** and the spring coil **794** and may extend the same length as the spring coil **794**. The interior rod **792** gives the flexible rod **790** some rigidity, while the spring coil **794** functions to allow for compression, distraction and rotational movement of the flexible rod **790**. The elastomeric sheath **796** holds the spring coil **794** in place and also allows for controlled compression, distraction, and rotational movement of the flexible rod **790**. It should be noted that the locking element **352** locks the flexible rod **790** within the housing **342** but does not exert pressure to the point of compressing the spring coil **794** within the flexible rod **790**.

FIGS. **45-48** illustrate an example of a transition apparatus **360** configured for use with the vertebral fixation system **10** described herein. The purpose of the transition apparatus **360** is to gradually reduce the rigidity of the fixation construct as it transitions from instrumented to non-instrumented vertebra. One advantage associated with the transition apparatus **360** is it reduces the need for muscle stripping along the patient's back and therefore may leave intact those anatomical structures that naturally help to prevent outcomes such as DJK or PJK.

FIG. **45** illustrates the transition apparatus **360** implanted in a segment of the spine. The transition apparatus **360** includes a bone anchor **362**, one or more bone hooks **364**, and a flexible cord **366**. The bone anchor **362** includes a housing **368** for receiving the spinal rod **12**, a shank **370**, and a locking element **372** for securing the spinal rod **12** within the housing **368**. The bone anchor **362** may be one of any of the bone screw example embodiments described above such that any and all features described above may be applied to this example without reservation either alone or in combination, and further discussion of the bone screw **362** is not necessary.

The bone hook **364** includes a housing **374**, a generally curved hook member **376** extending from the base of the housing **374**, and a locking element **378**. The housing **374** includes a pair of upstanding arms **380** separated by and forming part of a rod channel **382**. The upstanding arms **380** include a locking element engagement feature **384** disposed on the interior face of each arm **380**. The locking element engagement feature **384** mates with a complementary housing engagement feature **386** on the locking element **378** to secure the flexible cord **366** within the rod channel **382**. The generally curved hook member **376** is has a concave curvature that forms a cavity **386** dimensioned to receive a bone segment. By way of example only, the bone hooks **364** of the present example are configured to be used with rib bone, however other configurations are possible.

The flexible cord **366** may be composed of any material medically suitable for implantation into a human and sufficiently flexible to serve as a transition medium, including but not limited to autograft tendon, allograft tendon, braided polyethylene, PEEK, and PEKK. The flexible cord **366** is secured to the distal end of the spinal rod **12** via an attachment member **388**.

In use, the bone anchor **362** is implanted into the proximal-most fully instrumented vertebral level V₁. The bone anchor **362** may have one or more of the features described above (e.g. elastomeric inserts in one or more of the rod seat

and locking element, flexible collar, and the like). The spinal rod **12** terminates just proximally of the bone anchor **362** and transitions to a flexible cord **366**. The path of the flexible cord **366** is directed laterally away from the spinal column and continues along a path determined by the placement of the bone hooks **364**. For example, a first bone hook **364** may be secured to a rib R_1 associated with the first non-instrumented vertebral body V_2 . A second bone hook **364** may be secured to a rib R_2 associated with the second non-instrumented vertebral body V_3 . Since the cord path is away from the spine, less muscle tissue would need to be disturbed. And since the flexible cord **366** is flexible, it may be better suited to handle alignment shifts than a rigid construct.

FIGS. **49-56** illustrate another example of a transition apparatus configured for use with the vertebral fixation system **10** described herein. Transition apparatus **390** includes a housing **392** that generally has the form of a rectangular block having a leading surface **394**, a trailing surface **396**, a top surface **398**, and a bottom surface **400**, a first rod channel **402**, a second rod channel **404**, a first locking element **406**, and a second locking element **408**. The first rod channel **402** is sized and dimensioned to receive the proximal end of the spinal rod **12**. The second rod channel **404** is configured to receive the distal end of a transition rod **410**. The transition rod **410** is generally more flexible than the spinal rod **12** and serves to transitionally reduce the strain associated with the proximal terminus of the vertebral fixation system **10**. The transition rod **410** may be composed of any suitable medical grade material capable of establishing a flexible connection, including but not limited to plastics (e.g. PEEK) or flexible metal (e.g. Nitinol). Additionally, the transition rod **410** may be in the form of a cylindrically shaped rod, an oval shape, a fluted configuration, a cord, or a tether.

The top surface **398** further includes a pair of apertures **412** for receiving the locking elements **406**, **408** therein. The apertures **412** each have a locking element engagement feature **414** configured to engage the corresponding housing engagement features of the locking elements **406**, **408**. When inserted in the apertures **412**, the locking elements **406**, **408** are able to contact and lock in place the spinal rod **12** and transition rod **410**, respectively.

