



US 20190069800A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Bardy et al.(10) **Pub. No.: US 2019/0069800 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Mar. 7, 2019**(54) **SUBCUTANEOUS INSERTABLE CARDIAC
MONITOR OPTIMIZED FOR LONG TERM,
LOW AMPLITUDE
ELECTROCARDIOGRAPHIC DATA
COLLECTION**(71) Applicant: **Bardy Diagnostics, Inc.**, Seattle, WA
(US)(72) Inventors: **Gust H. Bardy**, Carnation, WA (US);
Jason Felix, Vashon Island, WA (US)(21) Appl. No.: **16/178,468**(22) Filed: **Nov. 1, 2018****Related U.S. Application Data**

- (63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 15/966,910, filed on Apr. 30, 2018, which is a continuation of application No. 15/483,142, filed on Apr. 10, 2017, now Pat. No. 9,955,888, which is a continuation of application No. 14/488,247, filed on Sep. 16, 2014, now Pat. No. 9,615,763, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 14/080,725, filed on Nov. 14, 2013, now Pat. No. 9,730,593, Continuation-in-part of application No. 15/832,385, filed on Dec. 5, 2017.
- (60) Provisional application No. 61/882,403, filed on Sep. 25, 2013.

Publication Classification(51) **Int. Cl.***A61B 5/0432* (2006.01)*A61B 5/0408* (2006.01)*A61B 5/00* (2006.01)*A61B 5/0404* (2006.01)*A61B 5/0452* (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.**CPC *A61B 5/04325* (2013.01); *A61B 5/04087*(2013.01); *A61B 5/6823* (2013.01); *A61B**5/04085* (2013.01); *A61B 5/725* (2013.01);*A61B 5/0404* (2013.01); *A61B 5/0452*(2013.01); *A61B 5/7232* (2013.01)

(57)

ABSTRACT

Long-term electrocardiographic and physiological monitoring over a period lasting up to several years in duration can be provided through a continuously-recording subcutaneous insertable cardiac monitor (ICM). The sensing circuitry and the physical layout of the electrodes are specifically optimized to capture electrical signals from the propagation of low amplitude, relatively low frequency content cardiac action potentials, particularly the P-waves that are generated during atrial activation. In general, the ICM is intended to be implanted centrally and positioned axially and slightly to either the left or right of the sternal midline in the parasternal region of the chest. Additionally, the ICM includes an ECG sensing circuit that measures raw cutaneous electrical signals and performs signal processing prior to outputting the processed signals for sampling and storage.

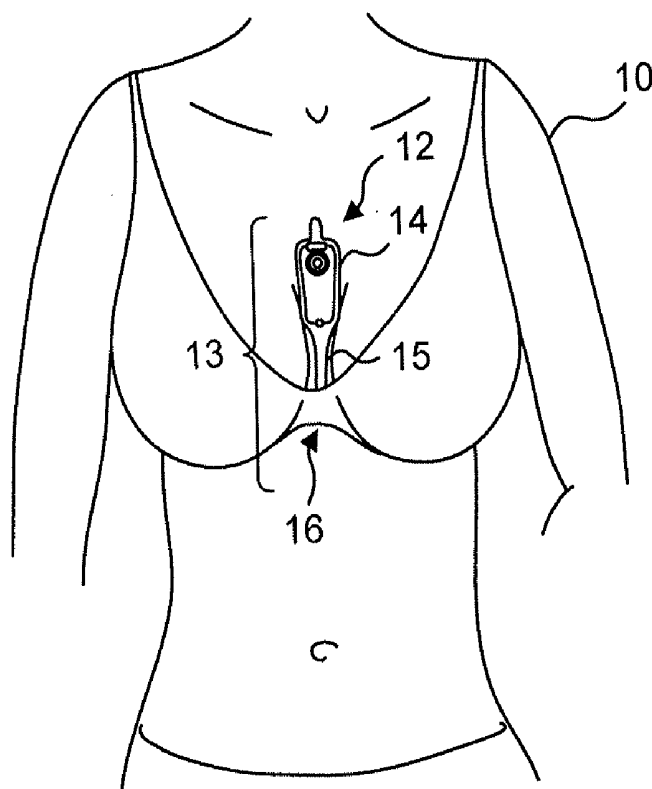


Fig. 1.

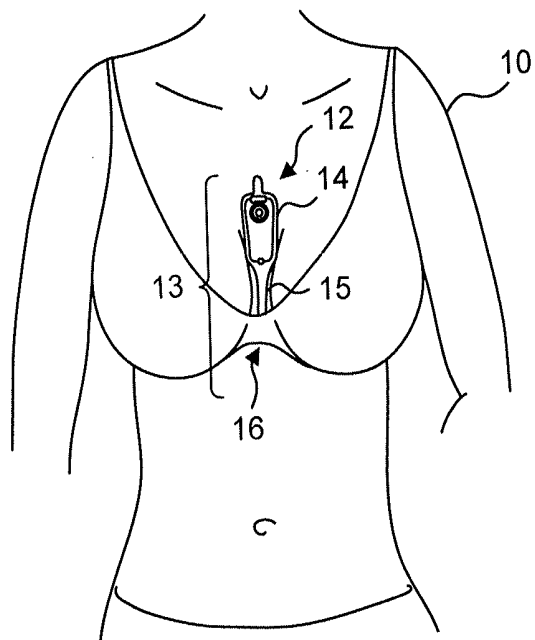


Fig. 2.

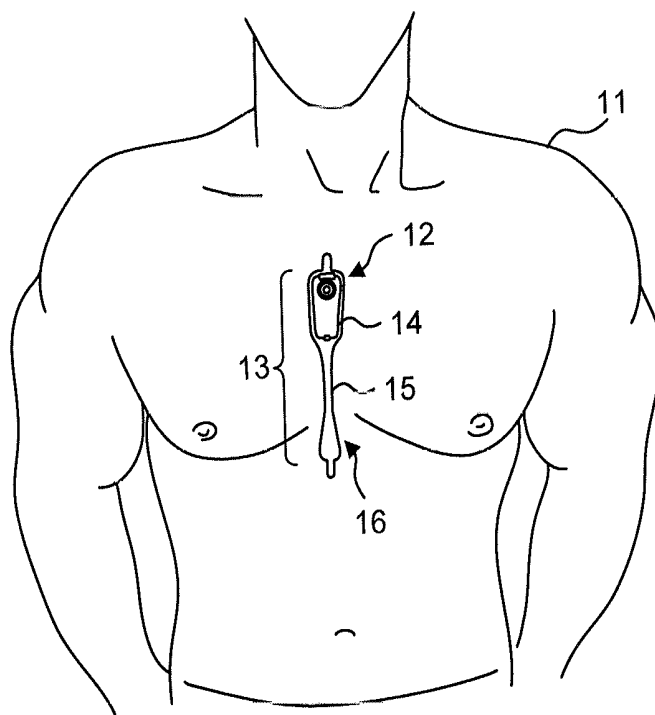


Fig. 3.

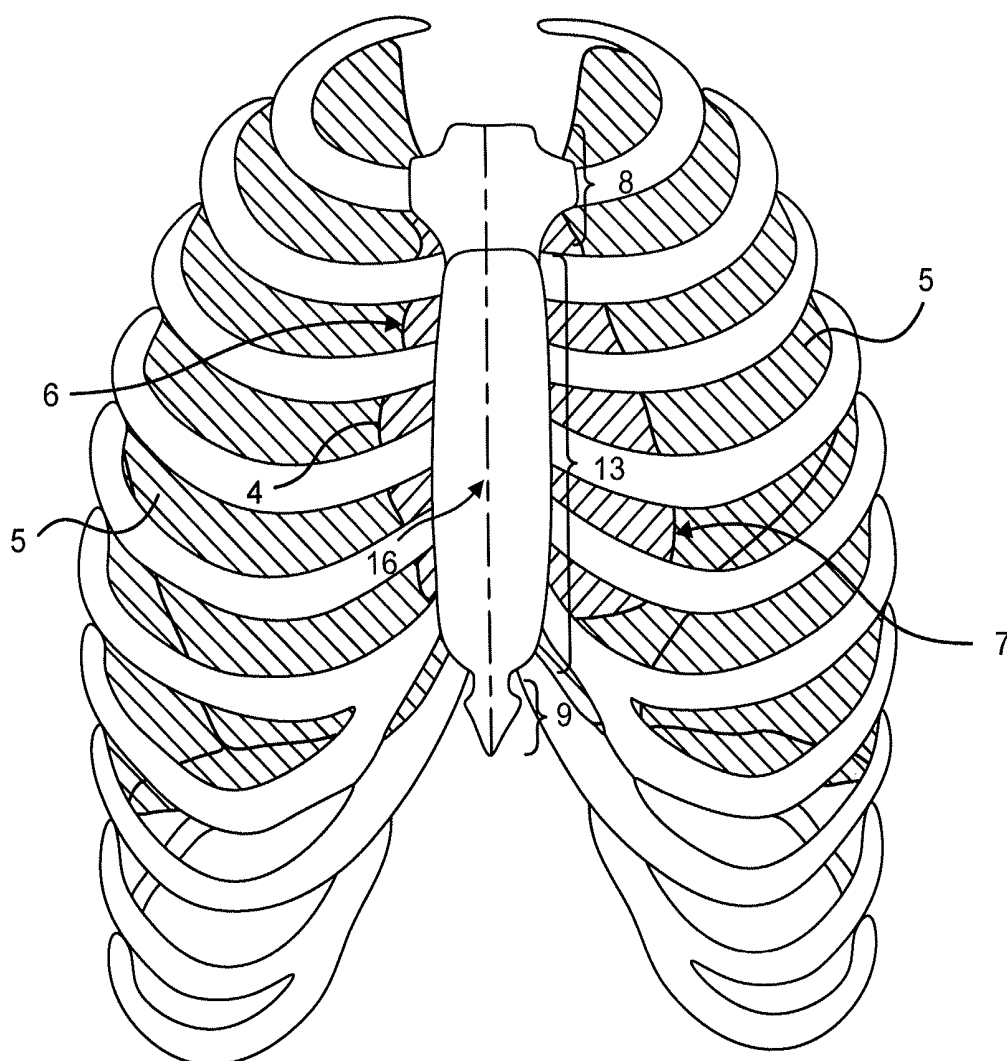


Fig. 4.

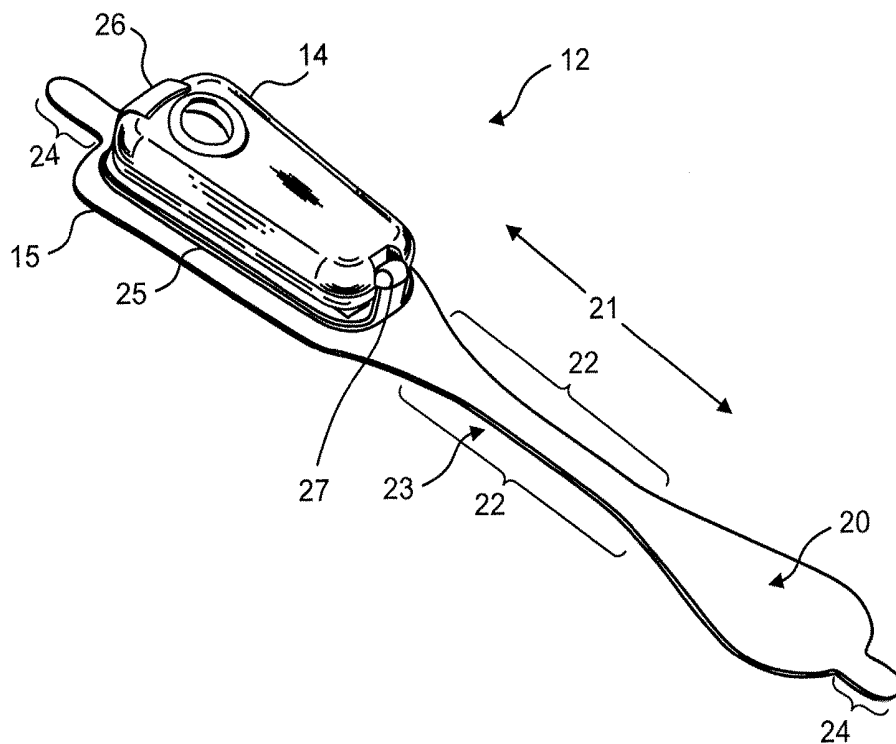


Fig. 5.

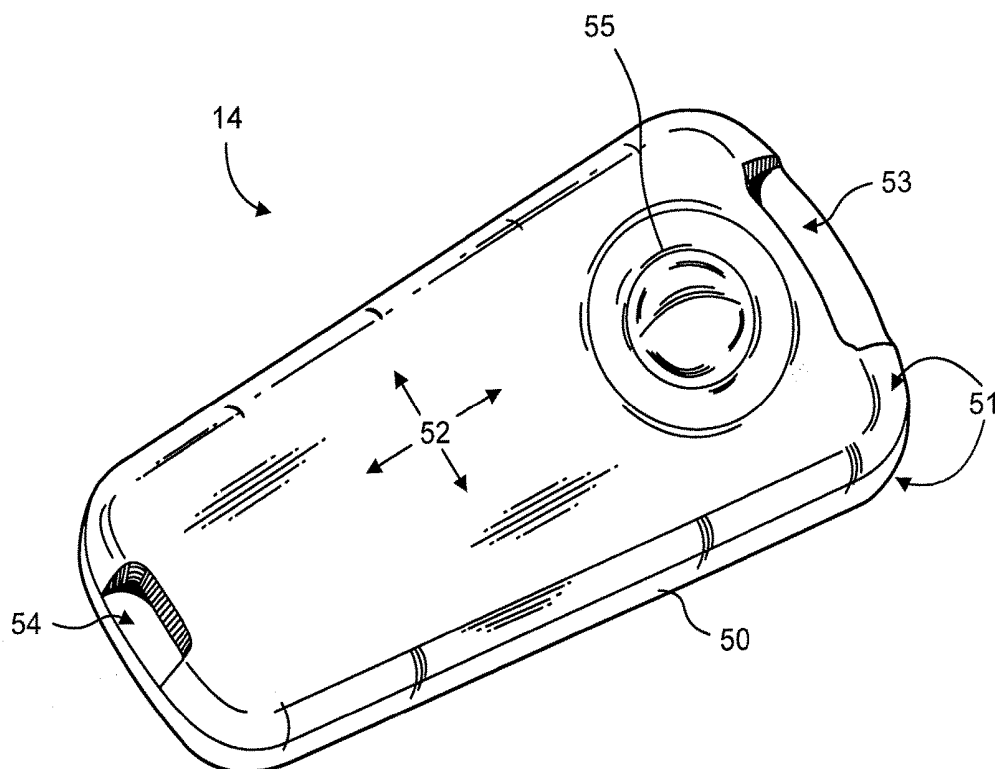


Fig. 6.

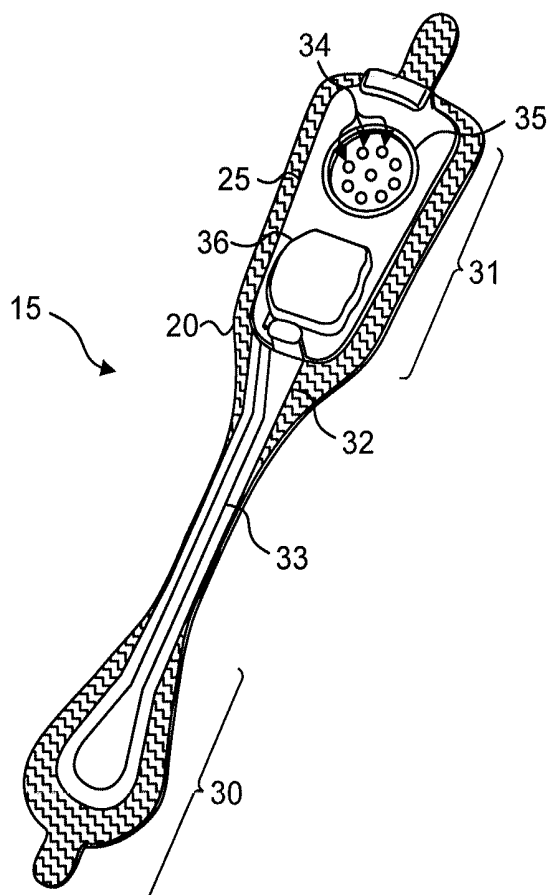


Fig. 7.

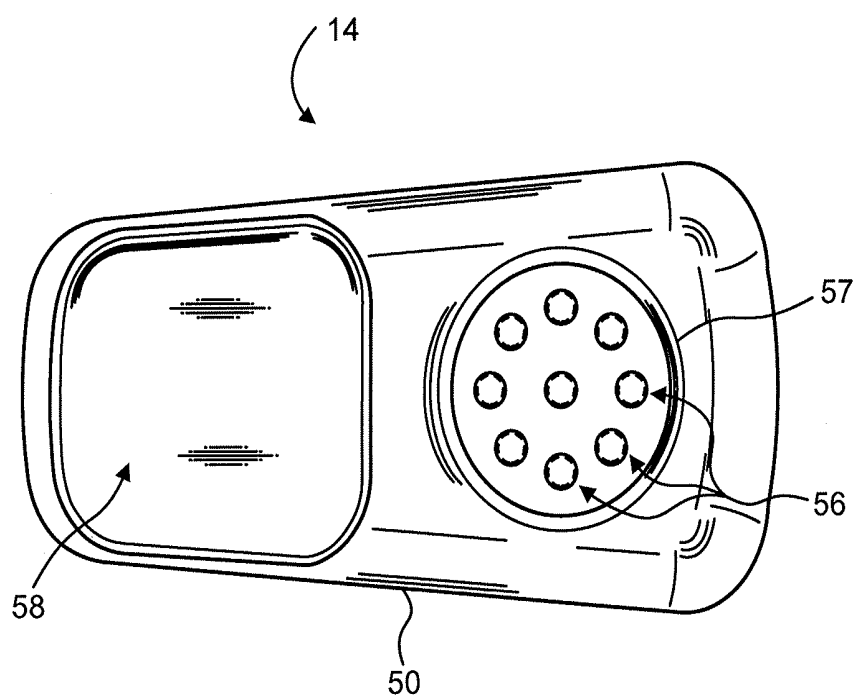


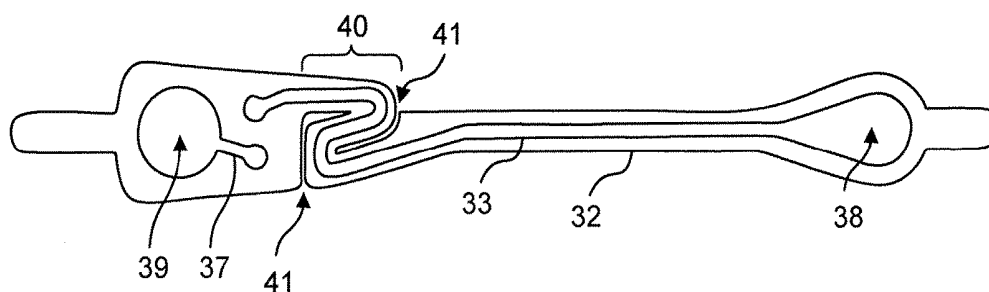
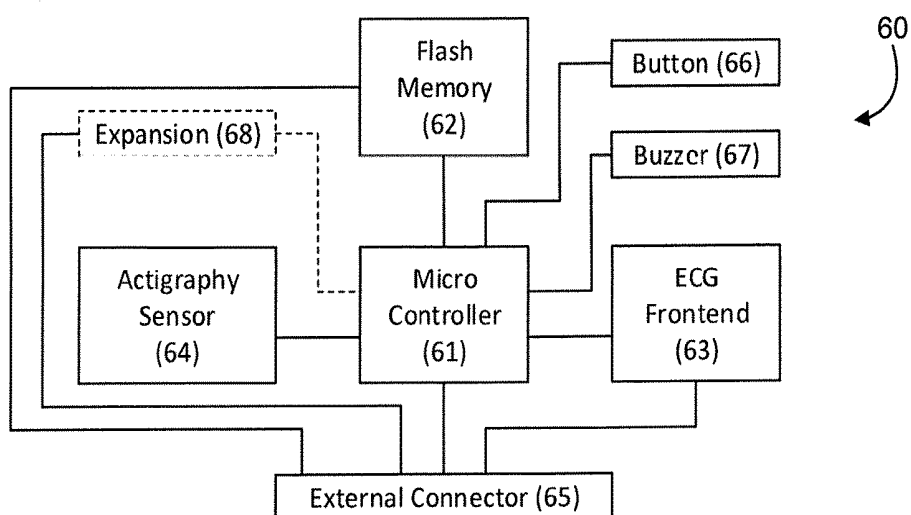
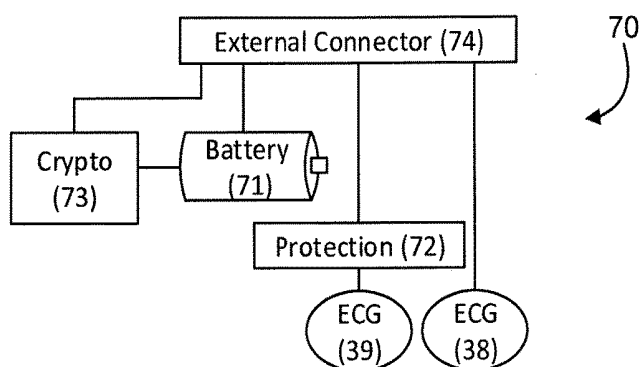
Fig. 8.**Fig. 9.****Fig. 10.**

Fig. 11.