The transition apparatus **390** further includes a pair of buffer elements **416** attached to the proximal end of the spinal rod **12**, with one buffer element **416** attached to the spinal rod **12** on either side of the housing **392**. The buffer element **416** includes a spring **418** or block of elastomeric material (not pictured) positioned within a sleeve **420**. Locking rings **422** are provided within circumferential grooves **424** formed in the spinal rod **12** to provide a physical barrier for the buffer element **416** to ensure the buffer element **416** remains in place.

The first locking element **406** is attachable to the housing **392** after the spinal rod **12** has been seated within the rod channel **402**. In the example shown in FIG. **55**, the locking element **406** comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature **426** and a rod engagement surface **428**. The housing engagement feature **426** complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature **414** of the housing **392**. The rod engagement surface **428** is configured to engage the spinal rod **12** and may be planar, convex, or concave. By way of example, the locking element **406** is made of a rigid material (e.g. titanium). In the example shown in FIG. **56**, the locking element **406** includes a rod engagement insert **430** comprising a block of material sized and dimensioned to snugly fit within a recess (not shown) formed within the locking element **406** and having a convex

surface **432** that forms the upper boundary of the rod channel **402** when the locking element **406** is mated with the housing **392**. The convex surface **432** is configured to engage the generally cylindrical spinal rod **12** and exert a force on the spinal rod **12** to enable the frictional lock. By way of example, the locking element **406** is made of a rigid material (e.g. titanium). Significantly, the rod engagement insert **430** of the instant example may be formed of a semi-rigid elastomeric material that allows for some movement (e.g. vertical shifting, axial rotation, pivoting, and/or translation) of the spinal rod **12** within the housing **392** while maintaining a frictional association with the spinal rod **12** (and thus preventing unrestricted movement of the rod). The rod engagement insert may be configured such that the limited movement occurs only upon surpassing a threshold pressure.

The second locking element **408** is attachable to the housing **392** after the transition rod **410** has been seated within the rod channel **404**. The locking element **408** comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature **434** and a rod engagement surface **436**. The housing engagement feature **434** complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature **414** of the housing **392**. The rod engagement surface **436** is configured to engage the spinal rod **12** and may be planar, convex, or concave. By way of example, the locking element **408** is made of a rigid material (e.g. titanium).

The buffer element **416** allows for controlled translation/shifting of the spinal rod **12** within the housing **392** which will allow the construct to absorb some force and experience some potential alignment correction that may occur from natural shifting of the patient's body, thereby potentially alleviating some conditions that may lead to junctional disease or failure (e.g. PJK, DJK, etc.).

FIGS. **57-61** illustrate another example of a transition apparatus configured for use with the vertebral fixation system **10**. The transition apparatus **440** of the present example generally comprises a parallel rod connector with multiple degrees of freedom of movement. The transition apparatus **440** includes a first housing **442** configured for receiving the spinal rod **12** and a second housing **444** configured for receiving a transition rod **446**. The first housing **442** and second housing **444** are connected via a pivot connector **448**. The first housing **442** is offset from the second housing **444** such that a longitudinal axis extending through the first rod channel **450** is parallel to, but not aligned with, a longitudinal axis extending through the second rod channel **460**.

The first housing includes a first rod channel **450** extending therethrough that is sized and configured to receive the proximal portion of the spinal rod **12**. The rod channel **450** has an elliptical cross-section to allow for some constrained motion of the spinal rod **12** within the rod channel **450** after implantation. The first housing **442** further includes an aperture **452** adjacent the rod channel **450** for receiving a locking element **454**. The aperture **452** includes a locking element engagement feature **456** configured to engage the corresponding housing engagement feature **458** of the locking element **454**. When inserted in the aperture **452**, the locking element **454** is able to contact and lock in place the spinal rod **12** while allowing for some controlled movement within the rod channel **450**. The locking element **454** comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature **458** and a rod engagement surface. The housing engagement feature **458** that complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature **456** of the first housing **442**. The rod engagement surface is configured to engage the spinal rod **12** and may be planar, convex, or concave. Although not

shown, the locking element **454** may alternatively be equipped with a rod engaging insert comprising a block of elastomeric material (for example) as shown and described in various example embodiments disclosed above.

The second housing **444** includes a second rod channel **460** extending therethrough that is sized and configured to receive a distal portion of the transition rod **446**. The rod channel **460** has an elliptical cross-section to allow for some constrained motion of the transition rod **446** within the rod channel **460** after implantation. The second housing **444** further includes an aperture **462** adjacent the rod channel **460** for receiving a locking element **464**. The aperture **462** includes a locking element engagement feature **466** configured to engage the corresponding housing engagement feature **468** of the locking element **464**. When inserted in the aperture **462**, the locking element **464** is able to contact and lock in place the transition rod **446** while allowing for some controlled movement within the rod channel **460**. The locking element **464** comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature **468** and a rod engagement surface. The housing engagement feature **468** complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature **466** of the first housing **462**. The rod engagement surface is configured to engage the transition rod **446** and may be planar, convex, or concave.

The pivot connector **448** comprises a generally cylindrical member including a first end flange **470**, a second end flange **472**, and a central flange **474**. The first end flange **470** is configured to be received within a recess **476** formed in the first housing **442**. The second end flange **472** is configured to be received within a recess **478** formed in the second housing **444**. The central flange **474** is positioned between the first and second housings **442**, **444** when assembled and acts as a washer. The first and second housings **442**, **444** are allowed to pivot relative to one another. This pivoting ability may be controlled or partially restricted but is not locked.

FIGS. **62-64** illustrate another example of a transition apparatus configured for use with the vertebral fixation system **10**. The transition apparatus **480** of the present example generally comprises an inline rod connector with multiple degrees of freedom of movement. The transition apparatus **480** includes a first housing **482** configured for receiving the spinal rod **12** and a second housing **484** configured for receiving a transition rod **486**. The first housing **482** and second housing **484** are connected via a pivot connector **488**. The first housing **482** is inline with the second housing **484** such that a longitudinal axis extending through the first rod channel **490** is axially aligned with a longitudinal axis extending through the second rod channel **500**.

The first housing includes a first rod channel **490** extending therethrough that is sized and configured to receive the proximal portion of the spinal rod **12**. The rod channel **490** has an elliptical cross-section to allow for some constrained motion of the spinal rod **12** within the rod channel **490** after implantation. The first housing **482** further includes an aperture **492** adjacent the rod channel **490** for receiving a locking element **494**. The aperture **492** includes a locking element engagement feature **496** configured to engage the corresponding housing engagement feature **498** of the locking element **494**. When inserted in the aperture **492**, the locking element **494** is able to contact and lock in place the spinal rod **12** while allowing for some controlled movement within the rod channel **490**. The locking element **494** comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature **498** and a rod engagement surface. The housing engagement feature **498** complementarily engages the locking element

engagement feature **496** of the first housing **482**. The rod engagement surface is configured to engage the spinal rod **12** and may be planar, convex, or concave. Although not shown, the locking element **494** may alternatively be equipped with a rod engaging insert comprising a block of elastomeric material (for example) as shown and described in various example embodiments disclosed above.

The second housing **484** includes a second rod channel **500** extending therethrough that is sized and configured to receive a distal portion of the transition rod **486**. The rod channel **500** has an elliptical cross-section to allow for some constrained motion of the transition rod **486** within the rod channel **500** after implantation. The second housing **484** further includes an aperture **502** adjacent the rod channel **500** for receiving a locking element **504**. The aperture **502** includes a locking element engagement feature **506** configured to engage the corresponding housing engagement feature **508** of the locking element **504**. When inserted in the aperture **502**, the locking element **504** is able to contact and lock in place the transition rod **486** while allowing for some controlled movement within the rod channel **500**. The locking element **504** comprises a setscrew having a housing engagement feature **508** and a rod engagement surface. The housing engagement feature **508** complementarily engages the locking element engagement feature **506** of the first housing **502**. The rod engagement surface is configured to engage the transition rod **486** and may be planar, convex, or concave.

The pivot connector **488** comprises a generally cylindrical member including a first end flange **510**, a second end flange **512**, and a central flange **514**. The first end flange **510** is configured to be received within a recess **516** formed in the first housing **482**. The first end flange **510** may be equipped with an elastomeric coating **511** that allows for restrained translational movement of the first end flange **510** within the recess **516**. The second end flange **512** is configured to be received within a recess **518** formed in the second housing **484**. The second end flange **512** may be equipped with an elastomeric coating **513** that allows for restrained translational movement of the second end flange **512** within the recess **518**. The central flange **514** is positioned between the first and second housings **482**, **484** when assembled and acts as a washer. The first and second housings **482**, **484** are allowed to pivot relative to one another. This pivoting ability may be controlled but is not locked.

FIGS. **65-68** illustrate an example of another type of bone anchor configured for use with the vertebral fixation system **10**. Generally, the bone anchor **520** is configured to attach to a bone structure (e.g. a transverse process TP₁ or lamina of vertebra V₁) without puncturing or otherwise invading the bone. The bone anchor **520** may be used with the spinal rod **12** or one of the several examples of flexible transition rod (e.g. PEEK, cable) disclosed above.