80

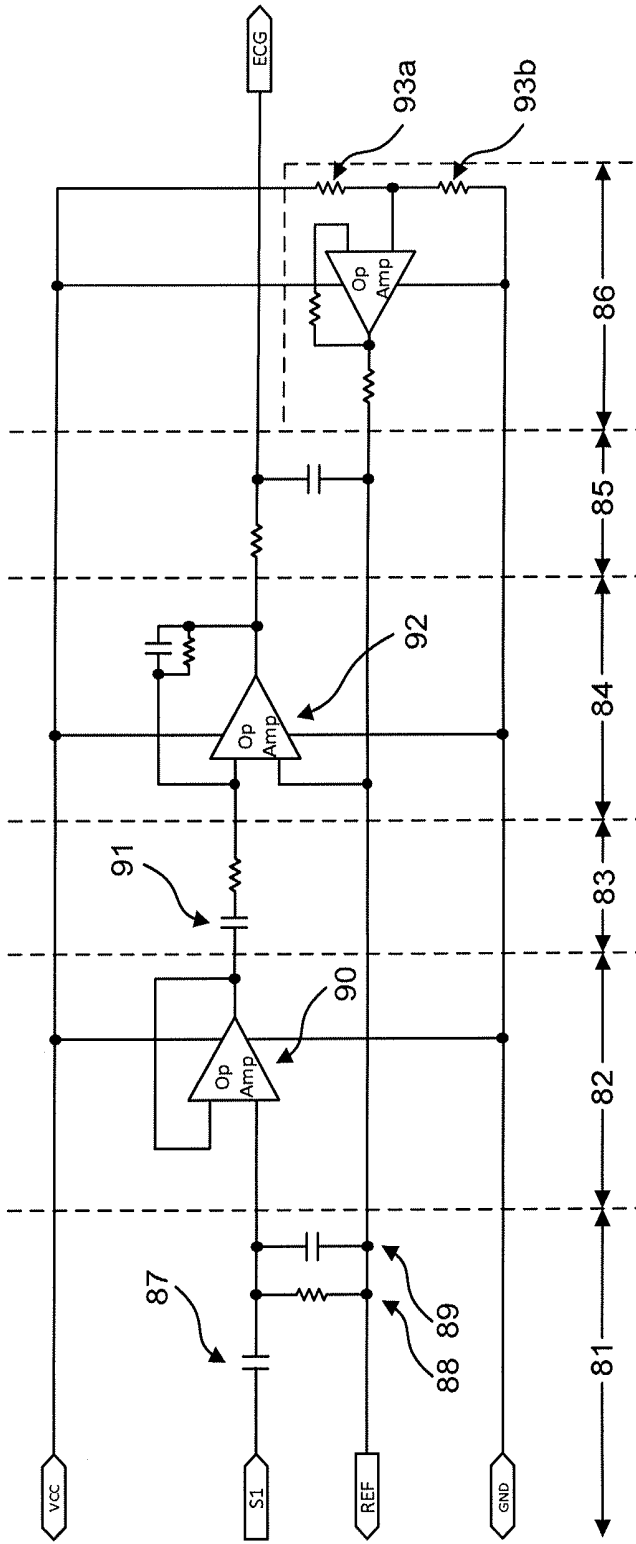


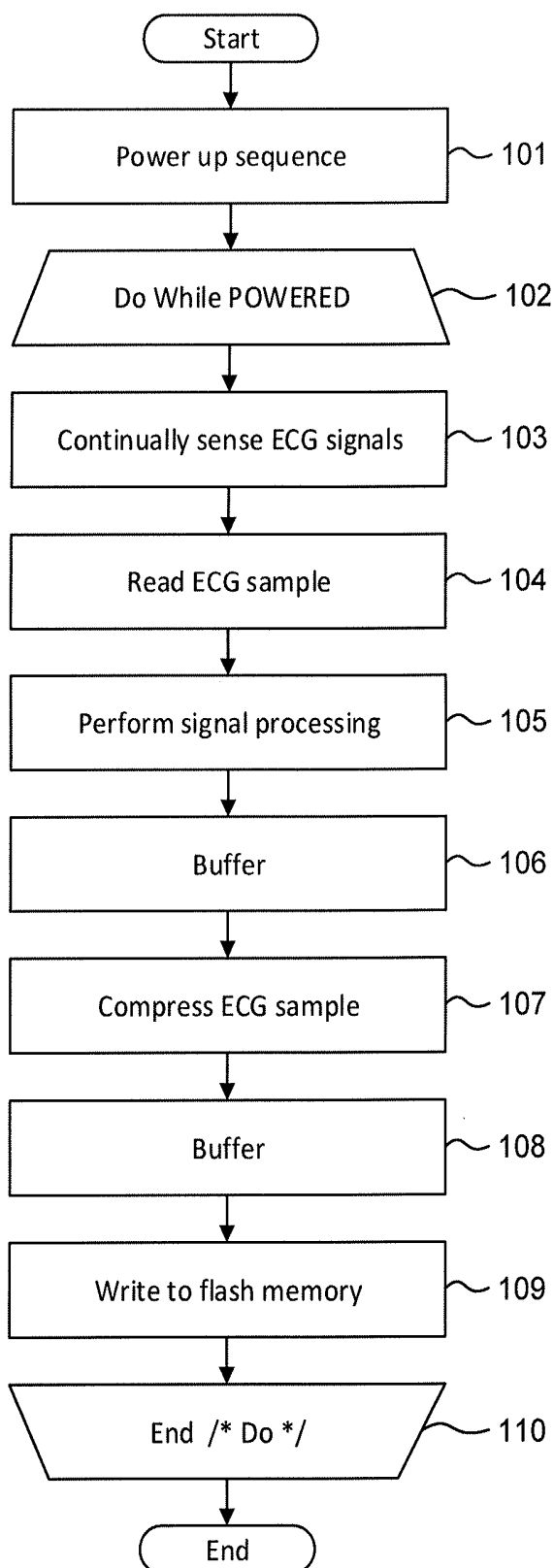
Fig. 12.100

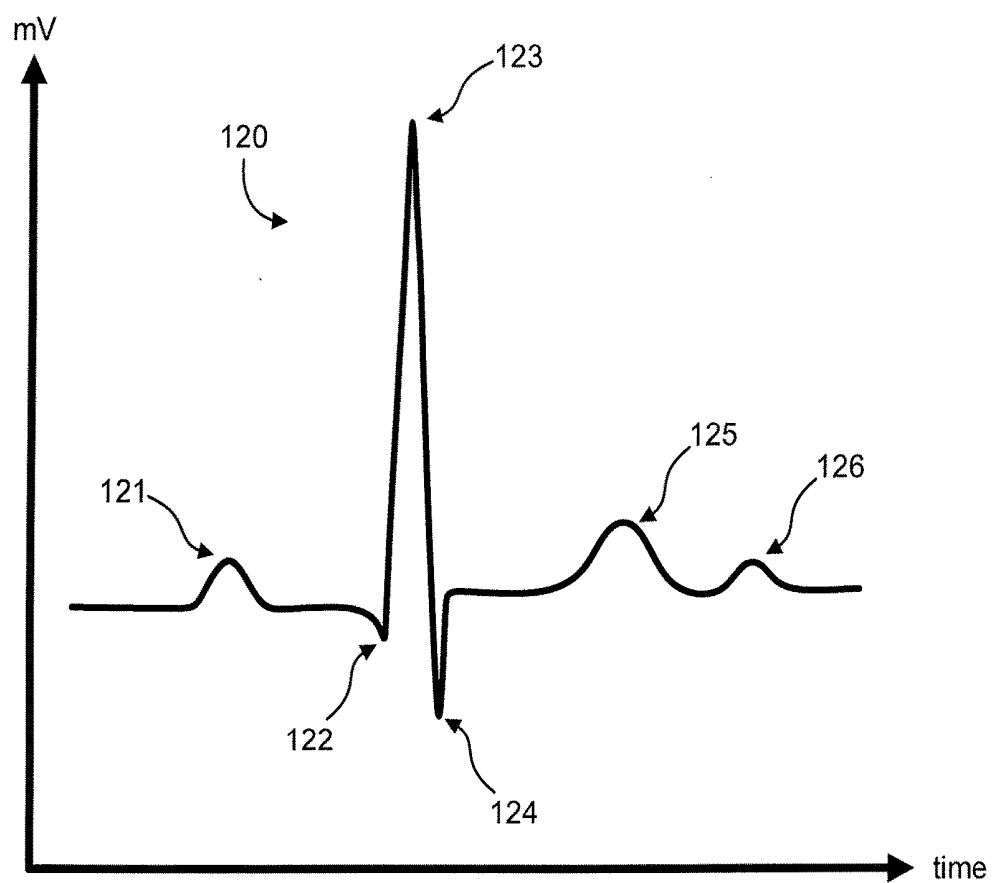
Fig. 13.

Fig. 14.

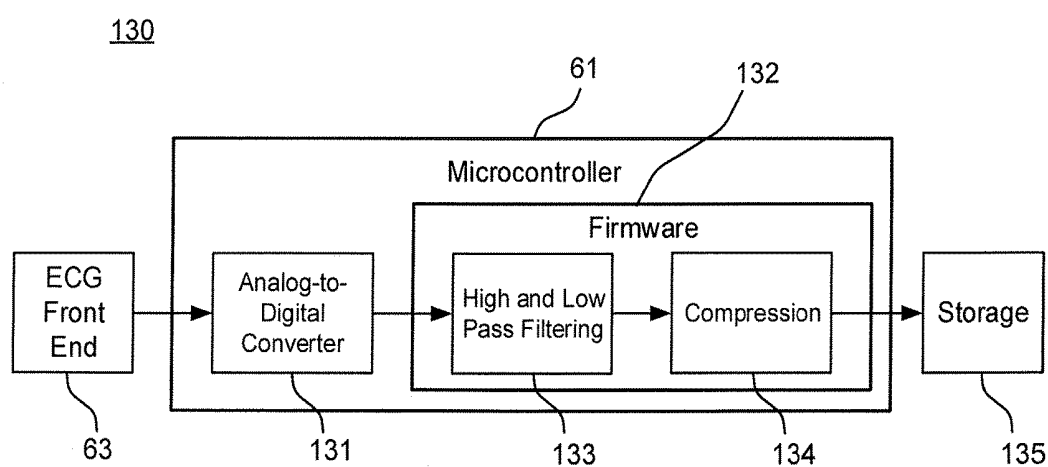


Fig. 15.

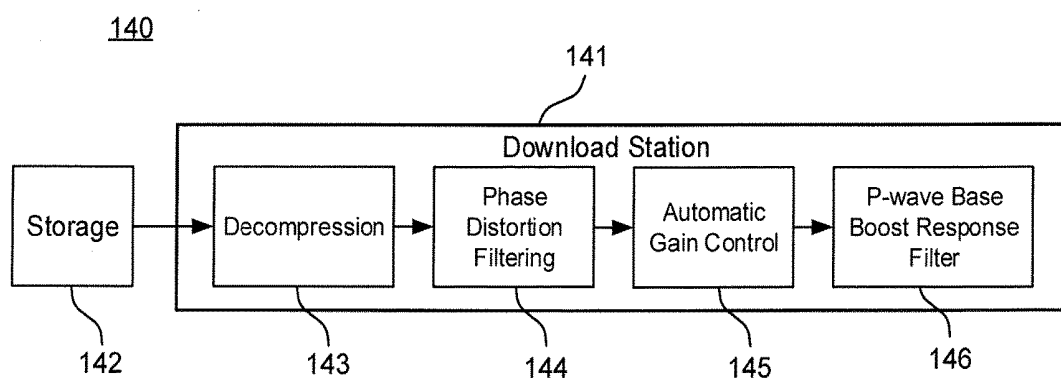


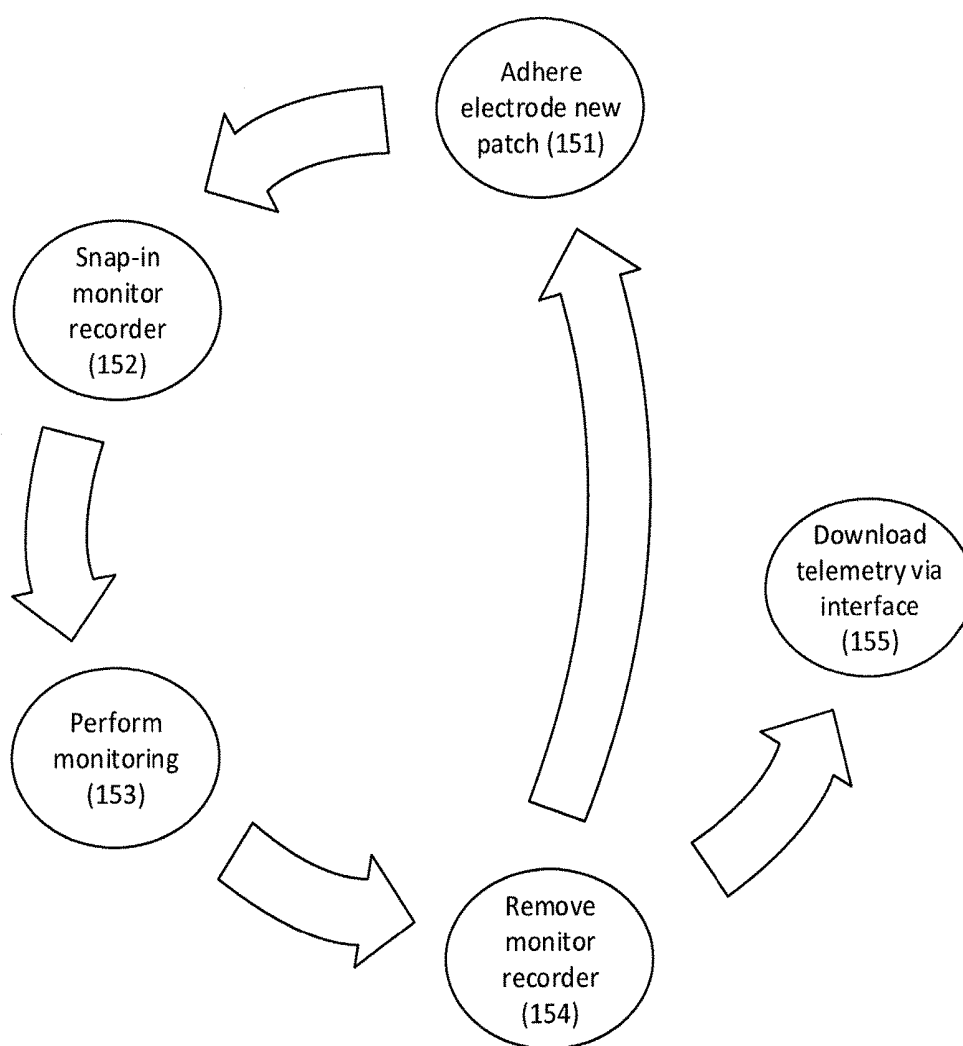
Fig. 16A.150

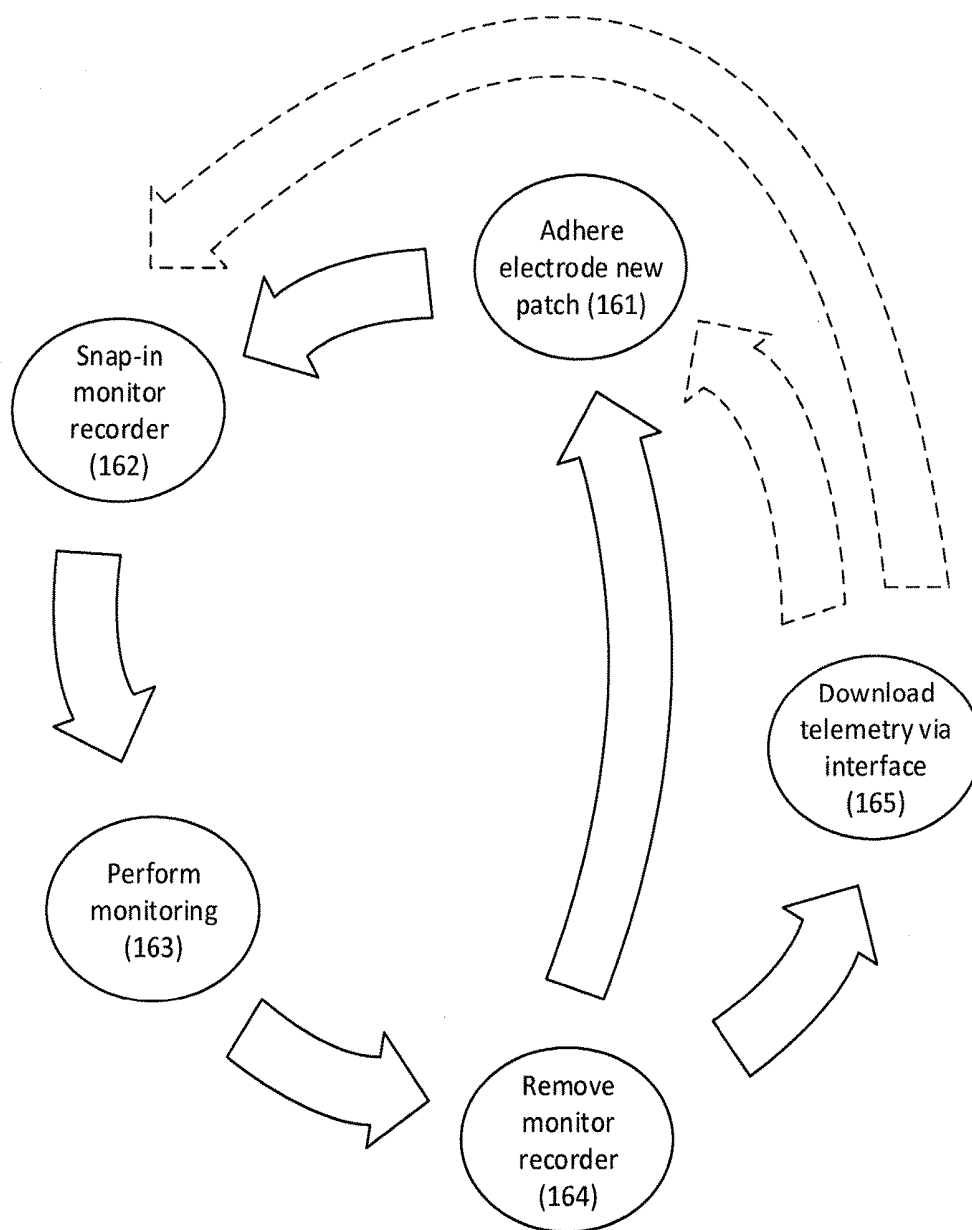
Fig. 16B.160

Fig. 16C.

170

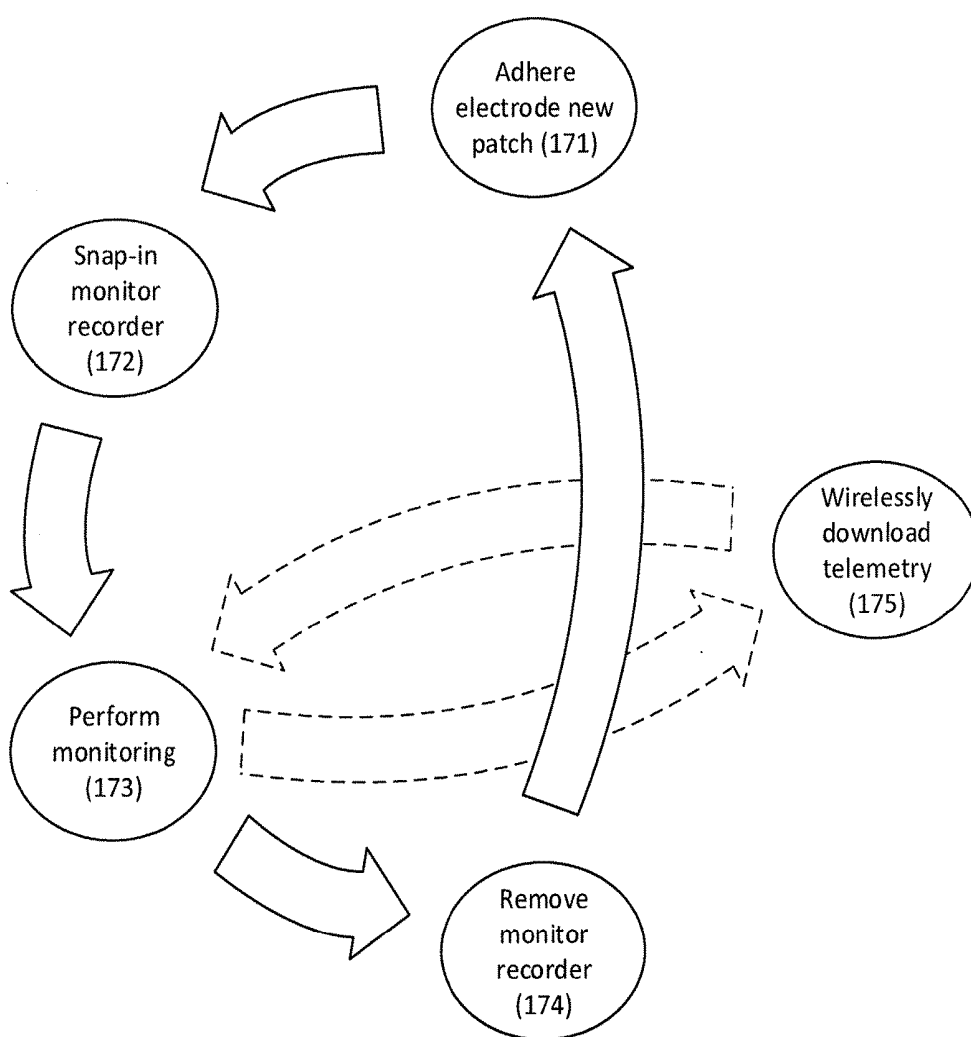


Fig. 17.

180

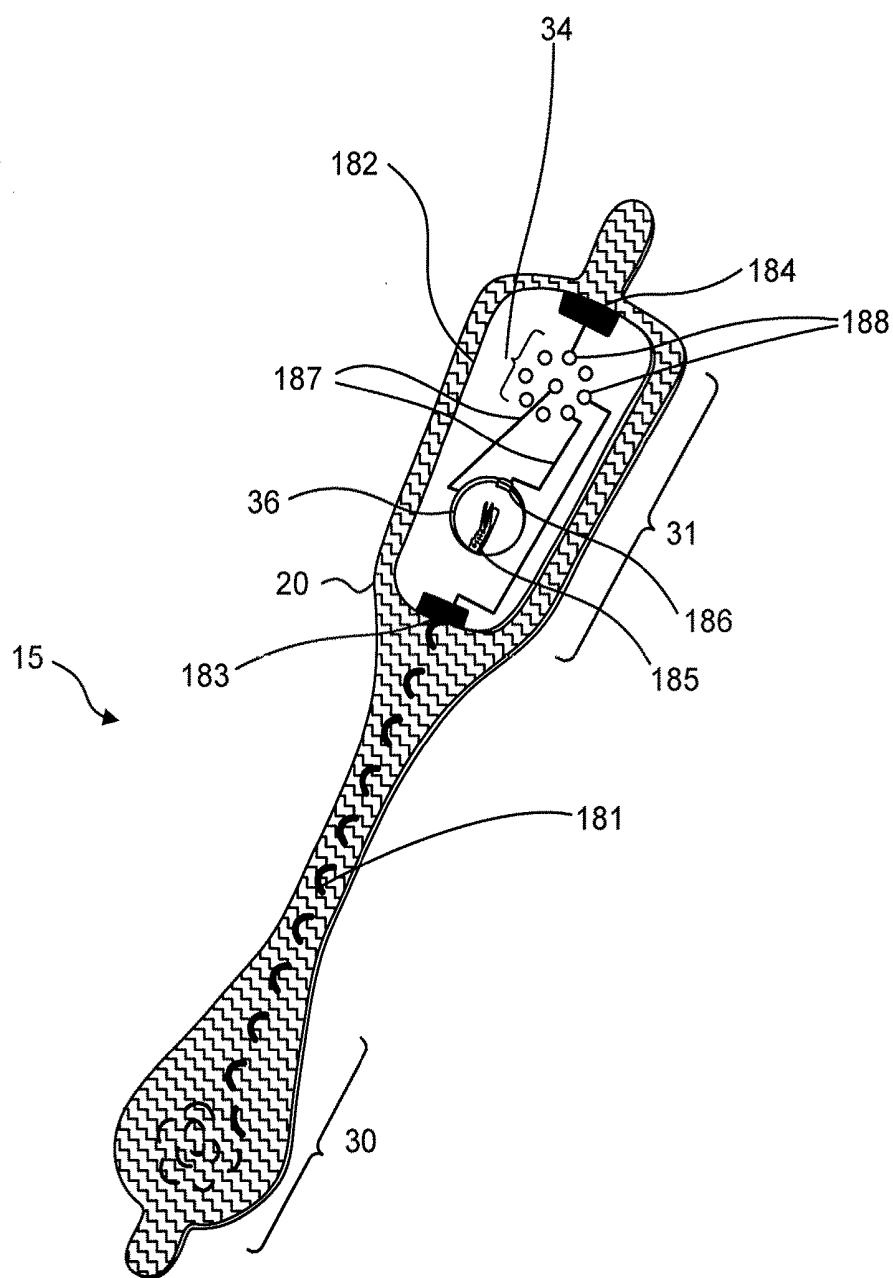


Fig. 18.

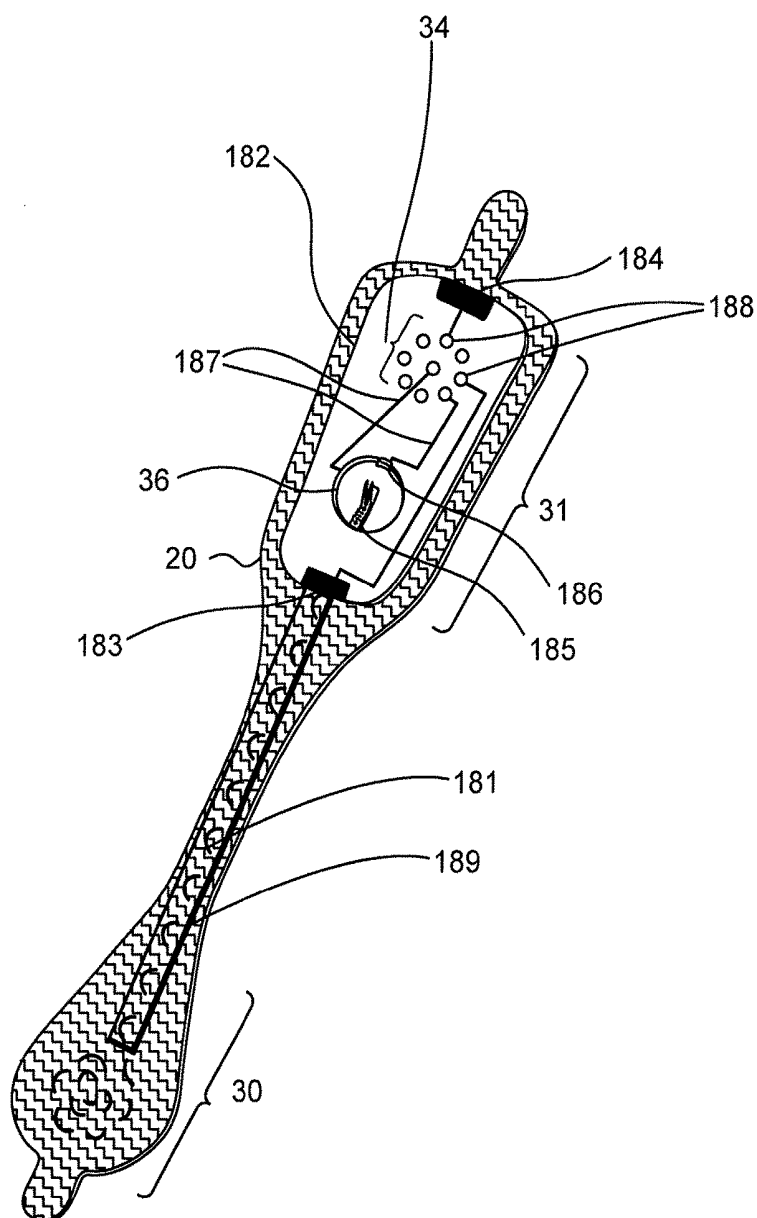


Fig. 19.

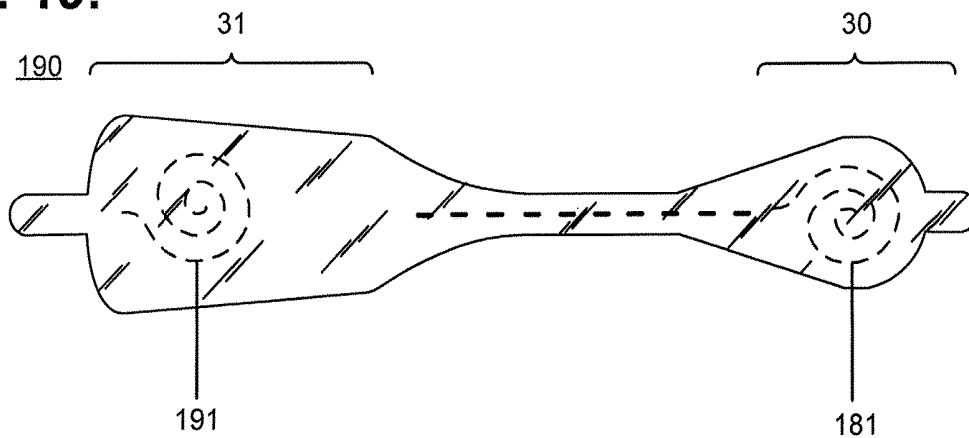


Fig. 20.

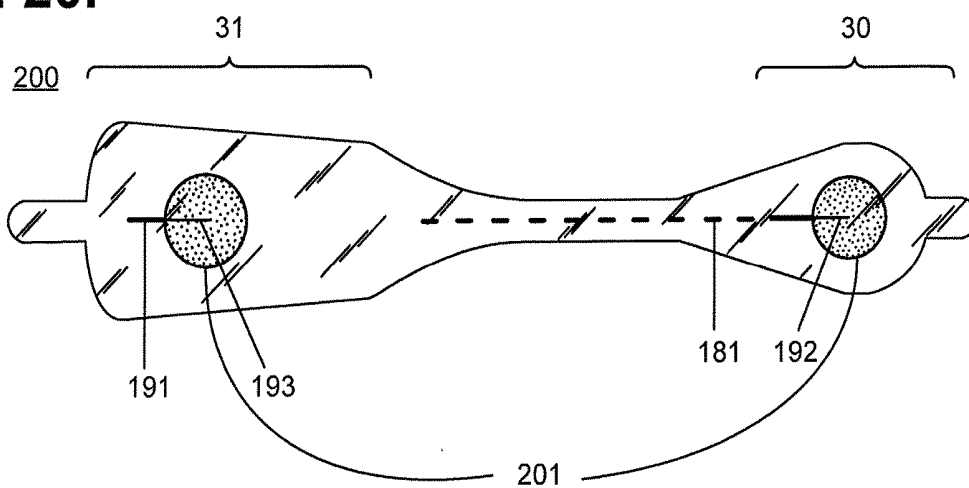


Fig. 21.

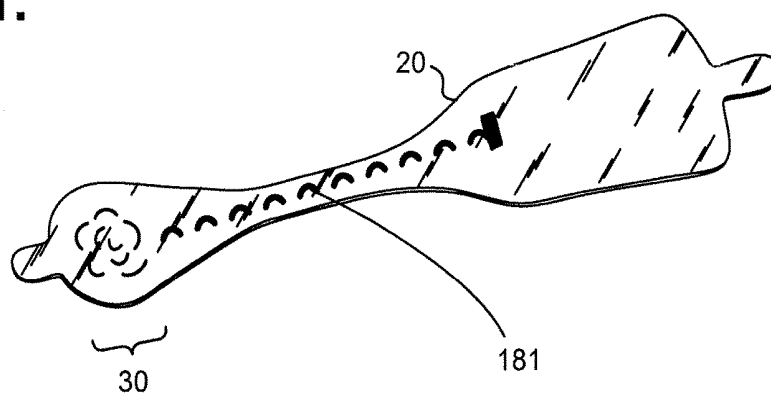


Fig. 22.

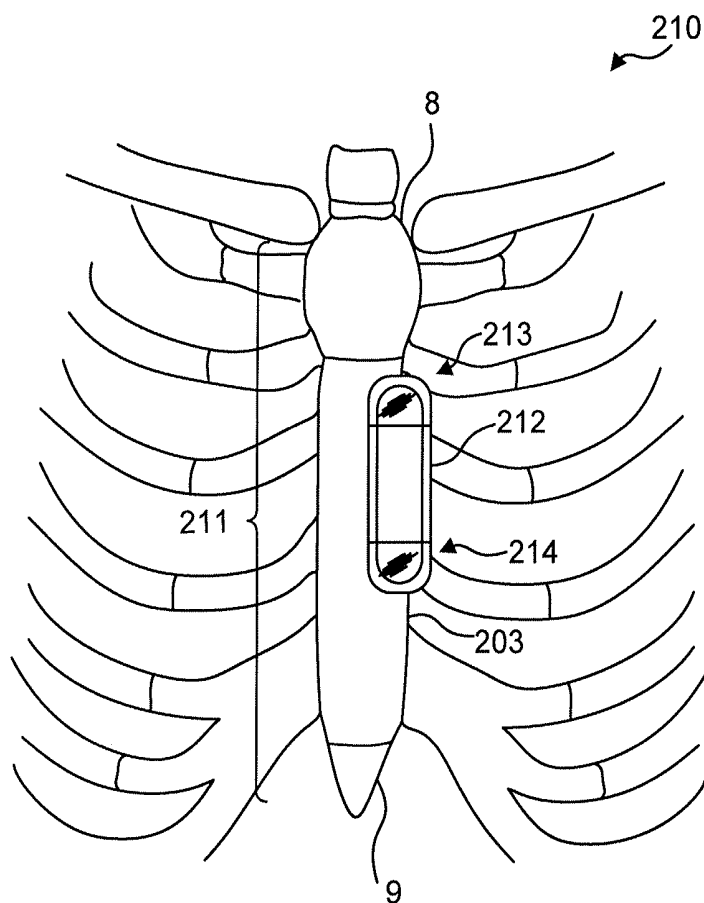


Fig. 23.

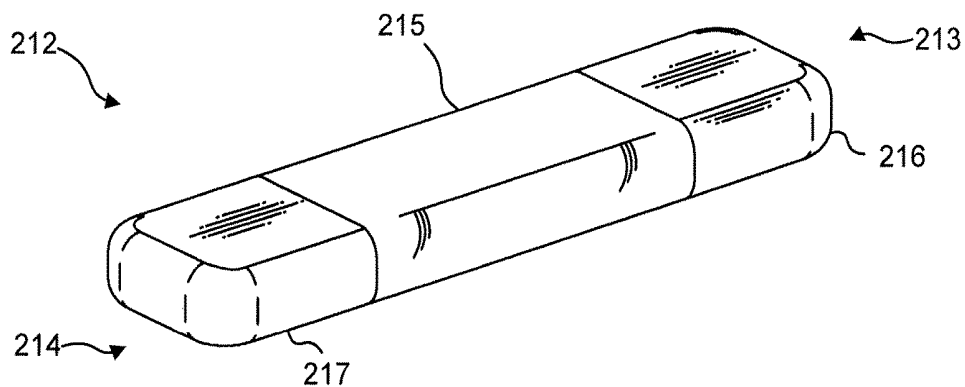


Fig. 24.

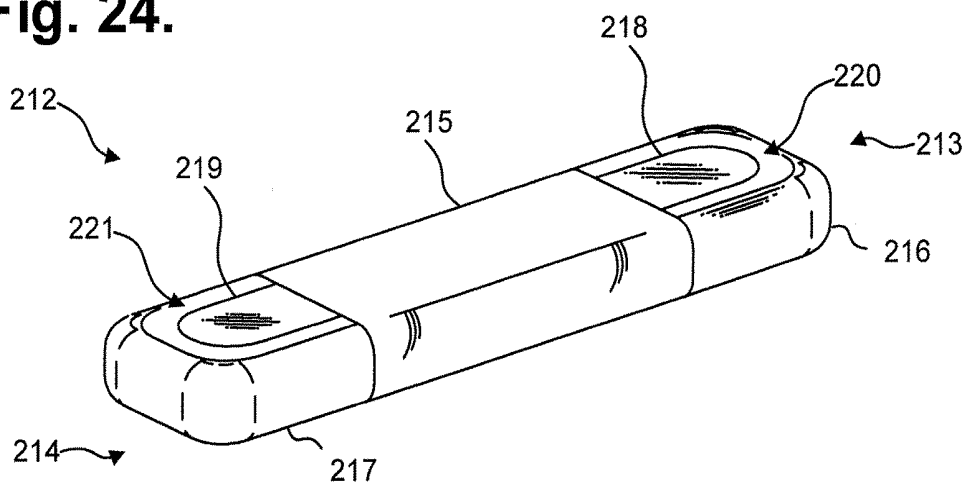


Fig. 25.

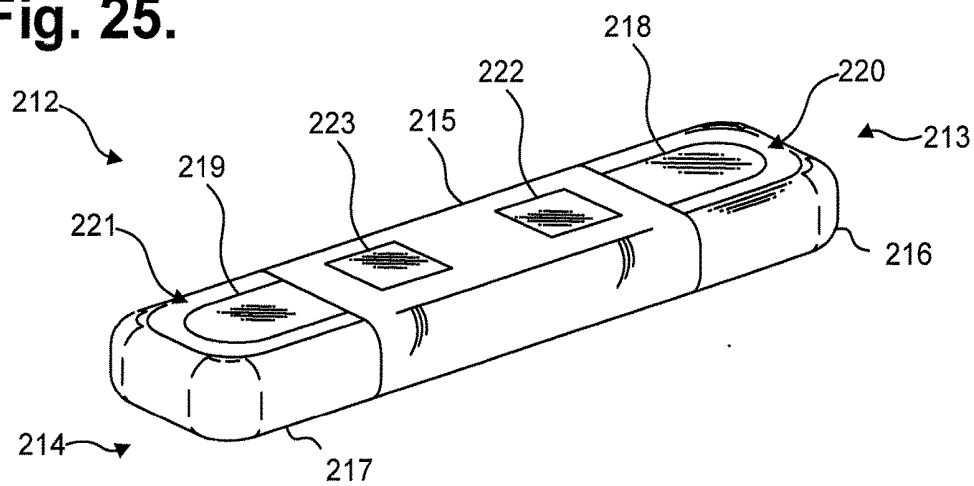


Fig. 26.

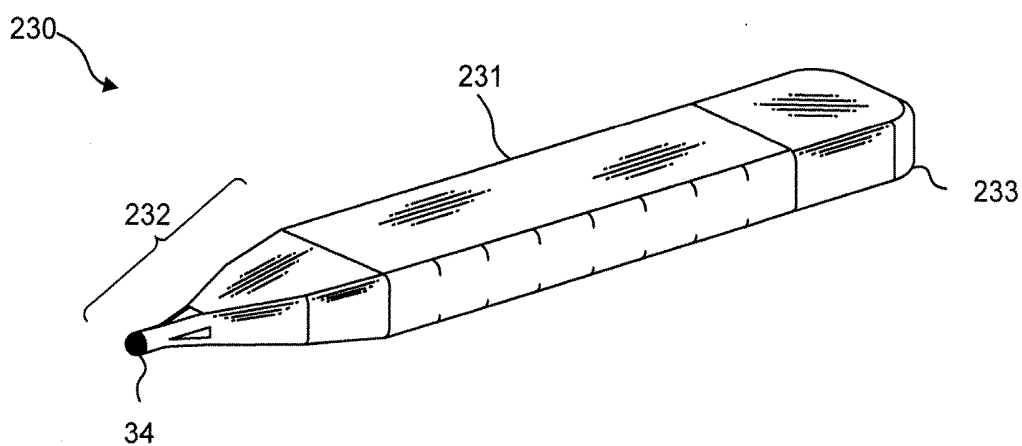


Fig. 27.

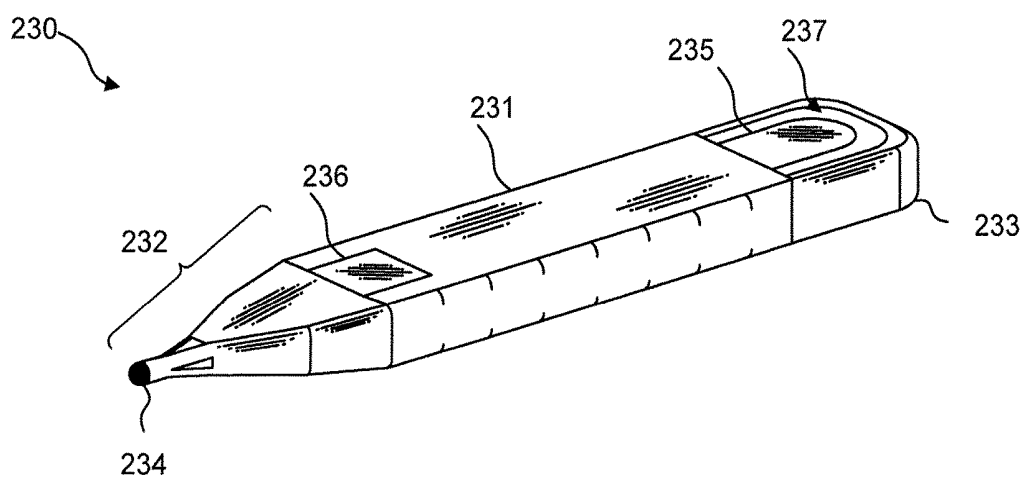


Fig. 28.