The bone anchor **520** includes a housing **522**, an attachment flange **524** extending from the base of the housing **522**, and a locking element **526**. The housing **522** includes a pair of upstanding arms **530** separated by and forming part of a rod channel **532**. The upstanding arms **530** include a locking element engagement feature **534** disposed on the interior face of each arm **530**. The locking element engagement feature **534** mates with a complementary housing engagement feature **536** on the locking element **526** to secure the transition rod within the rod channel **532**. The attachment flange **524** has a concave first portion **538** extending away from the housing **522** and a generally planar second portion **540** adjacent the first portion **538**. The concave first portion **538** and generally planar second portion **540** together form

a cavity **542** (along with the bottom face of the housing **522**) dimensioned to receive a bone segment. The second portion **540** is at least slightly flexible so that it may accommodate different sizes of bone but also so that it may experience some post-surgical adjustment without dislodging from the bone. This flexibility may be achieved by varying the thickness of the material or by using more flexible/elastic materials in the manufacture of the flange **524**. By way of example only, the bone anchor **520** of the present example is sized and configured to be used with transverse process bone, however other configurations are possible.

At least one of the upstanding arms **530** includes a tether connector **544** extending outwardly away from the arm **530** and configured to fixedly receive a tether **546** therein. By way of example, the tether connector **544** comprises a post member having a lumen **545** formed therein that is sized to receive at least a portion of the tether **546**. The tether **546** may be formed of any material suitable for medical use, including but not limited to allograft tendon, autograft tendon, braided polyethylene, PEEK, or PEKK. In some instances the tether **546** may be formed of elastic material. The tether **546** may be formed of any length necessary to secure the bone anchor **520** to surrounding bone by wrapping around the bone. The tether **546** of the instant example has a stop element **548** is attached to or otherwise forms the proximal end of the tether **546**. The stop element **548** buffers against the tether connector **544** and acts as a physical barrier to prevent the proximal end of the tether **546** from passing through the lumen **545**. In this way the tether **546** is secured to the tether connector **544**. Other attachment methods of securing the tether **546** to the tether connector **544** are possible, including but not limited to adhesive, spot welding, and the like.

The locking element **526** may be any of the previously described locking element examples disclosed herein. The locking element **526** may or may not be equipped with a block of elastomeric material, depending on the type of rod element that is secured in the rod channel **532** by the locking element **526**.

FIGS. **69-72** illustrate another example of a non-screw bone anchor configured for use with the vertebral fixation system **10**. The bone anchor **550** of the instant example generally comprises a clamp-type mechanism suitable for attachment to a rib bone. The bone anchor **550** has includes a rib clamp **552**, a connecting rod **554**, and a rod connector **556**. The rib clamp **552** includes a first clamp member **558** and a second clamp member **560** that are translationally connected to each other.

The first clamp member **558** has an elongated generally rectangular base **561** having a top side **562** and a bottom side **564**. The top side **562** has a housing **566** positioned on a first end of the base **561** and protruding away from the top side **562**. The housing **566** includes a rod hole **568** configured to receive the connecting rod **554** and a locking element **570** for securing the connecting rod **554** to the housing **566**. The bottom side **564** includes an elongated translation recess **572** and a curved flange **574**. The translation recess **572** is formed within the bottom side **564** on the first end of the base **561** (underneath the housing **566**) and is configured to slideably receive the translation arm **580** of the second clamp member **560**. The curved flange **574** is positioned on the second end of the base **561** and extends away from the bottom side **564** before curving inward (i.e. toward the second clamp member **560**). The bottom side **564** and curved flange **574** together form a cavity **576** sized and configured to receive at least a portion of a rib bone.

The second clamp member **560** includes a base **578** and a translation arm **580** extending laterally from the base **578**. The translation arm **580** mates with the translation recess **572** of the first clamp member **558** and is capable of translation within the recess to allow the rib clamp **552** to be secured to a bone. The second clamp member **560** further includes a curved flange **582** that extends away from the bottom side of the second clamp member **560** before curving inward (i.e. toward the first clamp member **558**). The translation arm **580** and curved flange **582** together form a cavity **584** sized and configured to receive at least a portion of a rib bone.

The rod connector **556** has a base and a pair of upstanding arms **586** that define a rod channel in between. The rod channel is configured to receive the spinal rod **12** or a transition rod (e.g. any of the transition rod types described herein). The rod connector **556** further has a locking element **588** (e.g. any of the locking elements described herein) configured to secure the rod connector **556** to the spinal rod **12** (or transition rod). The connecting rod **554** extends laterally from one of the upstanding arms **586**.

The bone anchor **550** has multiple articulating connections to help absorb force and allow controlled movement after implantation. One articulating connection is between the rod connector **556** and the spinal rod **12**. This is much the same as the interaction between the spinal rod and various examples of bone screws described above. Another articulating connection is between the connecting rod **554** and the rib clamp **552**. Thus slight shifting can occur without causing dislodgement of the bone anchor **550**.

FIGS. **73-76** illustrate an alternative example of a rib clamp for use with the bone anchor **550**. The rib clamp **590** of the instant example is substantially similar to the rib clamp **552** described above with the significant difference being the moveable housing **595** as will be described below. The rib clamp **590** includes a first clamp member **592** and a second clamp member **594** that are translationally connected to each other, and a housing **595** for receiving the connecting rod **554**.

The first clamp member **592** has an elongated generally rectangular base **596** having a top side **598** and a bottom side **599**. The top side **598** has a pedestal **600** positioned on a first end of the base **596** and protruding away from the top side **598**. The pedestal **600** includes a first translation recess **602** having a length dimension extending parallel to the longitudinal axis of the rib clamp **590**. The first translation recess **602** is configured to receive the lower flange **610** of the housing **595**. The housing **595** has a base **604** and a pair of upstanding arms **606** separated by and partially defining a rod channel **608** sized and configured to receive the connecting rod **554** therein. The housing **595** further includes a lower flange **610** that slideably mates with the first translation recess **602** to connect the housing **595** to the first clamp member **592**. A locking element **612** (e.g. any of the set-screw style locking elements described herein) mates with the housing **595** to secure the connecting rod **554** to the housing **595**.

The bottom side **599** includes an elongated translation recess **614** and a curved flange **616**. The translation recess **614** is formed within the bottom side **599** on the first end of the base **596** (underneath the housing **566**) and is configured to slideably receive the translation arm **580** of the second clamp member **594**. The curved flange **616** is positioned on the second end of the base **596** and extends away from the bottom side **599** before curving inward (i.e. toward the second clamp member **594**). The bottom side **599** and

curved flange **616** together form a cavity **618** sized and configured to receive at least a portion of a rib bone.

The second clamp member **594** includes a base **620** and a translation arm **622** extending laterally from the base **620**. The translation arm **622** mates with the translation recess **614** of the first clamp member **592** and is capable of translation within the recess to allow the rib clamp **590** to be secured to a bone. The second clamp member **594** further includes a curved flange **624** that extends away from the bottom side of the second clamp member **594** before curving inward (i.e. toward the first clamp member **592**). The translation arm **622** and curved flange **624** together form a cavity **584** sized and configured to receive at least a portion of a rib bone.

The rod connector **556** has a base and a pair of upstanding arms **586** that define a rod channel in between. The rod channel is configured to receive the spinal rod **12** or a transition rod (e.g. any of the transition rod types described herein). The rod connector **556** further has a locking element **588** (e.g. any of the locking elements described herein) configured to secure the rod connector **556** to the spinal rod **12** (or transition rod). The connecting rod **554** extends laterally from one of the upstanding arms **586**.

The bone anchor **550** has multiple articulating connections to help absorb force and allow controlled movement after implantation. One articulating connection is between the rod connector **556** and the spinal rod **12**. This is much the same as the interaction between the spinal rod and various examples of bone screws described above. Another articulating connection is between the connecting rod **554** and the rib clamp **590**. Thus slight shifting can occur without causing dislodgement of the bone anchor **550**.

FIGS. **77-81** illustrate another example of a non-screw bone anchor configured for use with the vertebral fixation system **10**. The bone anchor **630** of the instant example generally comprises a clamp-type mechanism suitable for attachment to a lamina or transverse process or spinous process bone or a combination thereof. The bone anchor **630** includes a first clamp member **632** and a second clamp member **634** that are translationally mated with each other.

The first clamp member **632** has an elongated base **636** having a top side **638** and a bottom side **640**. The top side **638** has a housing **642** positioned on a first end of the base **636** and protruding away from the top side **638**. The housing **642** has a base **644** and a pair of upstanding arms **646** separated by and partially defining a rod channel **648** sized and configured to receive the spinal rod **12** (or transition rod) therein. By way of example, the housing **642** further includes a lower flange **650** that mates with a first recess **652** formed in the top side **638** to connect the housing **642** to the first clamp member **632**. A locking element **654** (e.g. any of the setscrew style locking elements described herein) mates with the housing **642** to secure the rod **12** to the housing **642**. The top side **638** further includes a second recess **655** formed on the second end of the base **636** configured to slideably receive the translation arm **662** of the second clamp member **634**. The bottom side **640** includes a flange **656** positioned on the first end of the base **636** (underneath the housing **642**) and extending away from the bottom side **640** before curving inward (i.e. toward the second clamp member **634**). The bottom side **640** and flange **656** together form a cavity **658** sized and configured to receive at least a portion of a lamina or transverse process bone.

The second clamp member **634** includes a base **660** and a translation arm **662** extending laterally from the base **660**. The translation arm **662** mates with the second recess **655** of the first clamp member **632** and is capable of translation

within the recess to allow the bone anchor **630** to be secured to a bone. The second clamp member **634** also includes a housing **642** with locking element **654** that are identical to the same elements described in relation to the first clamp member **632**. The second clamp member **634** further includes a flange **664** that extends away from the bottom side of the second clamp member **634** before curving inward (i.e. toward the first clamp member **632**). The translation arm **662** and flange **664** together form a cavity **666** sized and configured to receive at least a portion of a lamina or transverse process bone.