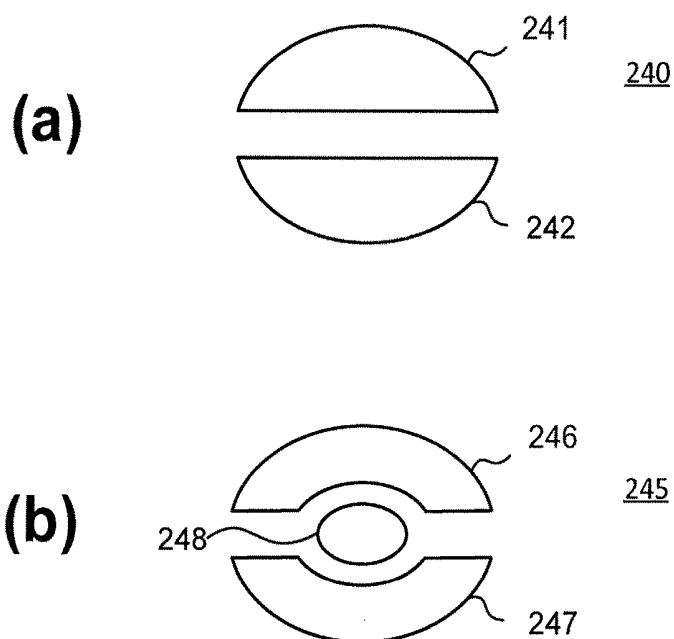
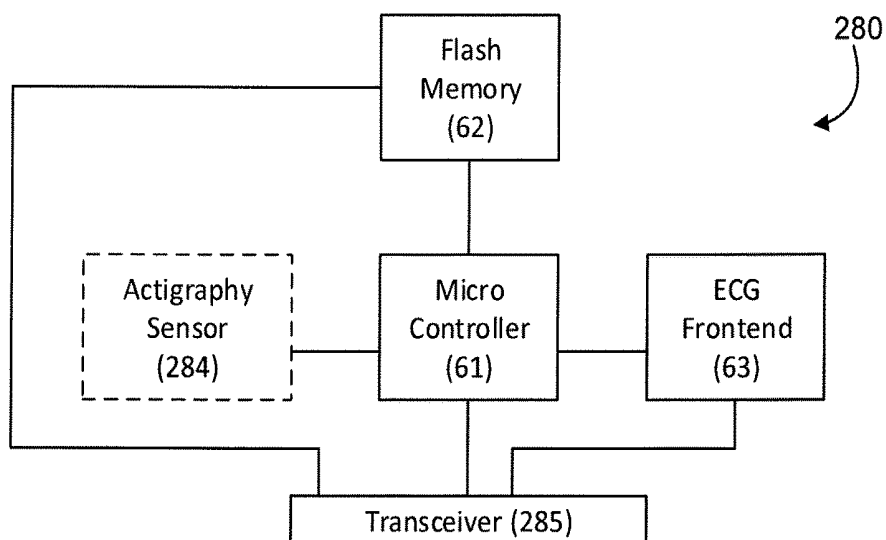


Fig. 29.



**SUBCUTANEOUS INSERTABLE CARDIAC
MONITOR OPTIMIZED FOR LONG TERM,
LOW AMPLITUDE
ELECTROCARDIOGRAPHIC DATA
COLLECTION**

**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATION**

[0001] This non-provisional patent application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/966,910, filed on Apr. 30, 2018, pending, which is a continuation of U.S. Pat. No. 9,955,888, issued May 1, 2018, which is a continuation of U.S. Pat. No. 9,615,763, issued April 11, 2017, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent No. 9,730,593, issued Aug. 15, 2017, and further claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) to U.S. Provisional Patent application Ser. No. 61/882,403, filed Sep. 25, 2013, the disclosures of which are incorporated by reference; this present non-provisional patent application is also a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/832,385, filed Dec. 5, 2017, pending, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference.

FIELD

[0002] This application relates in general to electrocardiographic monitoring and, in particular, to a subcutaneous insertable cardiac monitor optimized for long term, low amplitude electrocardiographic data collection.

BACKGROUND

[0003] The first electrocardiogram (ECG) was invented by a Dutch physiologist, Willem Einthoven, in 1903, who used a string galvanometer to measure the electrical activity of the heart. Generations of physicians around the world have since used ECGs, in various forms, to diagnose heart problems and other potential medical concerns. Although the basic principles underlying Dr. Einthoven's original work, including his naming of various waveform deflections (Einthoven's triangle), are still applicable today, ECG machines have evolved from his original three-lead ECG, to ECGs with unipolar leads connected to a central reference terminal starting in 1934, to augmented unipolar leads beginning in 1942, and finally to the 12-lead ECG standardized by the American Heart Association in 1954 and still in use today. Further advances in portability and computerized interpretation have been made, yet the electronic design of the ECG recording apparatuses has remained fundamentally the same for much of the past 40 years.

[0004] Essentially, an ECG measures the electrical signals emitted by the heart as generated by the propagation of the action potentials that trigger depolarization of heart fibers. Physiologically, transmembrane ionic currents are generated within the heart during cardiac activation and recovery sequences. Cardiac depolarization originates high in the right atrium in the sinoatrial (SA) node before spreading leftward towards the left atrium and inferiorly towards the atrioventricular (AV) node. After a delay occasioned by the AV node, the depolarization impulse transits the Bundle of His and moves into the right and left bundle branches and Purkinje fibers to activate the right and left ventricles.

[0005] During each cardiac cycle, the transmembrane ionic currents create an electrical field in and around the heart that can be detected by ECG electrodes either placed

on the skin or implanted under the skin of the thorax to record far field electrical signals from the heart. These far field electrical signals are the captured ECG signals that can be visually depicted in an ECG trace as the PQRSTU waveforms, each letter of which represents a specific electrical activity in the heart well known to cardiologists. Within each cardiac cycle, these waveforms indicate key aspects of cardiac electrical activity. The critical P-wave component of each heartbeat represents atrial electrical activity, the electrical signal that is essential if one is to understand heart rhythm disorders. The QRS components represent ventricular electrical activity, equally critical to understanding heart rhythm disorders. The TU components represent ventricular cell voltages that are the result of resetting cellular currents in preparation for the next cardiac cycle. The TU components are generally of limited value for the purposes of understanding heart rhythm disorders and are rarely addressed in the analysis of heart rhythm disorders per se. (Note that the signals involved in the resetting of the atria are so minuscule as to not be visible in an ECG trace or, even in a standard intra-cardiac recording.)

[0006] Practically, the QRS components of the ventricle electrical activity are often termed the "R-wave," in brief, as a shorthand way of identifying ventricular electrical activity in its entirety. (Henceforth, the shorthand version of "R-wave" will be used to indicate ventricular activity and "P-wave" will be used to indicate atrial activity.) These "waves" represent the two critical components of arrhythmia monitoring and diagnosis performed every day hundreds of thousands of times across the United States. Without a knowledge of the relationship of these two basic symbols, heart rhythm disorders cannot be reliably diagnosed. Visualizing both the P-wave and the R-wave allow for the specific identification of a variety of atrial tachyarrhythmias (also known as supraventricular tachyarrhythmias, or SVTs), ventricular tachyarrhythmias (VTs), and bradycardias related to sinus node and atrioventricular (AV) node dysfunction. These categories are well understood by cardiologists but only accurately diagnosable if the P-wave and the R-wave are visualized and their relationship and behavior are clear. Visualization of the R-wave is usually readily achievable, as the R-wave is a high voltage, high frequency signal easily recorded from the skin's surface. However, as the ECG bipole spacing and electrode surface area decreases, even the R-wave can be a challenge to visualize. To make matters of rhythm identification more complicated, surface P-waves can be much more difficult to visualize from the surface because of their much lower voltage and signal frequency content. P-wave visualization becomes exacerbated further when the recording bipole inter-electrode spacing decreases.

[0007] Cardiac rhythm disorders may present with lightheadedness, fainting, chest pain, hypoxia, syncope, palpitations, and congestive heart failure (CHF), yet rhythm disorders are often sporadic in occurrence and may not show up in-clinic during a conventional 12-second ECG. Continuous ECG monitoring with P-wave-centric action potential acquisition over an extended period is more apt to capture sporadic cardiac events. However, recording sufficient ECG and related physiological data over an extended period remains a significant challenge. For instance, maintaining continual contact between ECG electrodes of conventional ambulatory dermal ECG monitors and the skin after a day or two of ambulatory ECG monitoring has been a problem.

Time, dirt, moisture, and other environmental contaminants, as well as perspiration, skin oil, and dead skin cells from the patient's body, can get between an ECG electrode's non-conductive adhesive and the skin's surface. These factors adversely affect electrode adhesion and the quality of cardiac signal recordings. Furthermore, the physical movements of the patient and their clothing impart various compressional, tensile, bending, and torsional forces on the contact point of an ECG electrode, especially over long recording times, and an inflexibly fastened ECG electrode will be prone to becoming dislodged. Moreover, dislodgement may occur unbeknownst to the patient, making the ECG recordings worthless. Further, some patients may have skin that is susceptible to itching or irritation, and the wearing of ECG electrodes can aggravate such skin conditions.

[0008] While subcutaneous ECG monitors can perform monitoring for an extended period of time, up to three years, such subcutaneous ECG monitors, because of their small size, have greater problems of demonstrating a clear and dependable P-wave. The issues related to a tiny atrial voltage are exacerbated by the small size of insertable cardiac monitors (ICMs), the signal processing limits imposed upon them by virtue of their reduced electrode size, and restricted inter-electrode spacing. Conventional subcutaneous ICMs, as well as most conventional surface ECG monitors, are notorious for poor visualization of the P-wave, which remains the primary reason that heart rhythm disorders cannot precisely be identified today from ICMs. Furthermore, even when physiologically present, the P-wave may not actually appear on an ECG because the P-wave's visibility is strongly dependent upon the signal capturing ability of the ECG recording device's sensing circuitry. This situation is further influenced by several factors, including electrode configuration, electrode surface areas and shapes, inter-electrode spacing; where the electrodes are placed on or within the body relative to the heart's atria. Further, the presence or absence of ambient noise and the means to limit the ambient noise is a key aspect of whether the low amplitude atrial signal can be seen.

[0009] Conventional ICMs are often used after diagnostic measures when dermal ECG monitors fail to identify a suspected arrhythmia. Consequently, when a physician is strongly suspicious of a serious cardiac rhythm disorder that may have caused loss of consciousness or stroke, for example, the physician will often proceed to the insertion of an ICM under the skin of the thorax. Although traditionally, the quality of the signal is limited with ICMs with respect to identifying the P-wave, the duration of monitoring is hoped to compensate for poor P-wave recording. This situation has led to a dependence on scrutiny of R-wave behavior, such as RR interval (R-wave-to-R-wave interval) behavior, often used as a surrogate for diagnosing atrial fibrillation, a potential cause of stroke. To a limited extent, this approach has some degree of value. Nevertheless, better recording of the P-wave would result in a significant diagnostic improvement, not only in the case of atrial fibrillation, but in a host of other rhythm disorders that can result in syncope or loss of consciousness, like VT or heart block.

[0010] As mentioned above, the P-wave is the most difficult ECG signal to capture by virtue of originating in the low tissue mass atria and having both low voltage amplitude and relatively low frequency content. Notwithstanding these physiological constraints, ICMs are popular, albeit limited in

their diagnostic yield. The few ICMs that are commercially available today, including the Reveal LINQ ICM, manufactured by Medtronic, Inc., Minneapolis, Minn., the BioMonitor 2 (AF and S versions), manufactured by Biotronik SE & Co. KG, Berlin, Germany, and the Abbott Confirm Rx ICM, manufactured by Abbott Laboratories, Chicago, Ill., all are uniformly limited in their abilities to clearly and consistently sense, record, and deliver the P-wave.

[0011] Typically, the current realm of ICM devices use a loop recorder where cumulative ECG data lasting for around an hour is continually overwritten unless an episode of pre-programmed interest occurs or a patient marker is manually triggered. The limited temporal window afforded by the recordation loop is yet another restriction on the evaluation of the P-wave, and related cardiac morphologies, and further compromises diagnostic opportunities.

[0012] For instance, Medtronic's Reveal LINQ ICM delivers long-term subcutaneous ECG monitoring for up to three years, depending on programming. The monitor is able to store up to 59 minutes of ECG data, include up to 30 minutes of patient-activated episodes, 27 minutes of automatically detected episodes, and two minutes of the longest atrial fibrillation (AF) episode stored since the last interrogation of the device. The focus of the device is more directed to recording duration and programming options for recording time and patient interactions rather than signal fidelity. The Reveal LINQ ICM is intended for general purpose ECG monitoring and lacks an engineering focus on P-wave visualization. Moreover, the device's recording circuitry is intended to secure the ventricular signal by capturing the R-wave, and is designed to accommodate placement over a broad range of subcutaneous implantation sites, which is usually sufficient if one is focused on the R-wave given its amplitude and frequency content, but of limited value in capturing the low-amplitude, low-frequency content P-wave. Finally, electrode spacing, surface areas, and shapes are dictated (and limited) by the physical size of the monitor's housing which is quite small, an aesthetic choice, but unrealistic with respect to capturing the P-wave.

[0013] Similar in design is the titanium housing of Biotronik's BioMonitor 2 but with a flexible silicone antenna to mount a distal electrode lead, albeit of a standardized length. This standardized length mollifies, in one parameter only, the concerns of limited inter-electrode spacing and its curbing effect on securing the P-wave. None of the other factors related to P-wave signal revelation are addressed. Therefore the quality of sensed P-waves reflects a compromise caused by closely-spaced poles that fail to consistently preserve P-wave fidelity, with the reality of the physics imposed problems of signal-to-noise ratio limitations remaining mostly unaddressed.

[0014] Therefore, a need remains for a continuously recording subcutaneous ECG monitor attuned to capturing low amplitude cardiac action potential propagation for arrhythmia diagnosis, particularly atrial activation P-waves.

SUMMARY

[0015] Physiological monitoring can be provided through a lightweight wearable monitor that includes two components, a flexible extended wear electrode patch and a reusable monitor recorder that removably snaps into a receptacle on the electrode patch. The wearable monitor sits centrally (in the midline) on the patient's chest along the sternum oriented top-to-bottom. The ECG electrodes on the electrode

patch are tailored to be positioned axially along the midline of the sternum for capturing action potential propagation in an orientation that corresponds to the aVF lead used in a conventional 12-lead ECG that is used to sense positive or upright P-waves. The placement of the wearable monitor in a location at the sternal midline (or immediately to either side of the sternum), with its unique narrow “hourglass”-like shape, significantly improves the ability of the wearable monitor to cutaneously sense cardiac electrical potential signals, particularly the P-wave (or atrial activity) and, to a lesser extent, the QRS interval signals indicating ventricular activity in the ECG waveforms. In addition, the monitor recorder includes an ECG sensing circuit that measures raw cutaneous electrical signals using a driven reference containing power supply noise and system noise to the reference lead, which is critical to preserving the characteristics of low amplitude cardiac action potentials, particularly P-waves.

[0016] Further, long-term electrocardiographic and physiological monitoring over a period lasting up to several years in duration can be provided through a continuously-recording subcutaneous insertable cardiac monitor (ICM), such as one described in commonly-owned U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/832,385, filed Dec. 5, 2017, pending, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference. The sensing circuitry and the physical layout of the electrodes are specifically optimized to capture electrical signals from the propagation of low amplitude, relatively low frequency content cardiac action potentials, particularly the P-waves that are generated during atrial activation. In general, the ICM is intended to be implanted centrally and positioned axially and slightly to either the left or right of the sternal midline in the parasternal region of the chest.

[0017] In one embodiment, a subcutaneous insertable cardiac monitor (ICM) optimized for long term, low amplitude, electrocardiographic (ECG) data collection is provided. The monitor includes an implantable housing included of a biocompatible material that is suitable for implantation within a living body; at least one pair of ECG sensing electrodes provided on a ventral surface and on opposite ends of the implantable housing operatively placed to facilitate sensing in closest proximity to the low amplitude, low frequency content cardiac action potentials that are generated during atrial activation; and electronic circuitry provided within the implantable housing. The electronic circuitry includes a low power microcontroller operable to execute under modular micro program control as specified in firmware; an ECG front end circuit interfaced to the microcontroller and configured to capture the cardiac action potentials sensed by at least the pair of ECG sensing electrodes which are output as ECG signals, the ECG front end including: a signal lead operable to sense cardiac electrical potentials through one of the ECG sensing electrodes; a reference lead operable to sense the cardiac electrical potentials through the other of the ECG sensing electrodes; and a reference generator including a pair of resistors configured to inject a driven reference containing power supply noise and system noise into the body; and a non-volatile memory electrically interfaced with the microcontroller and operable to continuously store samples of the ECG signals.

[0018] In a further embodiment, a subcutaneous implantable loop recorder for long term electrocardiographic (ECG) monitoring is provided. The recorder includes: a hermetically sealed implantable housing and including a biocom-

patible material that is suitable for implantation within a living body of a patient; at least one pair of ECG sensing electrodes provided on a ventral surface and on opposite ends of the implantable housing operatively placed to facilitate sensing in closest proximity to the low amplitude, low frequency content cardiac action potentials that are generated during atrial activation; a power source comprised within the implantable housing; and electronic circuitry provided within the housing. The electronic circuitry includes a low power microcontroller operable to execute under modular micro program control as specified in firmware; an ECG front end circuit interfaced to the microcontroller and configured to capture the cardiac action potentials sensed by at least the pair of ECG sensing electrodes which are output as ECG signals, the ECG front end comprising: a signal lead operable to sense cardiac electrical potentials through one of the ECG electrodes; a reference lead operable to sense the cardiac electrical potentials through the other of the ECG electrodes; and a reference generator comprising a pair of resistors configured to inject a driven reference containing power supply noise and system noise into the body, the pair of resistance connected to the power source by a connection pair through which the pair of resistance receives the system noise and the power noise comprised in the driven reference signal; and a non-volatile memory electrically interfaced with the microcontroller and operable to continuously store samples of the ECG signals. **[0019]** Still other embodiments will become readily apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description, wherein are described embodiments by way of illustrating the best mode contemplated. As will be realized, other and different embodiments are possible and the embodiments' several details are capable of modifications in various obvious respects, all without departing from their spirit and the scope. Accordingly, the drawings and detailed description are to be regarded as illustrative in nature and not as restrictive.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020] FIGS. 1 and 2 are diagrams showing, by way of examples, an extended wear electrocardiography monitor, including an extended wear electrode patch, in accordance with one embodiment, respectively fitted to the sternal region of a female patient and a male patient.

[0021] FIG. 3 is a front anatomical view showing, by way of illustration, the locations of the heart and lungs within the rib cage of an adult human.

[0022] FIG. 4 is a perspective view showing an extended wear electrode patch in accordance with one embodiment with a monitor recorder inserted.

[0023] FIG. 5 is a perspective view showing the monitor recorder of FIG. 4.

[0024] FIG. 6 is a perspective view showing the extended wear electrode patch of FIG. 4 without a monitor recorder inserted.

[0025] FIG. 7 is a bottom plan view of the monitor recorder of FIG. 4.

[0026] FIG. 8 is a top view showing the flexible circuit of the extended wear electrode patch of FIG. 4.

[0027] FIG. 9 is a functional block diagram showing the component architecture of the circuitry of the monitor recorder of FIG. 4.

[0028] FIG. 10 is a functional block diagram showing the circuitry of the extended wear electrode patch of FIG. 4.

[0029] FIG. 11 is a schematic diagram showing the ECG front end circuit of the circuitry of the monitor recorder of FIG. 9.

[0030] FIG. 12 is a flow diagram showing a monitor recorder-implemented method for monitoring ECG data for use in the monitor recorder of FIG. 4.

[0031] FIG. 13 is a graph showing, by way of example, a typical ECG waveform.

[0032] FIG. 14 is a functional block diagram showing the signal processing functionality of the microcontroller.

[0033] FIG. 15 is a functional block diagram showing the operations performed by the download station.

[0034] FIGS. 16A-C are functional block diagrams respectively showing practical uses of the extended wear electrocardiography monitors of FIGS. 1 and 2.

[0035] FIG. 17 is a perspective view of an extended wear electrode patch with a flexile wire electrode assembly in accordance with a still further embodiment.

[0036] FIG. 18 is perspective view of the flexile wire electrode assembly from FIG. 17, with a layer of insulating material shielding a bare distal wire around the midsection of the flexible backing.

[0037] FIG. 19 is a bottom view of the flexile wire electrode assembly as shown in FIG. 17.

[0038] FIG. 20 is a bottom view of a flexile wire electrode assembly in accordance with a still yet further embodiment.

[0039] FIG. 21 is a perspective view showing the longitudinal midsection of the flexible backing of the electrode assembly from FIG. 17.

[0040] FIG. 22 is a diagram showing, by way of example, a subcutaneous P-wave centric insertable cardiac monitor (ICM) for long term electrocardiographic monitoring in accordance with one embodiment.

[0041] FIGS. 23 and 24 are respectively top and bottom perspective views showing the ICM of FIG. 22.

[0042] FIG. 25 is a bottom perspective view showing the ICM of FIG. 22 in accordance with a further embodiment.

[0043] FIGS. 26 and 27 are respectively top and bottom perspective views showing an ICM in accordance with a still further embodiment.

[0044] FIG. 28 is a plan view showing further electrode configurations.

[0045] FIG. 29 is a functional block diagram showing the P-wave focused component architecture of the circuitry of the ICM of FIG. 22.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0046] ECG and physiological monitoring can be provided through a wearable ambulatory monitor that includes two components, a flexible extended wear electrode patch and a removable reusable (or single use) monitor recorder. Both the electrode patch and the monitor recorder are optimized to capture electrical signals from the propagation of low amplitude, relatively low frequency content cardiac action potentials, particularly the P-waves generated during atrial activation. FIGS. 1 and 2 are diagrams showing, by way of examples, an extended wear electrocardiography monitor 12, including a monitor recorder 14, in accordance with one embodiment, respectively fitted to the sternal region of a female patient 10 and a male patient 11. The wearable monitor 12 sits centrally, positioned axially along the sternal midline 16, on the patient's chest along the sternum 13 and oriented top-to-bottom with the monitor recorder 14 preferably situated towards the patient's head. In

a further embodiment, the orientation of the wearable monitor 12 can be corrected post-monitoring, for instance, if the wearable monitor 12 is inadvertently fitted upside down.