The prior examples described herein have sought to address the need for reducing or preventing the occurrence of junctional disease and failures through instrumentation that aims to alleviate stress on the proximal and/or distal termini of multi-level spinal fixation systems. Another way to limit flexion in the proximal and/or distal instrumented vertebrae is to create physical barriers or countermeasures that either prevent or exert a counterforce to reverse the kyphosis. One example of such a physical barrier is a rod bumper that may be inserted between a bone anchor and spinal rod, and extends a short distance distally along the spinal rod. As flexion associated with kyphosis occurs and the upper vertebra falls forward, the bumper pushes backwards on the spinal rod. In response, the spinal rod exerts a return force on the bumper, which then causes the upper vertebra to return to a more normal position. FIGS. **82-86** illustrate one example of a bone anchor **670** with associated rod bumper **672** that may be employed as a terminal anchor in a fixation construct. The bone anchor **670** is shown by way of example as a pedicle screw with a tulip and lock screw, however the rod bumper may be used with other fixation hardware.

By way of example, the bone anchor **670** includes a housing **674**, threaded shank **676**, and locking element **678**. The housing has a base **680** and a pair of upstanding arms **682** that form the rod channel. The locking element **678** may be any of the previously described examples of locking elements. A rod bumper **672** may be attached to the housing **674** or one end of may be inserted into the rod channel between the housing **674** and spinal rod **12**. The rod bumper **672** has a concave rod engaging surface **684** so as to reduce the profile of the spinal fixation system after implantation and prior to the occurrence of flexion.

FIGS. **87-91** illustrate another example of a bone anchor and rod bumper combination configured for use with cords or other non-traditional transition rods. The bone anchor **690** is shown by way of example as a pedicle screw with a tulip and lock screw, however the rod bumper may be used with other fixation hardware.

By way of example, the bone anchor **690** includes a housing **692**, threaded shank **694**, and locking element **696**. The housing has a base **698** and a pair of upstanding arms **700** that form the rod channel. The locking element **696** may be any of the previously described examples of locking elements. A rod bumper **702** may be attached to the housing **692** or one end of may be inserted into the rod channel between the housing **692** and transition cable rod **701**. The rod bumper **702** is has an elongated body **704** with a concave rod engaging surface **706** to reduce the profile of the spinal fixation system after implantation and prior to the occurrence of flexion. The rod bumper **702** further includes a distal housing **708** to capture the transition cable rod **701** therein. The distal housing **708** is necessary to ensure the transition cable rod **701** remains aligned with the rod bumper **702** given the flexibility of the transition cable rod **701**. The distal housing **708** is similar to the previously described

examples of housings in that it has a base 710 and a pair of upstanding arms 712 that act in concert to form a rod channel 714. A locking element 716 may also be included to ensure the transition cable rod 701 remains in the rod channel 714. The locking element 716 may be any of the previously described examples of locking elements. Although described herein with regard to this specific example, other configurations are possible. For example the distal housing 708 may be replaced by a loop that achieves the goal of keeping the transition cable rod 701 aligned with the rod engaging surface 706.

FIGS. 92-95 illustrate an example of another fixation assembly that works to counteract flexion at the proximal and/or distal instrumented vertebra. The fixation assembly 720 described herein forms part of the spinal fixation system 10 and is suitable for use with the spinal rod 12 and/or a transition rod 721 such as one of the several examples described above. By way of example, the fixation assembly 720 is described herein as being used with both the spinal rod 12 and a transition rod 721. The fixation assembly 720 includes a first bone anchor 722, a pair of elastomeric sheaths 724, and first and second locking rings 726, 728. The present example is shown and described with a second bone anchor 730 associated with the spinal rod 12 and implanted at an adjacent vertebral level.

The first bone anchor 722 may be any bone anchor suitable for securing a spinal rod in place relative to a bone. By way of example, the bone anchor 722 includes a threaded shank 732 and a ring shaped head 734. Other types of anchors including tulip based pedicle screws like those described in above examples (as well as bone anchor 730 of this example) are possible. The threaded shank 732 is configured to provide purchase in bone tissue. The ring shaped head 734 includes a rod hole 736 sized and configured to allow passage of the transition rod 721 (or spinal rod 12) therethrough. One elastomer sleeve 724 is positioned on the rod 721 proximally of the head 734, and the other elastomer sleeve 724 is positioned on the rod 721 distally of the head 734. The first locking ring 726 is secured to the rod 721 proximally of the proximal elastomer sleeve 724. The second locking ring 728 is secured to the rod 721 distally of the distal elastomer sleeve 724.

The first locking ring 726 shown by way of example comprises a body 738 having a rod hole 740 extending therethrough and a locking element aperture 742 that opens to the rod hole 740 and is configured to receive a locking element 744. The locking element 744 may be any of the setscrew type locking elements described by way of example above. Other locking ring configurations are possible that may or may not need secondary locking elements.