[0047] The electrode patch 15 is shaped to fit comfortably and conformal to the contours of the patient's chest approximately centered on the sternal midline 16 (or immediately to either side of the sternum 13). The distal end of the electrode patch 15, under which a lower or inferior pole (ECG electrode) is adhered, extends towards the Xiphoid process and lower sternum and, depending upon the patient's build, may straddle the region over the Xiphoid process and lower sternum. The proximal end of the electrode patch 15, located under the monitor recorder 14, under which an upper or superior pole (ECG electrode) is adhered, is below the manubrium and, depending upon patient's build, may straddle the region over the manubrium.

[0048] During ECG monitoring, the amplitude and strength of action potentials sensed on the body's surface are affected to varying degrees by cardiac, cellular, extracellular, vector of current flow, and physical factors, like obesity, dermatitis, large breasts, and high impedance skin, as can occur in dark-skinned individuals. Sensing along the sternal midline 16 (or immediately to either side of the sternum 13) significantly improves the ability of the wearable monitor 12 to cutaneously sense cardiac electric signals, particularly the P-wave (or atrial activity) and, to a lesser extent, the QRS interval signals in the ECG waveforms that indicate ventricular activity by countering some of the effects of these factors.

[0049] The ability to sense low amplitude, low frequency content body surface potentials is directly related to the location of ECG electrodes on the skin's surface and the ability of the sensing circuitry to capture these electrical signals. FIG. 3 is a front anatomical view showing, by way of illustration, the locations of the heart 4 and lungs 5 within the rib cage of an adult human. Depending upon their placement locations on the chest, ECG electrodes may be separated from activation regions within the heart 4 by differing combinations of internal tissues and body structures, including heart muscle, intracardiac blood, the pericardium, intrathoracic blood and fluids, the lungs 5, skeletal muscle, bone structure, subcutaneous fat, and the skin, plus any contaminants present between the skin's surface and electrode signal pickups. The degree of amplitude degradation of cardiac transmembrane potentials increases with the number of tissue boundaries between the heart 4 and the skin's surface that are encountered. The cardiac electrical field is degraded each time the transmembrane potentials encounter a physical boundary separating adjoining tissues due to differences in the respective tissues' electrical resistances. In addition, other non-spatial factors, such as pericardial effusion, emphysema or fluid accumulation in the lungs, as further explained infra, can further degrade body surface potentials.

[0050] Internal tissues and body structures can adversely affect the current strength and signal fidelity of all body surface potentials, yet low amplitude cardiac action potentials, particularly the P-wave with a normative amplitude of less than 0.25 microvolts (mV) and a normative duration of less than 120 milliseconds (ms), are most apt to be negatively impacted. The atria 6 are generally located posteriorly within the thoracic cavity (with the exception of the anterior right atrium and right atrial appendage), and, physically, the left atrium constitutes the portion of the heart 4 furthest

away from the surface of the skin on the chest. Conversely, the ventricles **7**, which generate larger amplitude signals, generally are located anteriorly with the anterior right ventricle and most of the left ventricle situated relatively close to the skin surface on the chest, which contributes to the relatively stronger amplitudes of ventricular waveforms. Thus, the quality of P-waves (and other already-low amplitude action potential signals) is more susceptible to weakening from intervening tissues and structures than the waveforms associated with ventricular activation.

[0051] The importance of the positioning of ECG electrodes along the sternal midline **15** has largely been overlooked by conventional approaches to ECG monitoring, in part due to the inability of their sensing circuitry to reliably detect low amplitude, low frequency content electrical signals, particularly in P-waves. In turn, that inability to keenly sense P-waves has motivated ECG electrode placement in other non-sternal midline thoracic locations, where the QRSTU components that represent ventricular electrical activity are more readily detectable by their sensing circuitry than P-waves. In addition, ECG electrode placement along the sternal midline **15** presents major patient wearability challenges, such as fitting a monitoring ensemble within the narrow confines of the inter-mammary cleft between the breasts, that to large extent drive physical packaging concerns, which can be incompatible with ECG monitors intended for placement, say, in the upper pectoral region or other non-sternal midline thoracic locations. In contrast, the wearable monitor **12** uses an electrode patch **15** that is specifically intended for extended wear placement in a location at the sternal midline **16** (or immediately to either side of the sternum **13**). When combined with a monitor recorder **14** that uses sensing circuitry optimized to preserve the characteristics of low amplitude cardiac action potentials, especially those signals from the atria, as further described infra with reference to FIG. **11**, the electrode patch **15** helps to significantly improve atrial activation (P-wave) sensing through placement in a body location that robustly minimizes the effects of tissue and body structure.

[0052] Referring back to FIGS. **1** and **2**, the placement of the wearable monitor **12** in the region of the sternal midline **13** puts the ECG electrodes of the electrode patch **15** in locations better adapted to sensing and recording low amplitude cardiac action potentials during atrial propagation (P-wave signals) than placement in other locations, such as the upper left pectoral region, as commonly seen in most conventional ambulatory ECG monitors. The sternum **13** overlies the right atrium of the heart **4**. As a result, action potential signals have to travel through fewer layers of tissue and structure to reach the ECG electrodes of the electrode patch **15** on the body's surface along the sternal midline **13** when compared to other monitoring locations, a distinction that is of critical importance when capturing low frequency content electrical signals, such as P-waves.

[0053] Moreover, cardiac action potential propagation travels simultaneously along a north-to-south and right-to-left vector, beginning high in the right atrium and ultimately ending in the posterior and lateral region of the left ventricle. Cardiac depolarization originates high in the right atrium in the SA node before concurrently spreading leftward towards the left atrium and inferiorly towards the AV node. The ECG electrodes of the electrode patch **15** are placed with the upper or superior pole (ECG electrode) along the sternal midline **13** in the region of the manubrium and the lower or

inferior pole (ECG electrode) along the sternal midline **13** in the region of the Xiphoid process **9** and lower sternum. The ECG electrodes are placed primarily in a north-to-south orientation along the sternum **13** that corresponds to the north-to-south waveform vector exhibited during atrial activation. This orientation corresponds to the aVF lead used in a conventional 12-lead ECG that is used to sense positive or upright P-waves.

[0054] Furthermore, the thoracic region underlying the sternum **13** along the midline **16** between the manubrium **8** and Xiphoid process **9** is relatively free of lung tissue, musculature, and other internal body structures that could occlude the electrical signal path between the heart **4**, particularly the atria, and ECG electrodes placed on the surface of the skin. Fewer obstructions means that cardiac electrical potentials encounter fewer boundaries between different tissues. As a result, when compared to other thoracic ECG sensing locations, the cardiac electrical field is less altered when sensed dermally along the sternal midline **13**. As well, the proximity of the sternal midline **16** to the ventricles **7** facilitates sensing of right ventricular activity and provides superior recodation of the QRS interval, again, in part due to the relatively clear electrical path between the heart **4** and the skin surface.

[0055] Finally, non-spatial factors can affect transmembrane action potential shape and conductivity. For instance, myocardial ischemia, an acute cardiac condition, can cause a transient increase in blood perfusion in the lungs **5**. The perfused blood can significantly increase electrical resistance across the lungs **5** and therefore degrade transmission of the cardiac electrical field to the skin's surface. However, the placement of the wearable monitor **12** along the sternal midline **16** in the inter-mammary cleft between the breasts is relatively resilient to the adverse effects to cardiac action potential degradation caused by ischemic conditions as the body surface potentials from a location relatively clear of underlying lung tissue and fat help compensate for the loss of signal amplitude and content. The monitor recorder **14** is thus able to record the P-wave morphology that may be compromised by myocardial ischemia and therefore make diagnosis of the specific arrhythmias that can be associated with myocardial ischemia more difficult.

[0056] During use, the electrode patch **15** is first adhered to the skin along the sternal midline **16** (or immediately to either side of the sternum **13**). A monitor recorder **14** is then snapped into place on the electrode patch **15** using an electro mechanical docking interface to initiate ECG monitoring. FIG. **4** is a perspective view showing an extended wear electrode patch **15** in accordance with one embodiment with a monitor recorder **14** inserted. The body of the electrode patch **15** is preferably constructed using a flexible backing **20** formed as an elongated strip **21** of wrap knit or similar stretchable material about 145 mm long and 32 mm at the widest point with a narrow longitudinal mid-section **23** evenly tapering inward from both sides. A pair of cut-outs **22** between the distal and proximal ends of the electrode patch **15** create a narrow longitudinal midsection **23** or "isthmus" and defines an elongated "hourglass"-like shape, when viewed from above, such as described in commonly-assigned U.S. Design Patent application, entitled "Extended Wear Electrode Patch," Ser. No. 29/472,045, filed Nov. 7, 2013, pending, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference. The upper part of the "hourglass" is sized to allow an electrically non-conductive receptacle **25**, sits on top of

the outward-facing surface of the electrode patch 15, to be affixed to the electrode patch 15 with an ECG electrode placed underneath on the patient-facing underside, or contact, surface of the electrode patch 15; the upper part of the “hourglass” has a longer and wider profile (but still rounded and tapered to fit comfortably between the breasts) than the lower part of the “hourglass,” which is sized primarily to allow just the placement of an ECG electrode of appropriate shape and surface area to record the P-wave and the QRS signals sufficiently given the inter-electrode spacing.

[0057] The electrode patch 15 incorporates features that significantly improve wearability, performance, and patient comfort throughout an extended monitoring period. The entire electrode patch 15 is lightweight in construction, which allows the patch to be resilient to disadhering or falling off and, critically, to avoid creating distracting discomfort to the patient, even when the patient is asleep. In contrast, the weight of a heavy ECG monitor impedes patient mobility and will cause the monitor to constantly tug downwards and press on the patient’s body that can generate skin inflammation with frequent adjustments by the patient needed to maintain comfort.

[0058] During everyday wear, the electrode patch 15 is subjected to pushing, pulling, and torsional movements, including compressional and torsional forces when the patient bends forward, or tensile and torsional forces when the patient leans backwards. To counter these stress forces, the electrode patch 15 incorporates crimp and strain reliefs, such as described in commonly-assigned U.S. patent application, entitled “Extended Wear Electrocardiography Patch,” Ser. No. 14/080,717, filed Nov. 14, 2013, pending, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference. In addition, the cut-outs 22 and longitudinal midsection 23 help minimize interference with and discomfort to breast tissue, particularly in women (and gynecomastic men). The cut-outs 22 and longitudinal midsection 23 further allow better conformity of the electrode patch 15 to sternal bowing and to the narrow isthmus of flat skin that can occur along the bottom of the inter-mammary cleft between the breasts, especially in buxom women. The cut-outs 22 and narrow and flexible longitudinal midsection 23 help the electrode patch 15 fit nicely between a pair of female breasts in the inter-mammary cleft. In one embodiment, the cut-outs 22 can be graduated to form the longitudinal midsection 23 as a narrow in-between stem or isthmus portion about 7 mm wide. In a still further embodiment, tabs 24 can respectively extend an additional 8 mm to 12 mm beyond the distal and proximal ends of the flexible backing 20 to facilitate with adhering the electrode patch 15 to or removing the electrode patch 15 from the sternum 13. These tabs preferably lack adhesive on the underside, or contact, surface of the electrode patch 15. Still other shapes, cut-outs and conformities to the electrode patch 15 are possible.

[0059] The monitor recorder 14 removably and reusably snaps into an electrically non-conductive receptacle 25 during use. The monitor recorder 14 contains electronic circuitry for recording and storing the patient’s electrocardiography as sensed via a pair of ECG electrodes provided on the electrode patch 15, as further described infra beginning with reference to FIG. 9. The non-conductive receptacle 25 is provided on the top surface of the flexible backing 20 with a retention catch 26 and tension clip 27 molded into the non-conductive receptacle 25 to conformably receive and securely hold the monitor recorder 14 in place.

[0060] The monitor recorder 14 includes a sealed housing that snaps into place in the non-conductive receptacle 25. FIG. 5 is a perspective view showing the monitor recorder 14 of FIG. 4. The sealed housing 50 of the monitor recorder 14 intentionally has a rounded isosceles trapezoidal-like shape 52, when viewed from above, such as described in commonly-assigned U.S. Design Patent application, entitled “Electrocardiography Monitor,” Ser. No. 29/472,046, filed Nov. 7, 2013, pending, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference. The edges 51 along the top and bottom surfaces are rounded for patient comfort. The sealed housing 50 is approximately 47 mm long, 23 mm wide at the widest point, and 7 mm high, excluding a patient-operable tactile-feedback button 55. The sealed housing 50 can be molded out of polycarbonate, ABS, or an alloy of those two materials. The button 55 is waterproof and the button’s top outer surface is molded silicon rubber or similar soft pliable material. A retention detent 53 and tension detent 54 are molded along the edges of the top surface of the housing 50 to respectively engage the retention catch 26 and the tension clip 27 molded into non-conductive receptacle 25. Other shapes, features, and conformities of the sealed housing 50 are possible.

[0061] The electrode patch 15 is intended to be disposable, while the monitor recorder 14 is designed for reuse and can be transferred to successive electrode patches 15 to ensure continuity of monitoring, if so desired. The monitor recorder 14 can be used only once, but single use effectively wastes the synergistic benefits provided by the combination of the disposable electrode patch and reusable monitor recorder, as further explained infra with reference to FIGS. 16A-C. The placement of the wearable monitor 12 in a location at the sternal midline 16 (or immediately to either side of the sternum 13) benefits long-term extended wear by removing the requirement that ECG electrodes be continually placed in the same spots on the skin throughout the monitoring period. Instead, the patient is free to place an electrode patch 15 anywhere within the general region of the sternum 13.

[0062] As a result, at any point during ECG monitoring, the patient’s skin is able to recover from the wearing of an electrode patch 15, which increases patient comfort and satisfaction, while the monitor recorder 14 ensures ECG monitoring continuity with minimal effort. A monitor recorder 14 is merely unsnapped from a worn out electrode patch 15, the worn out electrode patch 15 is removed from the skin, a new electrode patch 15 is adhered to the skin, possibly in a new spot immediately adjacent to the earlier location, and the same monitor recorder 14 is snapped into the new electrode patch 15 to reinitiate and continue the ECG monitoring.

[0063] During use, the electrode patch 15 is first adhered to the skin in the sternal region. FIG. 6 is a perspective view showing the extended wear electrode patch 15 of FIG. 4 without a monitor recorder 14 inserted. A flexible circuit 32 is adhered to each end of the flexible backing 20. A distal circuit trace 33 from the distal end 30 of the flexible backing 20 and a proximal circuit trace (not shown) from the proximal end 31 of the flexible backing 20 electrically couple ECG electrodes (not shown) with a pair of electrical pads 34. In a further embodiment, the distal and proximal circuit traces are replaced with interlaced or sewn-in flexible wires, as further described infra beginning with reference to FIG. 17. The electrical pads 34 are provided within a moisture-resistant seal 35 formed on the bottom surface of

the non-conductive receptacle 25. When the monitor recorder 14 is securely received into the non-conductive receptacle 25, that is, snapped into place, the electrical pads 34 interface to electrical contacts (not shown) protruding from the bottom surface of the monitor recorder 14. The moisture-resistant seal 35 enables the monitor recorder 14 to be worn at all times, even during showering or other activities that could expose the monitor recorder 14 to moisture or adverse conditions.

[0064] In addition, a battery compartment 36 is formed on the bottom surface of the non-conductive receptacle 25. A pair of battery leads (not shown) from the battery compartment 36 to another pair of the electrical pads 34 electrically interface the battery to the monitor recorder 14. The battery contained within the battery compartment 35 is a direct current (DC) power cell and can be replaceable, rechargeable or disposable.

[0065] The monitor recorder 14 draws power externally from the battery provided in the non-conductive receptacle 25, thereby uniquely obviating the need for the monitor recorder 14 to carry a dedicated power source. FIG. 7 is a bottom plan view of the monitor recorder 14 of FIG. 4. A cavity 58 is formed on the bottom surface of the sealed housing 50 to accommodate the upward projection of the battery compartment 36 from the bottom surface of the non-conductive receptacle 25, when the monitor recorder 14 is secured in place on the non-conductive receptacle 25. A set of electrical contacts 56 protrude from the bottom surface of the sealed housing 50 and are arranged in alignment with the electrical pads 34 provided on the bottom surface of the non-conductive receptacle 25 to establish electrical connections between the electrode patch 15 and the monitor recorder 14. In addition, a seal coupling 57 circumferentially surrounds the set of electrical contacts 56 and securely mates with the moisture-resistant seal 35 formed on the bottom surface of the non-conductive receptacle 25. The battery contained within the battery compartment 36 can be replaceable, rechargeable or disposable. In a further embodiment, the ECG sensing circuitry of the monitor recorder 14 can be supplemented with additional sensors, including an SpO₂ sensor, a blood pressure sensor, a temperature sensor, respiratory rate sensor, a glucose sensor, an air flow sensor, and a volumetric pressure sensor, which can be incorporated directly into the monitor recorder 14 or onto the non-conductive receptacle 25.

[0066] The placement of the flexible backing 20 on the sternal midline 16 (or immediately to either side of the sternum 13) also helps to minimize the side-to-side movement of the wearable monitor 12 in the left- and right-handed directions during wear. However, the wearable monitor 12 is still susceptible to pushing, pulling, and torqueing movements, including compressional and torsional forces when the patient bends forward, and tensile and torsional forces when the patient leans backwards or twists. To counter the dislodgment of the flexible backing 20 due to compressional and torsional forces, a layer of non-irritating adhesive, such as hydrocolloid, is provided at least partially on the underside, or contact, surface of the flexible backing 20, but only on the distal end 30 and the proximal end 31. As a result, the underside, or contact surface of the longitudinal midsection 23 does not have an adhesive layer and remains free to move relative to the skin. Thus, the longitudinal midsection 23 forms a crimp relief that respectively facilitates compression and twisting of the flexible backing

20 in response to compressional and torsional forces. Other forms of flexible backing crimp reliefs are possible.

[0067] Unlike the flexible backing 20, the flexible circuit 32 is only able to bend and cannot stretch in a planar direction. The flexible circuit 32 can be provided either above or below the flexible backing 20. FIG. 8 is a top view showing the flexible circuit 32 of the extended wear electrode patch 15 of FIG. 4 when mounted above the flexible backing 20. A distal ECG electrode 38 and proximal ECG electrode 39 are respectively coupled to the distal and proximal ends of the flexible circuit 32 to serve as electrode signal pickups. The flexible circuit 32 preferably does not extend to the outside edges of the flexible backing 20, thereby avoiding gouging or discomforting the patient's skin during extended wear, such as when sleeping on the side. During wear, the ECG electrodes 38, 39 must remain in continual contact with the skin. A strain relief 40 is defined in the flexible circuit 32 at a location that is partially underneath the battery compartment 36 when the flexible circuit 32 is affixed to the flexible backing 20. The strain relief 40 is laterally extendable to counter dislodgment of the ECG electrodes 38, 39 due to bending, tensile and torsional forces. A pair of strain relief cutouts 41 partially extend transversely from each opposite side of the flexible circuit 32 and continue longitudinally towards each other to define in 'S'-shaped pattern, when viewed from above. The strain relief respectively facilitates longitudinal extension and twisting of the flexible circuit 32 in response to tensile and torsional forces. Other forms of circuit board strain relief are possible.

[0068] ECG monitoring and other functions performed by the monitor recorder 14 are provided through a micro controlled architecture. FIG. 9 is a functional block diagram showing the component architecture of the circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14 of FIG. 4. The circuitry 60 is externally powered through a battery provided in the non-conductive receptacle 25 (shown in FIG. 6). Both power and raw ECG signals, which originate in the pair of ECG electrodes 38, 39 (shown in FIG. 8) on the distal and proximal ends of the electrode patch 15, are received through an external connector 65 that mates with a corresponding physical connector on the electrode patch 15. The external connector 65 includes the set of electrical contacts 56 that protrude from the bottom surface of the sealed housing 50 and which physically and electrically interface with the set of pads 34 provided on the bottom surface of the non-conductive receptacle 25. The external connector includes electrical contacts 56 for data download, microcontroller communications, power, analog inputs, and a peripheral expansion port. The arrangement of the pins on the electrical connector 65 of the monitor recorder 14 and the device into which the monitor recorder 14 is attached, whether an electrode patch 15 or download station (not shown), follow the same electrical pin assignment convention to facilitate interoperability. The external connector 65 also serves as a physical interface to a download station that permits the retrieval of stored ECG monitoring data, communication with the monitor recorder 14, and performance of other functions. The download station is further described infra with reference to FIG. 15.

[0069] Operation of the circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14 is managed by a microcontroller 61, such as the EFM32 Tiny Gecko 32-bit microcontroller, manufactured by Silicon Laboratories Inc., Austin, Tex. The microcon-

troller 61 has flexible energy management modes and includes a direct memory access controller and built-in analog-to-digital and digital-to-analog converters (ADC and DAC, respectively). The microcontroller 61 also includes a program memory unit containing internal flash memory that is readable and writeable. The internal flash memory can also be programmed externally. The microcontroller 61 operates under modular micro program control as specified in firmware stored in the internal flash memory. The functionality and firmware modules relating to signal processing by the microcontroller 61 are further described infra with reference to FIG. 14. The microcontroller 61 draws power externally from the battery provided on the electrode patch 15 via a pair of the electrical contacts 56. The microcontroller 61 connects to the ECG front end circuit 63 that measures raw cutaneous electrical signals using a driven reference that eliminates common mode noise, as further described infra with reference to FIG. 11.

[0070] The circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14 also includes a flash memory 62, which the microcontroller 61 uses for storing ECG monitoring data and other physiology and information. The flash memory 62 also draws power externally from the battery provided on the electrode patch 15 via a pair of the electrical contacts 56. Data is stored in a serial flash memory circuit, which supports read, erase and program operations over a communications bus. The flash memory 62 enables the microcontroller 61 to store digitized ECG data. The communications bus further enables the flash memory 62 to be directly accessed externally over the external connector 65 when the monitor recorder 14 is interfaced to a download station.

[0071] The microcontroller 61 includes functionality that enables the acquisition of samples of analog ECG signals, which are converted into a digital representation, as further described infra with reference to FIG. 14. In one mode, the microcontroller 61 will acquire, sample, digitize, signal process, and store digitized ECG data into available storage locations in the flash memory 62 until all memory storage locations are filled, after which the digitized ECG data needs to be downloaded or erased to restore memory capacity. Data download or erasure can also occur before all storage locations are filled, which would free up memory space sooner, albeit at the cost of possibly interrupting monitoring while downloading or erasure is performed. In another mode, the microcontroller 61 can include a loop recorder feature that will overwrite the oldest stored data once all storage locations are filled, albeit at the cost of potentially losing the stored data that was overwritten, if not previously downloaded. Still other modes of data storage and capacity recovery are possible.

[0072] The circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14 further includes an actigraphy sensor 64 implemented as a 3-axis accelerometer. The accelerometer may be configured to generate interrupt signals to the microcontroller 61 by independent initial wake up and free fall events, as well as by device position. In addition, the actigraphy provided by the accelerometer can be used during post-monitoring analysis to correct the orientation of the monitor recorder 14 if, for instance, the monitor recorder 14 has been inadvertently installed upside down, that is, with the monitor recorder 14 oriented on the electrode patch 15 towards the patient's feet, as well as for other event occurrence analyses.

[0073] The microcontroller 61 includes an expansion port that also utilizes the communications bus. External devices,

separately drawing power externally from the battery provided on the electrode patch 15 or other source, can interface to the microcontroller 61 over the expansion port in half duplex mode. For instance, an external physiology sensor can be provided as part of the circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14, or can be provided on the electrode patch 15 with communication with the microcontroller 61 provided over one of the electrical contacts 56. The physiology sensor can include an SpO₂ sensor, blood pressure sensor, temperature sensor, respiratory rate sensor, glucose sensor, airflow sensor, volumetric pressure sensing, or other types of sensor or telemetric input sources. In a further embodiment, a wireless interface for interfacing with other wearable (or implantable) physiology monitors, as well as data offload and programming, can be provided as part of the circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14, or can be provided on the electrode patch 15 with communication with the microcontroller 61 provided over one of the electrical contacts 56.

[0074] Finally, the circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14 includes patient-interfaceable components, including a tactile feedback button 66, which a patient can press to mark events or to perform other functions, and a buzzer 67, such as a speaker, magnetic resonator or piezoelectric buzzer. The buzzer 67 can be used by the microcontroller 61 to output feedback to a patient such as to confirm power up and initiation of ECG monitoring. Still other components as part of the circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14 are possible.

[0075] While the monitor recorder 14 operates under micro control, most of the electrical components of the electrode patch 15 operate passively. FIG. 10 is a functional block diagram showing the circuitry 70 of the extended wear electrode patch 15 of FIG. 4. The circuitry 70 of the electrode patch 15 is electrically coupled with the circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14 through an external connector 74. The external connector 74 is terminated through the set of pads 34 provided on the bottom of the non-conductive receptacle 25, which electrically mate to corresponding electrical contacts 56 protruding from the bottom surface of the sealed housing 50 to electrically interface the monitor recorder 14 to the electrode patch 15.

[0076] The circuitry 70 of the electrode patch 15 performs three primary functions. First, a battery 71 is provided in a battery compartment formed on the bottom surface of the non-conductive receptacle 25. The battery 71 is electrically interfaced to the circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14 as a source of external power. The unique provisioning of the battery 71 on the electrode patch 15 provides several advantages. First, the locating of the battery 71 physically on the electrode patch 15 lowers the center of gravity of the overall wearable monitor 12 and thereby helps to minimize shear forces and the effects of movements of the patient and clothing. Moreover, the housing 50 of the monitor recorder 14 is sealed against moisture and providing power externally avoids having to either periodically open the housing 50 for the battery replacement, which also creates the potential for moisture intrusion and human error, or to recharge the battery, which can potentially take the monitor recorder 14 off line for hours at a time. In addition, the electrode patch 15 is intended to be disposable, while the monitor recorder 14 is a reusable component. Each time that the electrode patch 15 is replaced, a fresh battery is provided for the use of the monitor recorder 14, which enhances ECG monitoring performance quality and duration of use. Also, the architecture of the monitor recorder 14 is open, in that other

physiology sensors or components can be added by virtue of the expansion port of the microcontroller 61. Requiring those additional sensors or components to draw power from a source external to the monitor recorder 14 keeps power considerations independent of the monitor recorder 14. This approach also enables a battery of higher capacity to be introduced when needed to support the additional sensors or components without effecting the monitor recorders circuitry 60.

[0077] Second, the pair of ECG electrodes 38, 39 respectively provided on the distal and proximal ends of the flexible circuit 32 are electrically coupled to the set of pads 34 provided on the bottom of the non-conductive receptacle 25 by way of their respective circuit traces 33, 37. The signal ECG electrode 39 includes a protection circuit 72, which is an inline resistor that protects the patient from excessive leakage current should the front end circuit fail.

[0078] Last, in a further embodiment, the circuitry 70 of the electrode patch 15 includes a cryptographic circuit 73 to authenticate an electrode patch 15 for use with a monitor recorder 14. The cryptographic circuit 73 includes a device capable of secure authentication and validation. The cryptographic device 73 ensures that only genuine, non-expired, safe, and authenticated electrode patches 15 are permitted to provide monitoring data to a monitor recorder 14 and for a specific patient.

[0079] The ECG front end circuit 63 measures raw cutaneous electrical signals using a driven reference that effectively reduces common mode noise, power supply noise and system noise, which is critical to preserving the characteristics of low amplitude cardiac action potentials, especially those signals from the atria. FIG. 11 is a schematic diagram 80 showing the ECG front end circuit 63 of the circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14 of FIG. 9. The ECG front end circuit 63 senses body surface potentials through a signal lead ("S1") and reference lead ("REF") that are respectively connected to the ECG electrodes of the electrode patch 15. Power is provided to the ECG front end circuit 63 through a pair of DC power leads ("VCC" and "GND"). An analog ECG signal ("ECG") representative of the electrical activity of the patient's heart over time is output, which the microcontroller 11 converts to digital representation and filters, as further described infra.

[0080] The ECG front end circuit 63 is organized into five stages, a passive input filter stage 81, a unity gain voltage follower stage 82, a passive high pass filtering stage 83, a voltage amplification and active filtering stage 84, and an anti-aliasing passive filter stage 85, plus a reference generator. Each of these stages and the reference generator will now be described.

[0081] The passive input filter stage 81 includes the parasitic impedance of the ECG electrodes 38, 39 (shown in FIG. 8), the protection resistor that is included as part of the protection circuit 72 of the ECG electrode 39 (shown in FIG. 10), an AC coupling capacitor 87, a termination resistor 88, and filter capacitor 89. This stage passively shifts the frequency response poles downward there is a high electrode impedance from the patient on the signal lead Si and reference lead REF, which reduces high frequency noise.

[0082] The unity gain voltage follower stage 82 provides a unity voltage gain that allows current amplification by an Operational Amplifier ("Op Amp") 90. In this stage, the voltage stays the same as the input, but more current is available to feed additional stages. This configuration allows

a very high input impedance, so as not to disrupt the body surface potentials or the filtering effect of the previous stage.

[0083] The passive high pass filtering stage 83 is a high pass filter that removes baseline wander and any offset generated from the previous stage. Adding an AC coupling capacitor 91 after the Op Amp 90 allows the use of lower cost components, while increasing signal fidelity.

[0084] The voltage amplification and active filtering stage 84 amplifies the voltage of the input signal through Op Amp 91, while applying a low pass filter. The DC bias of the input signal is automatically centered in the highest performance input region of the Op Amp 91 because of the AC coupling capacitor 91.

[0085] The anti-aliasing passive filter stage 85 provides an anti-aliasing low pass filter. When the microcontroller 61 acquires a sample of the analog input signal, a disruption in the signal occurs as a sample and hold capacitor that is internal to the microcontroller 61 is charged to supply signal for acquisition.

[0086] The reference generator in subcircuit 86 drives a driven reference containing power supply noise and system noise to the reference lead REF. A coupling capacitor 87 is included on the signal lead S1 and a pair of resistors 93a, 93b inject system noise into the reference lead REF. The reference generator is connected directly to the patient, thereby avoiding the thermal noise of the protection resistor that is included as part of the protection circuit 72.

[0087] In contrast, conventional ECG lead configurations try to balance signal and reference lead connections. The conventional approach suffers from the introduction of differential thermal noise, lower input common mode rejection, increased power supply noise, increased system noise, and differential voltages between the patient reference and the reference used on the device that can obscure, at times, extremely, low amplitude body surface potentials.

[0088] Here, the parasitic impedance of the ECG electrodes 38, 39, the protection resistor that is included as part of the protection circuit 72 and the coupling capacitor 87 allow the reference lead REF to be connected directly to the skin's surface without any further components. As a result, the differential thermal noise problem caused by pairing protection resistors to signal and reference leads, as used in conventional approaches, is avoided.

[0089] The monitor recorder 14 continuously monitors the patient's heart rate and physiology. FIG. 12 is a flow diagram showing a monitor recorder-implemented method 100 for monitoring ECG data for use in the monitor recorder 14 of FIG. 4. Initially, upon being connected to the set of pads 34 provided with the non-conductive receptacle 25 when the monitor recorder 14 is snapped into place, the microcontroller 61 executes a power up sequence (step 101). During the power up sequence, the voltage of the battery 71 is checked, the state of the flash memory 62 is confirmed, both in terms of operability check and available capacity, and microcontroller operation is diagnostically confirmed. In a further embodiment, an authentication procedure between the microcontroller 61 and the electrode patch 15 are also performed.

[0090] Following satisfactory completion of the power up sequence, an iterative processing loop (steps 102-110) is continually executed by the microcontroller 61. During each iteration (step 102) of the processing loop, the ECG frontend 63 (shown in FIG. 9) continually senses the cutaneous ECG electrical signals (step 103) via the ECG electrodes 38, 29

and is optimized to maintain the integrity of the P-wave. A sample of the ECG signal is read (step 104) by the microcontroller 61 by sampling the analog ECG signal that is output by the ECG front end circuit 63. FIG. 13 is a graph showing, by way of example, a typical ECG waveform 120. The x-axis represents time in approximate units of tenths of a second. The y-axis represents cutaneous electrical signal strength in approximate units of millivolts. The P-wave 121 has a smooth, normally upward, that is, positive, waveform that indicates atrial depolarization. The QRS complex often begins with the downward deflection of a Q-wave 122, followed by a larger upward deflection of an R-wave 123, and terminated with a downward waveform of the S-wave 124, collectively representative of ventricular depolarization. The T-wave 125 is normally a modest upward waveform, representative of ventricular repolarization, while the U-wave 126, often not directly observable, indicates the recovery period of the Purkinje conduction fibers.

[0091] Sampling of the R-to-R interval enables heart rate information derivation. For instance, the R-to-R interval represents the ventricular rate and rhythm, while the P-to-P interval represents the atrial rate and rhythm. Importantly, the PR interval is indicative of atrioventricular (AV) conduction time and abnormalities in the PR interval can reveal underlying heart disorders, thus representing another reason why the P-wave quality achievable by the ambulatory electrocardiography monitoring patch optimized for capturing low amplitude cardiac action potential propagation described herein is medically unique and important. The long-term observation of these ECG indicia, as provided through extended wear of the wearable monitor 12, provides valuable insights to the patient's cardiac function symptoms, and overall well-being.

[0092] Referring back to FIG. 12, each sampled ECG signal, in quantized and digitized form, is processed by signal processing modules as specified in firmware (step 105), as described infra, and temporarily staged in a buffer (step 106), pending compression preparatory to storage in the flash memory 62 (step 107). Following compression, the compressed ECG digitized sample is again buffered (step 108), then written to the flash memory 62 (step 109) using the communications bus. Processing continues (step 110), so long as the monitoring recorder 14 remains connected to the electrode patch 15 (and storage space remains available in the flash memory 62), after which the processing loop is exited (step 110) and execution terminates. Still other operations and steps are possible.

[0093] The microcontroller 61 operates under modular micro program control as specified in firmware, and the program control includes processing of the analog ECG signal output by the ECG front end circuit 63. FIG. 14 is a functional block diagram showing the signal processing functionality 130 of the microcontroller 61. The microcontroller 61 operates under modular micro program control as specified in firmware 132. The firmware modules 132 include high and low pass filtering 133, and compression 134. Other modules are possible. The microcontroller 61 has a built-in ADC, although ADC functionality could also be provided in the firmware 132.

[0094] The ECG front end circuit 63 first outputs an analog ECG signal, which the ADC 131 acquires, samples and converts into an uncompressed digital representation. The microcontroller 61 includes one or more firmware modules 133 that perform filtering. In one embodiment,

three low pass filters and two high pass filters are used. Following filtering, the digital representation of the cardiac activation wave front amplitudes are compressed by a compression module 134 before being written out to storage 135.

[0095] The download station executes a communications or offload program ("Offload") or similar program that interacts with the monitor recorder 14 via the external connector 65 to retrieve the stored ECG monitoring data. FIG. 15 is a functional block diagram showing the operations 140 performed by the download station. The download station could be a server, personal computer, tablet or handheld computer, smart mobile device, or purpose-built programmer designed specific to the task of interfacing with a monitor recorder 14. Still other forms of download station are possible, including download stations connected through wireless interfacing using, for instance, a smart phone connected to the monitor recorder 14 through Bluetooth or Wi-Fi.

[0096] The download station is responsible for offloading stored ECG monitoring data from a monitor recorder 14 and includes an electro mechanical docking interface by which the monitor recorder 14 is connected at the external connector 65. The download station operates under programmable control as specified in software 141. The stored ECG monitoring data retrieved from storage 142 on a monitor recorder 14 is first decompressed by a decompression module 143, which converts the stored ECG monitoring data back into an uncompressed digital representation more suited to signal processing than a compressed signal. The retrieved ECG monitoring data may be stored into local storage for archival purposes, either in original compressed form, or as uncompressed.

[0097] The download station can include an array of filtering modules. For instance, a set of phase distortion filtering tools 144 may be provided, where corresponding software filters can be provided for each filter implemented in the firmware executed by the microcontroller 61. The digital signals are run through the software filters in a reverse direction to remove phase distortion. For instance, a 45 Hertz high pass filter in firmware may have a matching reverse 45 Hertz high pass filter in software. Most of the phase distortion is corrected, that is, canceled to eliminate noise at the set frequency, but data at other frequencies in the waveform remain unaltered. As well, bidirectional impulse infinite response (IIR) high pass filters and reverse direction (symmetric) IIR low pass filters can be provided. Data is run through these filters first in a forward direction, then in a reverse direction, which generates a square of the response and cancels out any phase distortion. This type of signal processing is particularly helpful with improving the display of the ST-segment by removing low frequency noise.

[0098] An automatic gain control (AGC) module 145 can also be provided to adjust the digital signals to a usable level based on peak or average signal level or other metric. AGC is particularly critical to single-lead ECG monitors, where physical factors, such as the tilt of the heart, can affect the electrical field generated. On three-lead Holter monitors, the leads are oriented in vertical, horizontal and diagonal directions. As a result, the horizontal and diagonal leads may be higher amplitude and ECG interpretation will be based on one or both of the higher amplitude leads. In contrast, the electrocardiography monitor 12 has only a single lead that is oriented in the vertical direction, so variations in amplitude

will be wider than available with multi-lead monitors, which have alternate leads to fall back upon.

[0099] In addition, AGC may be necessary to maintain compatibility with existing ECG interpretation software, which is typically calibrated for multi-lead ECG monitors for viewing signals over a narrow range of amplitudes. Through the AGC module 145, the gain of signals recorded by the monitor recorder 14 of the electrocardiography monitor 12 can be attenuated up (or down) to work with FDA-approved commercially available ECG interpretation.

[0100] AGC can be implemented in a fixed fashion that is uniformly applied to all signals in an ECG recording, adjusted as appropriate on a recording-by-recording basis. Typically, a fixed AGC value is calculated based on how an ECG recording is received to preserve the amplitude relationship between the signals. Alternatively, AGC can be varied dynamically throughout an ECG recording, where signals in different segments of an ECG recording are amplified up (or down) by differing amounts of gain.

[0101] Typically, the monitor recorder 14 will record a high resolution, low frequency signal for the P-wave segment. However, for some patients, the result may still be a visually small signal. Although high resolution is present, the unaided eye will normally be unable to discern the P-wave segment. Therefore, gaining the signal is critical to visually depicting P-wave detail. This technique works most efficaciously with a raw signal with low noise and high resolution, as generated by the monitor recorder 14. Automatic gain control applied to a high noise signal will only exacerbate noise content and be self-defeating.

[0102] Finally, the download station can include filtering modules specifically intended to enhance P-wave content. For instance, a P-wave base boost filter 146, which is a form of pre-emphasis filter, can be applied to the signal to restore missing frequency content or to correct phase distortion. Still other filters and types of signal processing are possible.

[0103] In a further embodiment, the operations of the download station described above can be performed to data collected by a subcutaneous insertable cardiac monitor (ICM) described below beginning with reference to FIG. 22, with which the download station can wirelessly interface.

[0104] Conventional ECG monitors, like Holter monitors, invariably require specialized training on proper placement of leads and on the operation of recording apparatuses, plus support equipment purpose-built to retrieve, convert, and store ECG monitoring data. In contrast, the electrocardiography monitor 12 simplifies monitoring from end to end, starting with placement, then with use, and finally with data retrieval. FIGS. 16A-C are functional block diagrams respectively showing practical uses 150, 160, 170 of the extended wear electrocardiography monitors 12 of FIGS. 1 and 2. The combination of a flexible extended wear electrode patch and a removable reusable (or single use) monitor recorder empowers physicians and patients alike with the ability to readily perform long-term ambulatory monitoring of the ECG and physiology.

[0105] Especially when compared to existing Holter-type monitors and monitoring patches placed in the upper pectoral region, the electrocardiography monitor 12 offers superior patient comfort, convenience and user-friendliness. To start, the electrode patch 15 is specifically designed for ease of use by a patient (or caregiver); assistance by professional medical personnel is not required. Moreover, the patient is free to replace the electrode patch 15 at any time and need

not wait for a doctor's appointment to have a new electrode patch 15 placed. In addition, the monitor recorder 14 operates automatically and the patient only need snap the monitor recorder 14 into place on the electrode patch 15 to initiate ECG monitoring. Thus, the synergistic combination of the electrode patch 15 and monitor recorder 14 makes the use of the electrocardiography monitor 12 a reliable and virtually foolproof way to monitor a patient's ECG and physiology for an extended, or even open-ended, period of time.

[0106] In simplest form, extended wear monitoring can be performed by using the same monitor recorder 14 inserted into a succession of fresh new electrode patches 15. As needed, the electrode patch 15 can be replaced by the patient (or caregiver) with a fresh new electrode patch 15 throughout the overall monitoring period. Referring first to FIG. 16A, at the outset of monitoring, a patient adheres a new electrode patch 15 in a location at the sternal midline 16 (or immediately to either side of the sternum 13) oriented top-to-bottom (step 151). The placement of the wearable monitor in a location at the sternal midline (or immediately to either side of the sternum), with its unique narrow "hourglass"-like shape, significantly improves the ability of the wearable monitor to cutaneously sense cardiac electrical potential signals, particularly the P-wave (or atrial activity) and, to a lesser extent, the QRS interval signals indicating ventricular activity in the ECG waveforms.

[0107] Placement involves simply adhering the electrode patch 15 on the skin along the sternal midline 16 (or immediately to either side of the sternum 13). Patients can easily be taught to find the physical landmarks on the body necessary for proper placement of the electrode patch 15. The physical landmarks are locations on the surface of the body that are already familiar to patients, including the inter-mammary cleft between the breasts above the manubrium (particularly easily locatable by women and gynecomatic men), the sternal notch immediately above the manubrium, and the Xiphoid process located at the bottom of the sternum. Empowering patients with the knowledge to place the electrode patch 15 in the right place ensures that the ECG electrodes will be correctly positioned on the skin, no matter the number of times that the electrode patch 15 is replaced.

[0108] A monitor recorder 14 is snapped into the non-conductive receptacle 25 on the outward-facing surface of the electrode patch 15 (step 152). The monitor recorder 14 draws power externally from a battery provided in the non-conductive receptacle 25. In addition, the battery is replaced each time that a fresh new electrode patch 15 is placed on the skin, which ensures that the monitor recorder 14 is always operating with a fresh power supply and minimizing the chances of a loss of monitoring continuity due to a depleted battery source.

[0109] By default, the monitor recorder 14 automatically initiates monitoring upon sensing body surface potentials through the pair of ECG electrodes (step 153). In a further embodiment, the monitor recorder 14 can be configured for manual operation, such as by using the tactile feedback button 66 on the outside of the sealed housing 50, or other user-operable control. In an even further embodiment, the monitor recorder 14 can be configured for remotely-controlled operation by equipping the monitor recorder 14 with a wireless transceiver, such as described in commonly-assigned U.S. patent application, entitled "Remote Interfacing of an Extended Wear Electrocardiography and Physiological Sensor Monitor," Ser. No. 14/082,071, filed Nov.