The second locking ring 728 shown by way of example is capable of joining a pair of rods and comprises a body 746 having a rod hole 748 extending therethrough, and first and second locking element apertures 750, 752 that open to the rod hole 748 and are configured to receive first and second locking elements 754, 756 respectively. The locking elements 754, 756 may be any of the setscrew type locking elements described by way of example above. In the instant example the first locking element 754 secures the second locking element 728 to the transition rod 721 and the second locking element 756 secures the second locking element 728 to the spinal rod 12. Although described as a junction point between the transition rod 721 and the spinal rod 12, the second locking ring 728 may be secured to only one rod and therefore may be identical to the first locking ring 726. Other locking ring configurations are possible that may or may not need secondary locking elements.

In an initial unbiased position, the various elements are positioned such that the proximal elastomer sleeve 724 abuts the head 734 and first locking ring 726, while the distal elastomer sleeve 724 abuts the head 734 and second locking ring 726. When flexion occurs and the rod 721 experiences forward bending, the elastomer sleeves 724 will be compressed and as a result exert a counterforce back on the first and second locking rings 726, 728 and head 734. This counterforce will work to return the rod 721 toward its initial position.

FIGS. 96-98 illustrate an example of another fixation assembly that works to present a physical barrier to flexion at the proximal and/or distal instrumented vertebra. The fixation assembly 760 described herein forms part of the spinal fixation system 10 and is suitable for use with the spinal rod 12 and/or a transition rod such as one of the several examples described above. By way of example, the fixation assembly 760 includes bone anchor 762, flexible cable rod 764, and attachment element 766. The present example is shown and described with a second bone anchor 768 associated with the spinal rod 12 and implanted at an adjacent vertebral level.

The bone anchor 762 may be any bone anchor suitable for securing a spinal rod in place relative to a bone. By way of example, the bone anchor 762 includes a threaded shank 770 and a ring shaped head 772. Other types of anchors including tulip based pedicle screws like those described in above examples (as well as bone anchor 768 of this example) are possible. The threaded shank 770 is configured to provide purchase in bone tissue. The ring shaped head 772 includes a rod hole 774 sized and configured to allow passage of the cable rod 764 therethrough. The head 772 further includes a proximal abutment surface 776 oriented toward the proximal end of the cable rod 764 and configured to flushly engage the flexion stop 778 when necessary during flexion.

The cable rod 764 is a flexible cable and has a proximal terminus comprising a flexion stop 778. By way of example, the flexion stop 778 is a rigid member attached to the end of the cable rod 764 and having a diameter (or length dimension) that is greater than the diameter of the rod hole 774 so that the flexion stop 778 is incapable of passing through the rod hole 774. During flexion the cable rod 764 will be pulled through the rod hole 774 until the flexion stop 778 abuts the abutment surface 776. When this abutment happens, the top vertebra (that is falling forward) will in effect be held up by the cable rod 764, preventing further flexion from occurring.

The attachment element 766 is configured to attach the distal end of the cable rod 764 to the proximal end of the spinal rod 12. By way of example, the attachment element 766 comprising a housing 780 having a rod channel 782 and a plurality of locking element apertures 784, each of which is configured to receive a locking element 786. In use, the distal end of the cable rod 764 is received within the rod channel 782 and secured with the proximal most locking element 786. The proximal end of the spinal rod 12 is received within the rod channel 782 and secured with the distal most locking element 786. In the present example, the locking elements 786 may be one of the several examples of setscrew type locking elements described above. Although shown and described herein as a housing and setscrew based attachment mechanism, it should be understood that the cable rod 764 and spinal rod 12 may be joined by any suitable method without departing from the scope of this disclosure.

Several of the examples described herein involve tethers attached to the bone anchor or to a bone hook that then act as artificial ligaments to secure the rod to the bone. In some

instances it may not be necessary to attach the tethers to implanted hardware other than the rod. In these instances it is contemplated that the tether may be wrapped around the bone structure without having a terminus that is attached to implanted hardware.

While specific embodiments have been shown by way of example in the drawings and described herein in detail, it will be appreciated that the invention is susceptible to various modifications and alternative forms (beyond combining features disclosed herein). The description herein of specific embodiments is not intended to limit the invention to the particular forms disclosed, but on the contrary, the invention is to cover all modifications, equivalents, and alternatives falling within the spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for preventing the onset of junctional joint disease subsequent to implantation of a spinal fixation construct to fix two or more segments of the spine together during an index surgery, the method comprising the steps of:

anchoring a first bone anchor through a pedicle of a first vertebra, the bone anchor including a threaded shank and a housing, the housing having a base connected to the shank and a pair of upstanding spaced apart arms forming a channel dimensioned to fit a portion of a connecting rod therein;

anchoring a second bone anchor through a pedicle of a second vertebra situated superior to the first vertebra, the second bone anchor including a threaded shank and a housing, the housing having a base connected to the shank and a pair of upstanding spaced apart arms forming a channel dimensioned to fit a portion of the connecting rod therein;