15, 2013, pending, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference. The wireless transceiver allows wearable or mobile communications devices to wirelessly interface with the monitor recorder 14.

[0110] A key feature of the extended wear electrocardiography monitor 12 is the ability to monitor ECG and physiological data for an extended period of time, which can be well in excess of the 14 days currently pitched as being achievable by conventional ECG monitoring approaches. In a further embodiment, ECG monitoring can even be performed over an open-ended time period, as further explained infra. The monitor recorder 14 is reusable and, if so desired, can be transferred to successive electrode patches 15 to ensure continuity of monitoring. At any point during ECG monitoring, a patient (or caregiver) can remove the monitor recorder 14 (step 154) and replace the electrode patch 15 currently being worn with a fresh new electrode patch 15 (step 151). The electrode patch 15 may need to be replaced for any number of reasons. For instance, the electrode patch 15 may be starting to come off after a period of wear or the patient may have skin that is susceptible to itching or irritation. The wearing of ECG electrodes can aggravate such skin conditions. Thus, a patient may want or need to periodically remove or replace ECG electrodes during a long-term ECG monitoring period, whether to replace a dislodged electrode, reestablish better adhesion, alleviate itching or irritation, allow for cleansing of the skin, allow for showering and exercise, or for other purpose.

[0111] Following replacement, the monitor recorder 14 is again snapped into the electrode patch 15 (step 152) and monitoring resumes (step 153). The ability to transfer the same monitor recorder 14 to successive electrode patches 15 during a period of extended wear monitoring is advantageous not to just diagnose cardiac rhythm disorders and other physiological events of potential concern, but to do extremely long term monitoring, such as following up on cardiac surgery, ablation procedures, or medical device implantation. In these cases, several weeks of monitoring or more may be needed. In addition, some IMDs, such as pacemakers or implantable cardioverter defibrillators, incorporate a loop recorder that will capture cardiac events over a fixed time window. If the telemetry recorded by the IMD is not downloaded in time, cardiac events that occurred at a time preceding the fixed time window will be overwritten by the IMD and therefore lost. The monitor recorder 14 provides continuity of monitoring that acts to prevent loss of cardiac event data. In a further embodiment, the firmware executed by the microcontroller 61 of the monitor recorder 14 can be optimized for minimal power consumption and additional flash memory for storing monitoring data can be added to achieve a multi-week monitor recorder 14 that can be snapped into a fresh new electrode patch 15 every seven days, or other interval, for weeks or even months on end.

[0112] Upon the conclusion of monitoring, the monitor recorder 14 is removed (step 154) and recorded ECG and physiological telemetry are downloaded (step 155). For instance, a download station can be physically interfaced to the external connector 65 of the monitor recorder 14 to initiate and conduct downloading, as described supra with reference to FIG. 15.

[0113] In a further embodiment, the monitoring period can be of indeterminate duration. Referring next to FIG. 16B, a similar series of operations are followed with respect to replacement of electrode patches 15, reinsertion of the same

monitor recorder 14, and eventual download of ECG and physiological telemetry (steps 161-165), as described supra with reference to FIG. 16A. However, the flash memory 62 (shown in FIG. 9) in the circuitry 60 of the monitor recorder 14 has a finite capacity. Following successful downloading of stored data, the flash memory 62 can be cleared to restore storage capacity and monitoring can resume once more, either by first adhering a new electrode patch 15 (step 161) or by snapping the monitor recorder 14 into an already-adhered electrode patch 15 (step 162). The foregoing expanded series of operations, to include reuse of the same monitor recorder 14 following data download, allows monitoring to continue indefinitely and without the kinds of interruptions that often affect conventional approaches, including the retrieval of monitoring data only by first making an appointment with a medical professional.

[0114] In a still further embodiment, when the monitor recorder 14 is equipped with a wireless transceiver, the use of a download station can be skipped. Referring last to FIG. 16C, a similar series of operations are followed with respect to replacement of electrode patches 15 and reinsertion of the same monitor recorder 14 (steps 171-174), as described supra with reference to FIG. 16A. However, recorded ECG and physiological telemetry are downloaded wirelessly (step 175), such as described in commonly-assigned U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/082,071, cited supra. The recorded ECG and physiological telemetry can even be downloaded wirelessly directly from a monitor recorder 14 during monitoring while still snapped into the non-conductive receptacle 25 on the electrode patch 15. The wireless interfacing enables monitoring to continue for an open-ended period of time, as the downloading of the recorded ECG and physiological telemetry will continually free up onboard storage space. Further, wireless interfacing simplifies patient use, as the patient (or caregiver) only need worry about placing (and replacing) electrode patches 15 and inserting the monitor recorder 14. Still other forms of practical use of the extended wear electrocardiography monitors 12 are possible.

[0115] The circuit trace and ECG electrodes components of the electrode patch 15 can be structurally simplified. In a still further embodiment, the flexible circuit 32 (shown in FIG. 5) and distal ECG electrode 38 and proximal ECG electrode 39 (shown in FIG. 6) are replaced with a pair of interlaced flexile wires. The interlacing of flexile wires through the flexible backing 20 reduces both manufacturing costs and environmental impact, as further described infra. The flexible circuit and ECG electrodes are replaced with a pair of flexile wires that serve as both electrode circuit traces and electrode signal pickups. FIG. 17 is a perspective view 180 of an extended wear electrode patch 15 with a flexile wire electrode assembly in accordance with a still further embodiment. The flexible backing 20 maintains the unique narrow "hourglass"-like shape that aids long term extended wear, particularly in women, as described supra with reference to FIG. 4. For clarity, the non-conductive receptacle 25 is omitted to show the exposed battery printed circuit board 182 that is adhered underneath the non-conductive receptacle 25 to the proximal end 31 of the flexible backing 20. Instead of employing flexible circuits, a pair of flexile wires are separately interlaced or sewn into the flexible backing 20 to serve as circuit connections for an anode electrode lead and for a cathode electrode lead.

[0116] To form a distal electrode assembly, a distal wire 181 is interlaced into the distal end 30 of the flexible backing

20, continues along an axial path through the narrow longitudinal midsection of the elongated strip, and electrically connects to the battery printed circuit board 182 on the proximal end 31 of the flexible backing 20. The distal wire 181 is connected to the battery printed circuit board 182 by stripping the distal wire 181 of insulation, if applicable, and interlacing or sewing the uninsulated end of the distal wire 181 directly into an exposed circuit trace 183. The distal wire-to-battery printed circuit board connection can be made, for instance, by back stitching the distal wire 181 back and forth across the edge of the battery printed circuit board 182. Similarly, to form a proximal electrode assembly, a proximal wire (not shown) is interlaced into the proximal end 31 of the flexible backing 20. The proximal wire is connected to the battery printed circuit board 182 by stripping the proximal wire of insulation, if applicable, and interlacing or sewing the uninsulated end of the proximal wire directly into an exposed circuit trace 184. The resulting flexile wire connections both establish electrical connections and help to affix the battery printed circuit board 182 to the flexible backing 20.

[0117] The battery printed circuit board 182 is provided with a battery compartment 36. A set of electrical pads 34 are formed on the battery printed circuit board 182. The electrical pads 34 electrically interface the battery printed circuit board 182 with a monitor recorder 14 when fitted into the non-conductive receptacle 25. The battery compartment 36 contains a spring 185 and a clasp 186, or similar assembly, to hold a battery (not shown) in place and electrically interfaces the battery to the electrical pads 34 through a pair battery leads 187 for powering the electrocardiography monitor 14. Other types of battery compartment are possible. The battery contained within the battery compartment 36 can be replaceable, rechargeable, or disposable.

[0118] In a yet further embodiment, the circuit board and non-conductive receptacle 25 are replaced by a combined housing that includes a battery compartment and a plurality of electrical pads. The housing can be affixed to the proximal end of the elongated strip through the interlacing or sewing of the flexile wires or other wires or threads.

[0119] The core of the flexile wires may be made from a solid, stranded, or braided conductive metal or metal compounds. In general, a solid wire will be less flexible than a stranded wire with the same total cross-sectional area, but will provide more mechanical rigidity than the stranded wire. The conductive core may be copper, aluminum, silver, or other material. The pair of the flexile wires may be provided as insulated wire. In one embodiment, the flexile wires are made from a magnet wire from Belden Cable, catalogue number 8051, with a solid core of AWG 22 with bare copper as conductor material and insulated by polyurethane or nylon. Still other types of flexile wires are possible. In a further embodiment, conductive ink or graphene can be used to print electrical connections, either in combination with or in place of the flexile wires.

[0120] In a still further embodiment, the flexile wires are uninsulated. FIG. 18 is perspective view of the flexile wire electrode assembly from FIG. 17, with a layer of insulating material 189 shielding a bare uninsulated distal wire 181 around the midsection on the contact side of the flexible backing. On the contact side of the proximal and distal ends of the flexible backing, only the portions of the flexile wires serving as electrode signal pickups are electrically exposed and the rest of the flexile wire on the contact side outside of

the proximal and distal ends are shielded from electrical contact. The bare uninsulated distal wire 181 may be insulated using a layer of plastic, rubber-like polymers, or varnish, or by an additional layer of gauze or adhesive (or non-adhesive) gel. The bare uninsulated wire 181 on the non-contact side of the flexible backing may be insulated or can simply be left uninsulated.

[0121] Both end portions of the pair of flexile wires are typically placed uninsulated on the contact surface of the flexible backing 20 to form a pair of electrode signal pickups. FIG. 19 is a bottom view 190 of the flexile wire electrode assembly as shown in FIG. 17. When adhered to the skin during use, the uninsulated end portions of the distal wire 181 and the proximal wire 191 enable the monitor recorder 14 to measure dermal electrical potential differentials. At the proximal and distal ends of the flexible backing 20, the uninsulated end portions of the flexile wires may be configured into an appropriate pattern to provide an electrode signal pickup, which would typically be a spiral shape formed by guiding the flexile wire along an inwardly spiraling pattern. The surface area of the electrode pickups can also be variable, such as by selectively removing some or all of the insulation on the contact surface. For example, an electrode signal pickup arranged by sewing insulated flexile wire in a spiral pattern could have a crescent-shaped cutout of uninsulated flexile wire facing towards the signal source.

[0122] In a still yet further embodiment, the flexile wires are left freely riding on the contact surfaces on the distal and proximal ends of the flexible backing, rather than being interlaced into the ends of the flexible backing 20. FIG. 20 is a bottom view 200 of a flexile wire electrode assembly in accordance with a still yet further embodiment. The distal wire 181 is interlaced onto the midsection and extends an exposed end portion 192 onto the distal end 30. The proximal wire 191 extends an exposed end portion 193 onto the proximal end 31. The exposed end portions 192 and 193, not shielded with insulation, are further embedded within an electrically conductive adhesive 201. The adhesive 201 makes contact to skin during use and conducts skin electrical potentials to the monitor recorder 14 (not shown) via the flexile wires. The adhesive 201 can be formed from electrically conductive, non-irritating adhesive, such as hydrocolloid.

[0123] The distal wire 181 is interlaced or sewn through the longitudinal midsection of the flexible backing 20 and takes the place of the flexible circuit 32. FIG. 21 is a perspective view showing the longitudinal midsection of the flexible backing of the electrode assembly from FIG. 17. Various stitching patterns may be adopted to provide a proper combination of rigidity and flexibility. In simplest form, the distal wire 181 can be manually threaded through a plurality of holes provided at regularly-spaced intervals along an axial path defined between the battery printed circuit board 182 (not shown) and the distal end 30 of the flexible backing 20. The distal wire 181 can be threaded through the plurality of holes by stitching the flexile wire as a single "thread." Other types of stitching patterns or stitching of multiple "threads" could also be used, as well as using a sewing machine or similar device to machine-stitch the distal wire 181 into place, as further described infra. Further, the path of the distal wire 181 need not be limited to a straight line from the distal to the proximal end of the flexible backing 20.

[0124] In a further embodiment, the ECG sensing and processing circuitry described above can be adapted for incorporation into a continuously-recording subcutaneous insertable cardiac monitor (ICM), such as one described in commonly-owned U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/832,385, filed Dec. 5, 2017, pending, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference. The ICM can be used for conducting a long-term electrocardiographic and physiological monitoring over a period lasting up to several years in duration. FIG. 22 is a diagram showing, by way of example, a subcutaneous P-wave centric ICM 212 for long term electrocardiographic monitoring in accordance with one embodiment. The ICM 212 is implanted in the parasternal region 211 of a patient 210. The sensing circuitry and components, compression algorithms, and the physical layout of the electrodes are specifically optimized to capture electrical signals from the propagation of low amplitude, relatively low frequency content cardiac action potentials, particularly the P-waves generated during atrial activation. The position and placement of the ICM 212 coupled to engineering considerations that optimize the ICM's sensing circuitry, discussed infra, aid in demonstrating the P-wave clearly.

[0125] Implantation of a P-wave centric ICM 212 in the proper subcutaneous site facilitates the recording of high quality ECG data with a good delineation of the P-wave. In general, the ICM 212 is intended to be implanted anteriorly and be positioned axially and slightly to either the right or left of the sternal midline in the parasternal region 211 of the chest, or if sufficient subcutaneous fat exists, directly over the sternum. Optimally, the ICM 212 is implanted in a location left parasternally to bridge the left atrial appendage. However, either location to the right or left of the sternal midline is acceptable; placement of the device, if possible, should bridge the vertical height of the heart, which lies underneath the sternum 203, thereby placing the ICM 212 in close proximity to the anterior right atrium and the left atrial appendage that lie immediately beneath.

[0126] The ICM 212 is shaped to fit comfortably within the body under the skin and to conform to the contours of the patient's parasternal region 211 when implanted immediately to either side of the sternum 203, but could be implanted in other locations of the body. In most adults, the proximal end 13 of the ICM 212 is generally positioned below the manubrium 8 but, depending upon patient's vertical build, the ICM 212 may actually straddle the region over the manubrium 8. The distal end 214 of the ICM 212 generally extends towards the xiphoid process 9 and lower sternum but, depending upon the patient's build, may actually straddle the region over or under the xiphoid process 9, lower sternum and upper abdomen.

[0127] Although internal tissues, body structures, and tissue boundaries can adversely affect the current strength and signal fidelity of all body surface potentials, subsurface low amplitude cardiac action potentials, particularly P-wave signals with a normative amplitude of less than 0.25 millivolts (mV) and a normative duration of less than 120 milliseconds (ms), are most apt to be negatively impacted by these factors. The atria, which generate the P wave, are mostly located posteriorly within the thoracic cavity (with the exception of the anterior right atrium, right atrial appendage and left atrial appendage). The majority of the left atrium constitutes the portion of the heart furthest away from the surface of the skin on the chest and harbors the atrial tissue

most likely to be the source of serious arrhythmias, like atrial fibrillation. Conversely, the ventricles, which generate larger amplitude signals, are located anteriorly as in the case of the anterior right ventricle and most of the anterior left ventricle situated relatively close to the skin surface of the central and left anterior chest. These factors, together with larger size and more powerful impulse generation from the ventricles, contribute to the relatively larger amplitudes of ventricular waveforms.

[0128] Nevertheless, as explained supra, both the P-wave and the R-wave are required for the physician to make a proper rhythm diagnosis from the dozens of arrhythmias that can occur. Yet, the quality of P-waves is more susceptible to weakening from distance and the intervening tissues and structures and from signal attenuation and signal processing than the high voltage waveforms associated with ventricular activation. The added value of avoiding further signal attenuation resulting from dermal impedance makes a subcutaneous P-wave centric ICM even more likely to match, or even outperform dermal ambulatory monitors designed to analogous engineering considerations and using similar sensing circuitry and components, compression algorithms, and physical layout of electrodes, such as described in U.S. Pat. No. 9,545,204, issued Jan. 21, 2021 to Bishay et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 9,730,593, issued Aug. 15, 2021 to Felix et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 9,700,227, issued Jul. 11, 2021 to Bishay et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 9,721,433, issued Aug. 1, 2021 to Felix et al.; and U.S. Pat. No. 9,615,763, issued Apr. 11, 2021 to Felix et al., the disclosures of which are incorporated by reference.

[0129] The ICM 212 can be implanted in the patient's chest using, for instance, a minimally invasive subcutaneous implantation instrument or other suitable surgical implement. The ICM 212 is positioned slightly to the right or left of midline, covering the center third of the chest, roughly between the second and sixth ribs, approximately spanning between the level of the manubrium 8 and the level of the xiphoid process 9 on the inferior border of the sternum 203, depending upon the vertical build of the patient 210.

[0130] During monitoring, the amplitude and strength of action potentials sensed by an ECG devices, including dermal ECG monitors and ICMs, can be affected to varying degrees by cardiac, cellular, extracellular, vector of current flow, and physical factors, like obesity, dermatitis, lung disease, large breasts, and high impedance skin, as can occur in dark-skinned individuals. Performing ECG sensing subcutaneously in the parasternal region 211 significantly improves the ability of the ICM 212 to counter some of the effects of these factors, particularly high skin impedance and impedance from subcutaneous fat. Thus, the ICM 212 exhibits superior performance when compared to conventional dermal ECG monitors to existing implantable loop recorders, ICMs, and other forms of implantable monitoring devices by virtue of its engineering and proven P-wave documentation above the skin, as discussed in W. M. Smith et al., "Comparison of diagnostic value using a small, single channel, P-wave centric sternal ECG monitoring patch with a standard 3-lead Holter system over 24 hours," *Am. Heart J.*, March 2021; 2185:67-73, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference.

[0131] Moreover, the sternal midline implantation location in the parasternal region 211 allows the ICM's electrodes to record an ECG of optimal signal quality from a location immediately above the strongest signal-generating

aspects of the atrial. Signal quality is improved further in part because cardiac action potential propagation travels simultaneously along a north-to-south and right-to-left vector, beginning high in the right atrium and ultimately ending in the posterior and lateral region of the left ventricle. Cardiac depolarization originates high in the right atrium in the SA node before concurrently spreading leftward towards the left atrium and inferiorly towards the atrioventricular (AV) node. On the proximal end **13**, the ECG electrodes of the ICM **212** are subcutaneously positioned with the upper or superior pole (ECG electrode) slightly to the right or left of the sternal midline in the region of the manubrium **8** and, on the distal end **214**, the lower or inferior pole (ECG electrode) is similarly situated slightly to the right or left of the sternal midline in the region of the xiphoid process **9** and lower sternum **203**. The ECG electrodes of the ICM **212** are placed primarily in a north-to-south orientation along the sternum **203** that corresponds to the north-to-south waveform vector exhibited during atrial activation. This orientation corresponds to the aVF lead used in a conventional 12-lead ECG that is used to sense positive or upright P-waves. In addition, the electrode spacing and the electrodes' shapes and surface areas mimic the electrodes used in the ICM's dermal cousin, designed as part of the optimal P-wave sensing electrode configuration, such as provided with the dermal ambulatory monitors cited supra.

[0132] Despite the challenges faced in capturing low amplitude cardiac action potentials, the ICM **212** is able to operate effectively using only two electrodes that are strategically sized and placed in locations ideally suited to high fidelity P-wave signal acquisition. This approach has been shown to clinically outperform more typical multi-lead monitors because of the improved P-wave clarity, as discussed in W. M. Smith et al., cited supra. FIGS. **23** and **24** are respectively top and bottom perspective views showing the ICM **212** of FIG. **1**. Physically, the ICM **212** is constructed with a hermetically sealed implantable housing **215** with at least one ECG electrode forming a superior pole on the proximal end **13** and at least one ECG electrode forming an inferior pole on the distal end **214**.

[0133] When implanted, the housing **215** is oriented most cephalad. The housing **215** is constructed of titanium, stainless steel or other biocompatible material. The housing **215** contains the sensing, recordation and interfacing circuitry of the ICM **212**, plus a long life battery. A wireless antenna is integrated into or within the housing **215** and can be positioned to wrap around the housing's internal periphery or location suited to signal reception. Other wireless antenna placement or integrations are possible.

[0134] Physically, the ICM **212** has four ECG electrodes **216**, **217**, **218**, **219**. There could also be additional ECG electrodes, as discussed infra. The ECG electrodes include two ventral (or dorsal) ECG electrodes **218**, **219** and two wraparound ECG electrodes **216**, **217**. One ventral ECG electrode **218** is formed on the proximal end **13** and one ventral ECG electrode **219** is formed on the distal end **214**. One wraparound ECG electrode **216** is formed circumferentially about the proximal end **13** and one wraparound ECG electrode **217** is formed circumferentially about the distal end **214**. Each wraparound ECG electrode **216**, **217** is electrically insulated from its respective ventral ECG electrode **218**, **219** by a periphery **220**, **221**.

[0135] The four ECG electrodes **216**, **217**, **218**, **219** are programmatically controlled by a microcontroller through

onboard firmware programming to enable a physician to choose from several different electrode configurations that vary the electrode surface areas, shapes, and inter-electrode spacing. The sensing circuitry can be programmed, either pre-implant or in situ, to use different combinations of the available ECG electrodes (and thereby changing electrode surface areas, shapes, and inter-electrode spacing), including pairing the two ventral ECG electrodes **216**, **217**, the two wraparound ECG electrodes **218**, **219**, or one ventral ECG electrode **216**, **217** with one wraparound ECG electrode **218**, **219** located on the opposite end of the housing **215**. In addition, the periphery **220**, **221** can be programmatically controlled to logically combine the wraparound ECG electrode **216**, **217** on one end of the ICM **212** with its corresponding ventral ECG electrode **218**, **219** to form a single virtual ECG electrode with larger surface area and shape. (Although electronically possible, the two ECG electrodes that are only on one end of the ICM **212**, for instance, wraparound ECG electrode **216** and ventral ECG electrode **218**, could be paired; however, the minimal inter-electrode spacing would likely yield a signal of poor fidelity in most situations.)

[0136] In a further embodiment, the housing **215** and contained circuitry can be provided as a standalone ICM core assembly to which a pair of compatible ECG electrodes can be operatively coupled to form a full implantable ICM device.

[0137] Other ECG electrode configurations are possible. For instance, additional ECG electrodes can be provided to increase the number of possible electrode configurations, all of which are to ensure better P-wave resolution. FIG. **25** is a bottom perspective view showing the ICM **212** of FIG. **22** in accordance with a further embodiment. An additional pair of ventral ECG electrodes **222**, **223** are included on the housing's ventral surface. These ventral ECG electrodes **222**, **223** are spaced closer together than the ventral ECG electrodes **218**, **219** on the ends of the housing **215** and a physician can thus choose to pair the two inner ventral ECG electrodes **222**, **223** by themselves to allow for minimal electrode-to-electrode spacing, or with the other ECG electrodes **216**, **217**, **218**, **219** to vary electrode surface areas, shapes, and inter-electrode spacing even further to explore optimal configurations to acquire the P-wave.

[0138] Other housing configurations of the ICM are possible. For instance, the housing of the ICM can be structured to enhance long term comfort and fitment, and to accommodate a larger long life battery or more circuitry or features, including physiologic sensors, to provide additional functionality. FIGS. **26** and **27** are respectively top and bottom perspective views showing an ICM **230** in accordance with a still further embodiment. The ICM **230** has a housing **31** with a tapered extension **32** that is terminated on the distal end with an electrode **34**. On a proximal end, the housing **31** includes a pair of ECG electrodes electrically insulated by a periphery **37** that include a ventral ECG electrode **33** and a wraparound ECG electrode **34**. In addition, a ventral ECG electrode **36** is oriented on the housing's distal end before the tapered extension **32**. Still other housing structures and electrode configurations are possible.

[0139] In general, the basic electrode layout is sufficient to sense cardiac action potentials in a wide range of patients. Differences in thoracic tissue density and skeletal structure from patient to patient, though, can affect the ability of the sensing electrodes to efficaciously capture action potential

signals, yet the degree to which signal acquisition is affected may not be apparent until after an ICM has been implanted and deployed, when the impacts of the patient's physical constitution and his patterns of mobility and physical movement on ICM monitoring can be fully assessed.

[0140] In further embodiments, the electrodes can be configured post-implant to allow the ICM to better adapt to a particular patient's physiology. For instance, electrode configurations having more than two sensing electrodes are possible. FIG. 28 is a plan view showing further electrode configurations. Referring first to FIG. 28(a), a single disc ECG electrode 40 could be bifurcated to form a pair of half-circle ECG electrodes 241, 242 that could be programmatically selected or combined to accommodate a particular patient's ECG signal characteristics post-ICM implant. Referring next to FIG. 28(b), a single disc ECG electrode 245 could be divided into three sections, a pair of crescent-shaped ECG electrodes 246, 247 surrounding a central semicircular ECG electrode 48 that could similarly be programmatically selected or combined. Still other ECG electrode configurations are possible.

[0141] ECG monitoring and other functions performed by the ICM 212 are provided through a micro controlled architecture. FIG. 29 is a functional block diagram showing the P-wave focused component architecture of the circuitry 280 of the ICM 212 of FIG. 22. The circuitry 280 is powered through the long life battery 21 provided in the housing 215, which can be a direct current battery. Operation of the circuitry 280 of the ICM 212 is managed by a microcontroller 61, such as the EFM32 Tiny Gecko 32-bit microcontroller, manufactured by Silicon Laboratories Inc., Austin, Tex. The microcontroller 61 has flexible energy management modes and includes a direct memory access controller and built-in analog-to-digital and digital-to-analog converters (ADC and DAC, respectively). The microcontroller 61 also includes a program memory unit containing internal flash memory (not shown) that is readable, writeable, and externally programmable.

[0142] The microcontroller 61 operates under modular micro program control as specified in firmware stored in the internal flash memory. The functionality and firmware modules relating to signal processing by the microcontroller 61 are further described supra with reference to FIG. 14. The microcontroller 61 draws power from the battery provided in the housing 215 and connects to the ECG front end circuit 63. In a further embodiment, the front end circuit 63 measures raw subcutaneous electrical signals using a driven reference signal that eliminates common mode noise, as further described supra with reference to FIG. 11. The driven reference signal effectively reduces common mode noise, power supply noise and system noise, which is critical to preserving the characteristics of low amplitude cardiac action potentials, especially the P wave signals originating from the atria.

[0143] The circuitry 280 of the ICM 212 also includes a flash memory 82 external to the microcontroller 61, which the microcontroller 61 uses for continuously storing samples of ECG monitoring signal data and other physiology, such as respiratory rate, blood oxygen saturation level (SpO_2), blood pressure, temperature sensor, and physical activity, and device and related information. The flash memory 82 also draws power from the battery provided in the housing 215. Data is stored in a serial flash memory circuit, which supports read, erase and program operations over a commu-

nications bus. The flash memory 82 enables the microcontroller 61 to store digitized ECG data. The communications bus further enables the flash memory 82 to be directly accessed wirelessly through a transceiver 285 coupled to an antenna 217 built into (or provided with) the housing 215, as further described infra with reference to FIG. 30. The transceiver 285 can be used for wirelessly interfacing over Bluetooth or other types of wireless technologies for exchanging data over a short distance with a paired mobile device, including smartphones and smart watches, that are designed to communicate over a public communications infrastructure, such as a cellular communications network, and, in a further embodiment, other wearable (or implantable) physiology monitors, such as activity trackers worn on the wrist or body. Other types of device pairings are possible, including with a desktop computer or purpose-built bedside monitor. The transceiver 285 can be used to offload stored ECG monitoring data and other physiology data and information and for device firmware reprogramming, such by interfacing via a wireless network with the download station described above with reference to FIG. 15. In a further embodiment, the flash memory 82 can be accessed through an inductive coupling (not shown).

[0144] The microcontroller 61 includes functionality that enables the acquisition of samples of analog ECG signals, which are converted into a digital representation, as further described supra with reference to FIG. 12. In one mode, the microcontroller 61 implements a loop recorder feature that will acquire, sample, digitize, signal process, and store digitized ECG data into available storage locations in the flash memory 82 until all memory storage locations are filled, after which existing stored digitized ECG data will either be overwritten through a sliding window protocol, albeit at the cost of potentially losing the stored data that was overwritten, if not previously downloaded, or transmitted wirelessly to an external receiver to unburden the flash memory. In another mode, the stored digitized ECG data can be maintained permanently until downloaded or erased to restore memory capacity. Data download or erasure can also occur before all storage locations are filled, which would free up memory space sooner, albeit at the cost of possibly interrupting monitoring while downloading or erasure is performed. Still other modes of data storage and capacity recovery are possible.

[0145] The circuitry 280 of the ICM 212 can include functionality to programmatically select pairings of sensing electrodes when the ICM 212 is furnished with three or more electrodes. In a further embodiment, multiple sensing electrodes could be provided on the ICM 212 to provide a physician the option of fine-tuning the sensing dipole (or tripole or multipole) in situ by parking active electrodes and designating any remaining electrodes inert. The pairing selection can be made remotely through an inductive coupling or by the transceiver 285 via, for instance, a paired mobile device. Thus, the sensing electrode configuration, including number of electrodes, electrode-to-electrode spacing, and electrode size, shape, surface area, and placement, can be modified at any time during the implantation of the ICM 212.

[0146] In a further embodiment, the circuitry 280 of the ICM 212 can include an actigraphy sensor 84 implemented as a 3-axis accelerometer. The accelerometer may be configured to generate interrupt signals to the microcontroller 61 by independent initial wake up and free fall events, as

well as by device position. In addition, the actigraphy provided by the accelerometer can be used during post-monitoring analysis to correct the orientation of the ICM 212 if, for instance, the ICM 212 has been inadvertently implanted upside down, that is, with the ICM's housing oriented caudally, as well as for other event occurrence analyses.

[0147] In a still further embodiment, the circuitry 280 of the ICM 212 can include one or more physiology sensors. For instance, a physiology sensor can be provided as part of the circuitry 280 of the ICM 212, or can be provided on the electrode assembly 14 with communication with the microcontroller 61 provided through a circuit trace. The physiology sensor can include an SpO₂ sensor, blood pressure sensor, temperature sensor, respiratory rate sensor, glucose sensor, airflow sensor, volumetric pressure sensing, or other types of sensor or telemetric input sources.

[0148] In a yet further embodiment, firmware with programming instructions, including machine learning and other forms of artificial intelligence-originated instructions, can be downloaded into the microcontroller's internal flash memory. The firmware can include heuristics to signal patient and physician with alerts over health conditions or arrhythmias of selected medical concern, such as where a heart pattern particular to the patient is identified and the ICM 212 is thereby reprogrammed to watch for a reoccurrence of that pattern, after which an alert will be generated and sent to the physician (or other caregiver) through the transceiver 285 via, for instance, a paired mobile device. Similarly, the firmware can include heuristics that can be downloaded to the ICM 212 to actively identify or narrow down a pattern (or even the underlying cause) of sporadic cardiac conditions, for instance, atrial tachycardia (AT), atrial fibrillation (AF), atrial flutter (AFL), AV node reciprocating tachycardia, ventricular tachycardia (VT), sinus bradycardia, asystole, complete heart block, and other cardiac arrhythmias, again, after which an alert will be generated and sent to the physician (or other caregiver) through the transceiver 285. For instance, an alert that includes a compressed ECG digitized sample can also be wirelessly transmitted by the ICM 212 upon the triggering of a preset condition, such as an abnormally low heart rate in excess of 170 beats per minute (bpm), an abnormally low heart rate falling below 30 bpm, or AF detected by onboard analysis of RR interval variability by the microcontroller 61. Finally, a similar methodology of creating firmware programming tailored to the monitoring and medical diagnostic needs of a specific patient (or patient group or general population) can be used for other conditions or symptoms, such as syncope, palpitations, dizziness and giddiness, unspecified convulsions, abnormal ECG, transient cerebral ischemic attacks and related syndromes, cerebral infarction, occlusion and stenosis of pre-cerebral and cerebral arteries not resulting in cerebral infarction personal history of transient ischemic attack, and cerebral infarction without residual deficits, to trigger an alert and involve the physician or initiate automated analysis and follow up back at the patient's clinic. Finally, in a still further embodiment, the circuitry 280 of the ICM 212 can accommodate patient-interfaceable components, including an external tactile feedback device (not shown) that wirelessly interfaces to the ICM 212 through the transceiver 285. A patient 210 can press the external tactile feedback device to mark events, such as a syncope episode, or to perform other functions. The circuitry 280 can also

accommodate triggering an external buzzer 67, such as a speaker, magnetic resonator or piezoelectric buzzer, implemented as part of the external tactile feedback device or as a separate wirelessly-interfaceable component. The buzzer 67 can be used by the microcontroller 61 to indirectly output feedback to a patient 210, such as a low battery or other error condition or warning. Still other components, provided as either part of the circuitry 280 of the ICM 212 or as external wirelessly-interfaceable devices, are possible.

[0149] In a further embodiment, the ECG front end circuit 63 of the ICM 212 measures raw subcutaneous electrical signals using a driven reference signal, such as described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 9,700,227, 9,721,433, and 9,615,763, cited supra.

[0150] As described above with reference to FIG. 11, the ECG front end circuit 63 is organized into a passive input filter stage, a unity gain voltage follower stage, a passive high pass filtering stage, a voltage amplification and active filtering stage, and an anti-aliasing passive filter stage, plus a reference generator. The passive input filter stage passively shifts the frequency response poles downward to counter the high electrode impedance from the patient on the signal lead and reference lead, which reduces high frequency noise. The unity gain voltage follower stage allows the circuit to accommodate a very high input impedance, so as not to disrupt the subcutaneous potentials or the filtering effect of the previous stage. The passive high pass filtering stage includes a high pass filter that removes baseline wander and any offset generated from the previous stage. As necessary, the voltage amplification and active filtering stage amplifies or de-amplifies (or allows to pass-through) the voltage of the input signal, while applying a low pass filter. The anti-aliasing passive filter stage provides an anti-aliasing low pass filter. The reference generator drives a driven reference signal containing power supply noise and system noise to the reference lead and is connected directly to the patient, thereby avoiding the thermal noise of the protection resistor that is included as part of the protection circuit.

[0151] While the invention has been particularly shown and described as referenced to the embodiments thereof, those skilled in the art will understand that the foregoing and other changes in form and detail may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope.

What is claimed is:

1. A subcutaneous insertable cardiac monitor (ICM) optimized for long term, low amplitude, electrocardiographic (ECG) data collection, comprising:

an implantable housing comprised of a biocompatible material that is suitable for implantation within a living body;

at least one pair of ECG sensing electrodes provided on a ventral surface and on opposite ends of the implantable housing operatively placed to facilitate sensing in closest proximity to the low amplitude, low frequency content cardiac action potentials that are generated during atrial activation; and

electronic circuitry provided within the implantable housing, the electronic circuitry comprising:

a low power microcontroller operable to execute under modular micro program control as specified in firmware;

an ECG front end circuit interfaced to the microcontroller and configured to capture the cardiac action

- potentials sensed by at least the pair of ECG sensing electrodes which are output as ECG signals, the ECG front end comprising:
- a signal lead operable to sense cardiac electrical potentials through one of the ECG sensing electrodes;
 - a reference lead operable to sense the cardiac electrical potentials through the other of the ECG sensing electrodes; and
 - a reference generator comprising a pair of resistors configured to inject a driven reference containing power supply noise and system noise into the body; and
 - a non-volatile memory electrically interfaced with the microcontroller and operable to continuously store samples of the ECG signals.
2. A monitor according to claim 1, further comprising:
- an analog-to-digital converter operable to convert the ECG signals into digital representations of the cardiac activation wave front amplitudes;
 - at least one low pass filter comprised in the firmware; and
 - at least one high pass filter comprised in the firmware, wherein the cardiac activation wave front amplitudes are passed through the at least one low pass filter and the at least one high pass filter following conversion into the digital representations.
3. A monitor according to claim 2, further comprising:
- a transceiver interfaced to the microcontroller and operable to wirelessly interface to a wireless network;
 - a download station comprising:
 - a data link operable to interface with the electronic circuitry via the wireless network; and
 - a download station controller configured to be removably connected to the electronic circuitry via the data link and operable to execute under programmable control as specified in software, the software comprising:
 - a data retrieval module configured to retrieve the samples of the ECG signals from the non-volatile memory; and
 - a data storage module configured to store the retrieved samples of the ECG signals into local storage.
4. A monitor according to claim 3, the software further comprising:
- at least one software-implemented low pass filter that corresponds to the at least one low pass filter comprised in the firmware;
 - at least one software-implemented high pass filter that corresponds to the at least one high pass filter comprised in the firmware; and
 - a phase distortion correction module configured to run the retrieved samples of the ECG signals through each of the at least one software-implemented low pass filter and the at least one software-implemented high pass filter in a direction reversed respectively from the at least one low pass filter comprised in the firmware and the at least one high pass filter comprised in the firmware.
5. A monitor according to claim 3, the software further comprising:
- a software-implemented bidirectional impulse infinite response (IIR) high pass filter; and
 - a phase distortion correction module configured to run the retrieved samples of the electrocardiographic signals through the IIR high pass filter first in a forward direction and then in a reverse direction.
6. A monitor according to claim 3, the software further comprising:
- a software-implemented P-wave base boost response filter adapted to restore missing frequency content in the retrieved samples of the ECG signals.
7. A monitor according to claim 3, the software further comprising:
- an automatic gain adjustment module configured to apply a gain to the digital signals to the retrieved samples of the ECG signals.
8. A monitor according to claim 1, further comprising:
- a compression algorithm comprised in the firmware, wherein the cardiac activation wave front amplitudes are compressed with the compression algorithm into compressed digital representations prior to being stored in the non-volatile memory.
9. A monitor according to claim 1, further comprising:
- a long life battery power cell comprised within the housing.
10. A monitor according to claim 9, wherein the power supply noise and the system noise comprised within the driven reference are received from the power cell.
11. A subcutaneous implantable loop recorder for long term electrocardiographic (ECG) monitoring, comprising:
- a hermetically sealed implantable housing and comprised of a biocompatible material that is suitable for implantation within a living body of a patient;
 - at least one pair of ECG sensing electrodes provided on a ventral surface and on opposite ends of the implantable housing operatively placed to facilitate sensing in closest proximity to the low amplitude, low frequency content cardiac action potentials that are generated during atrial activation;
 - a power source comprised within the implantable housing; and
 - electronic circuitry provided within the housing, the electronic circuitry comprising:
 - a low power microcontroller operable to execute under modular micro program control as specified in firmware;
 - an ECG front end circuit interfaced to the microcontroller and configured to capture the cardiac action potentials sensed by at least the pair of ECG sensing electrodes which are output as ECG signals, the ECG front end comprising:
 - a signal lead operable to sense cardiac electrical potentials through one of the ECG electrodes;
 - a reference lead operable to sense the cardiac electrical potentials through the other of the ECG electrodes; and
 - a reference generator comprising a pair of resistors configured to inject a driven reference containing power supply noise and system noise into the body, the pair of resistance connected to the power source by a connection pair through which the pair of resistance receives the system noise and the power noise comprised in the driven reference signal; and

- a non-volatile memory electrically interfaced with the microcontroller and operable to continuously store samples of the ECG signals.
- 12.** A recorder according to claim **11**, further comprising:
 an analog-to-digital converter operable to convert the ECG signals into digital representations of the cardiac activation wave front amplitudes;
 at least one low pass filter comprised in the firmware; and
 at least one high pass filter comprised in the firmware, wherein the cardiac activation wave front amplitudes are passed through the at least one low pass filter and the at least one high pass filter following conversion into the digital representations.
- 13.** A recorder according to claim **12**, further comprising:
 a transceiver interfaced to the microcontroller and operable to wirelessly interface to a wireless network;
 a download station comprising:
 a data link operable to interface with the electronic circuitry via the wireless network; and
 a download station controller configured to be removably connected to the electronic circuitry via the data link and operable to execute under programmable control as specified in software, the software comprising:
 a data retrieval module configured to retrieve the samples of the ECG signals from the non-volatile memory; and
 a data storage module configured to store the retrieved samples of the ECG signals into local storage.
- 14.** A monitor according to claim **13**, the software further comprising:
 at least one software-implemented low pass filter that corresponds to the at least one low pass filter comprised in the firmware;
 at least one software-implemented high pass filter that corresponds to the at least one high pass filter comprised in the firmware; and
 a phase distortion correction module configured to run the retrieved samples of the ECG signals through each of the at least one software-implemented low pass filter and the at least one software-implemented high pass filter in a direction reversed respectively from the at least one low pass filter comprised in the firmware and the at least one high pass filter comprised in the firmware.
- 15.** A recorder according to claim **12**, further comprising:
 a compression algorithm comprised in the firmware, wherein the cardiac activation wave front amplitudes are compressed with the compression algorithm into compressed digital representations prior to being stored in the non-volatile memory.
- 16.** A recorder according to claim **11**, further comprising:
 a power up sequence stored as part of the firmware, wherein the microcontroller is operable to execute the power up sequence upon the monitor being implanted into the body.
- 17.** A recorder in accordance with claim **11**, wherein the electrocardiographic signals are output as an analog signal and the microcontroller acquires the samples by sampling the analog signal, each of the samples comprising a disruption in the analog signal.
- 18.** A recorder in accordance with claim **17**, further comprising:
 a hold capacitor comprised in the microcontroller that is charged to supply the analog signal for the acquisition.
- 19.** A recorder in accordance with claim **11**, wherein the power source is a long life direct current power cell comprised within the housing.
- 20.** A recorder in accordance with claim **11**, the electronic circuitry further comprising:
 a transceiver interfaced to the microcontroller and operable to wirelessly interface to a wireless network.

* * * * *

专利名称(译)	皮下可插入式心脏监护仪，针对长期，低幅度心电图数据采集进行了优化		
公开(公告)号	US20190069800A1	公开(公告)日	2019-03-07
申请号	US16/178468	申请日	2018-11-01
[标]申请(专利权)人(译)	BARDY诊断		
申请(专利权)人(译)	BARDY诊断，INC.		
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发明人	BARDY, GUST H. FELIX, JASON		
IPC分类号	A61B5/0432 A61B5/0408 A61B5/00 A61B5/0404 A61B5/0452		
CPC分类号	A61B5/04087 A61B5/6823 A61B5/04085 A61B5/7232 A61B5/0404 A61B5/0452 A61B5/04325 A61B5/725 A61B5/0006 A61B5/0422 A61B5/7225		
优先权	61/882403 2013-09-25 US		
外部链接	Espacenet USPTO		

摘要(译)

可以通过连续记录的皮下可插入心脏监测器 (ICM) 提供持续长达数年的持续时间的长期心电图和生理监测。感测电路和电极的物理布局被特别优化以捕获来自低幅度，相对低频率内容的心脏动作电位的传播的电信号，尤其是在心房激活期间产生的P波。通常，ICM旨在被植入中央并且轴向地并且稍微地定位在胸骨的胸骨旁区域中的胸骨中线的左侧或右侧。另外，ICM包括ECG感测电路，其测量原始皮肤电信号并在输出经处理的信号以进行采样和存储之前执行信号处理。