anchoring a third bone anchor through a pedicle of a third vertebra situated superior to the second vertebra, the third bone anchor including a threaded shank and a housing, the housing having a base connected to the shank and a pair of upstanding spaced apart arms forming a channel dimensioned to fit a portion of the connecting rod therein;

locking a rigid connecting rod within each of the first second and third bone anchor housings, the pair of upstanding arms of the first bone anchor being mateable with a first locking element that locks the rigid connecting rod to the first bone anchor to create a first connection, the pair of upstanding arms of the second bone anchor being mateable with a second locking element that locks the rigid connecting rod to the second bone anchor to create a second connection, and the pair of upstanding arms of the third bone anchor being mateable with a third locking element that locks the rigid connecting rod to the third bone anchor to create a third connection, wherein the first connection is a rigid connection, the second connection is a rigid connection, and the third connection is a compliant connection;

wherein the third bone anchor housing is coupled to the shank in a multi-axial configuration in which the housing can initially rotate and pivot relative to the shank prior to locking the rod within the housing; and

wherein the third bone anchor further includes a collar situated around the shank and flushly engaged with the housing base, the collar being formed of elastomeric material to provide the compliant connection, wherein the collar further includes a spring disposed therein.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the spring is biased toward the housing.

3. The method of claim 1, the method further comprising the step of:

coupling a tether to a fourth vertebra situated superior to the third vertebra, the tether being attached to one or more of the first bone anchor, the second bone anchor, the third bone anchor, and the rigid connection rod.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the tether is formed of plastic fibers.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the plastic fibers are braided.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the plastic fibers are polyethylene.

7. The method of claim 3, wherein coupling the tether to the fourth vertebra includes wrapping the tether around one or more of the transverse process, lamina, rib, and spinous process of the fourth vertebra.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein after the tether is wrapped around one or more of the transverse process, lamina, rib, and spinous process, the tether is attached back to itself.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein after the tether is wrapped around one or more of the transverse process, lamina, rib, and spinous process, the tether is attached to a fourth bone anchor anchored to the contralateral side of the third vertebra.

10. The method of claim 7, wherein coupling the tether to the fourth vertebra includes passing an anchor through the tether and engaging the anchor to one of the transverse process, lamina, rib, and spinous process of the fourth vertebra.

11. A method for preventing the onset of junctional joint disease subsequent to implantation of a spinal fixation construct to fix two or more segments of the spine together during an index surgery, the method comprising the steps of:

anchoring a first bone anchor through a pedicle of a first vertebra, the bone anchor including a threaded shank and a housing, the housing having a base connected to the shank and a pair of upstanding spaced apart arms forming a channel dimensioned to fit a portion of a connecting element therein;

anchoring a second bone anchor through a pedicle of a second vertebra situated superior to the first vertebra, the second bone anchor including a threaded shank and a housing, the housing having a base connected to the shank and a pair of upstanding spaced apart arms forming a channel dimensioned to fit a portion of the connecting rod therein;

coupling a first hook to a third vertebra situated superior to the second vertebra, the first hook including a housing having a channel dimensioned to fit a portion of the connecting element therein;

coupling a second hook to a fourth vertebra situated superior to the third vertebra, the second hook including a housing having a channel dimensioned to fit a portion of the connecting element therein;

locking a connecting element within each of the first bone anchor housing, second bone anchor housing, first hook, and second hook, the connecting element having a first segment situated between the first bone anchor and the second bone anchor, the first segment being rigid, the connecting element having a second segment situated between the first hook and the second hook, the second segment being flexible, and the connecting element having a third segment situated between the second bone anchor and the first hook, the third segment including a transition from the rigid first segment to the flexible second segment; and

31

wherein the first hook is engaged to a rib attached to the third vertebra and the second hook is engaged to a rib attached to the fourth vertebra.

12. The method of claim 11, the method further comprising the step of:

coupling a tether to a fourth vertebra situated superior to the third vertebra, the tether being attached to one or more of the first bone anchor, the second bone anchor, the first hook, the second hook, and the connecting element.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the tether is formed of plastic fibers.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the plastic fibers are braided.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the plastic fibers are polyethylene.

16. The method of claim 12, wherein the coupling the tether to the fourth vertebra includes wrapping the tether

32

around one or more of the transverse process, lamina, rib, and spinous process of the fourth vertebra.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein after the tether is wrapped around one or more of the transverse process, lamina, rib, and spinous process, the tether is attached back to itself.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein after the tether is wrapped around one or more of the transverse process, lamina, rib, and spinous process, the tether is attached to a fourth bone anchor anchored to the contralateral side of the third vertebra.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein coupling the tether to the fourth vertebra includes passing an anchor through the tether and engaging the anchor to one of the transverse process, lamina, rib, and spinous process of the fourth vertebra.

* * * * *