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(54) **VEHICLE SEATING SYSTEM WITH SEAT
OCCUPANT VITAL SIGN MONITORING**

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(56)

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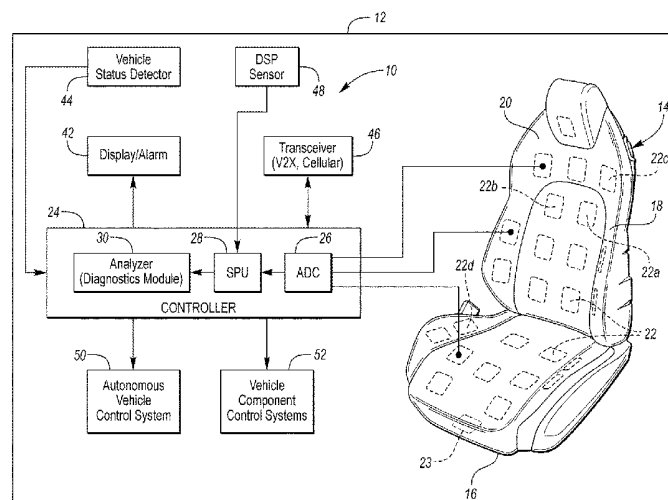
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(57)

ABSTRACT

A vehicle seating system includes a vehicle seat, piezoelectric sensors individually positioned at respective locations within the seat corresponding to anatomical locations of a person sitting in the seat, and a controller. The sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the sensors from biologically motivated force inputs of the person. The controller to detect from the electrical signals generated by the sensors biometric information of the person corresponding to the biologically motivated force inputs of the person.

12 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



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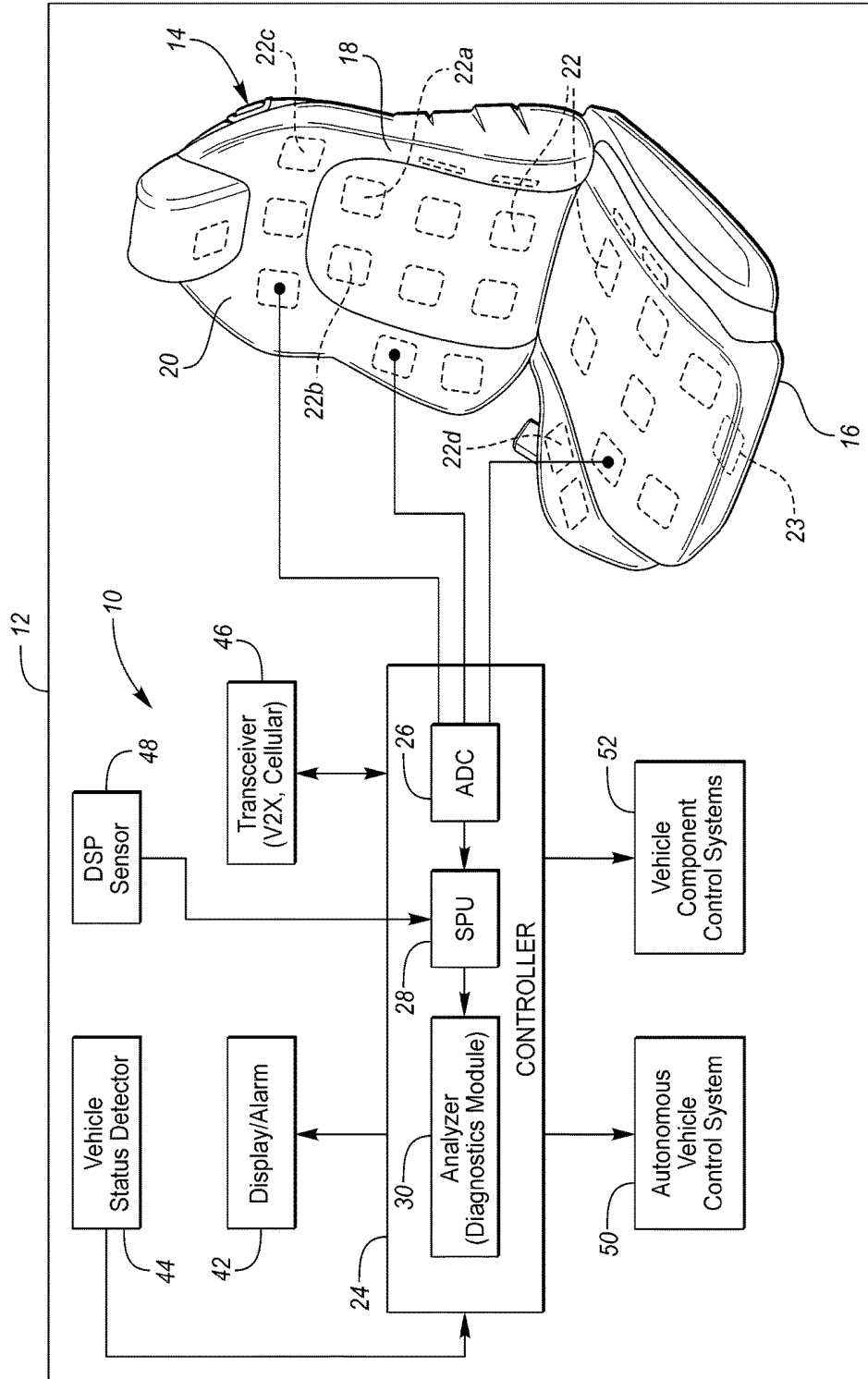


FIG. 1

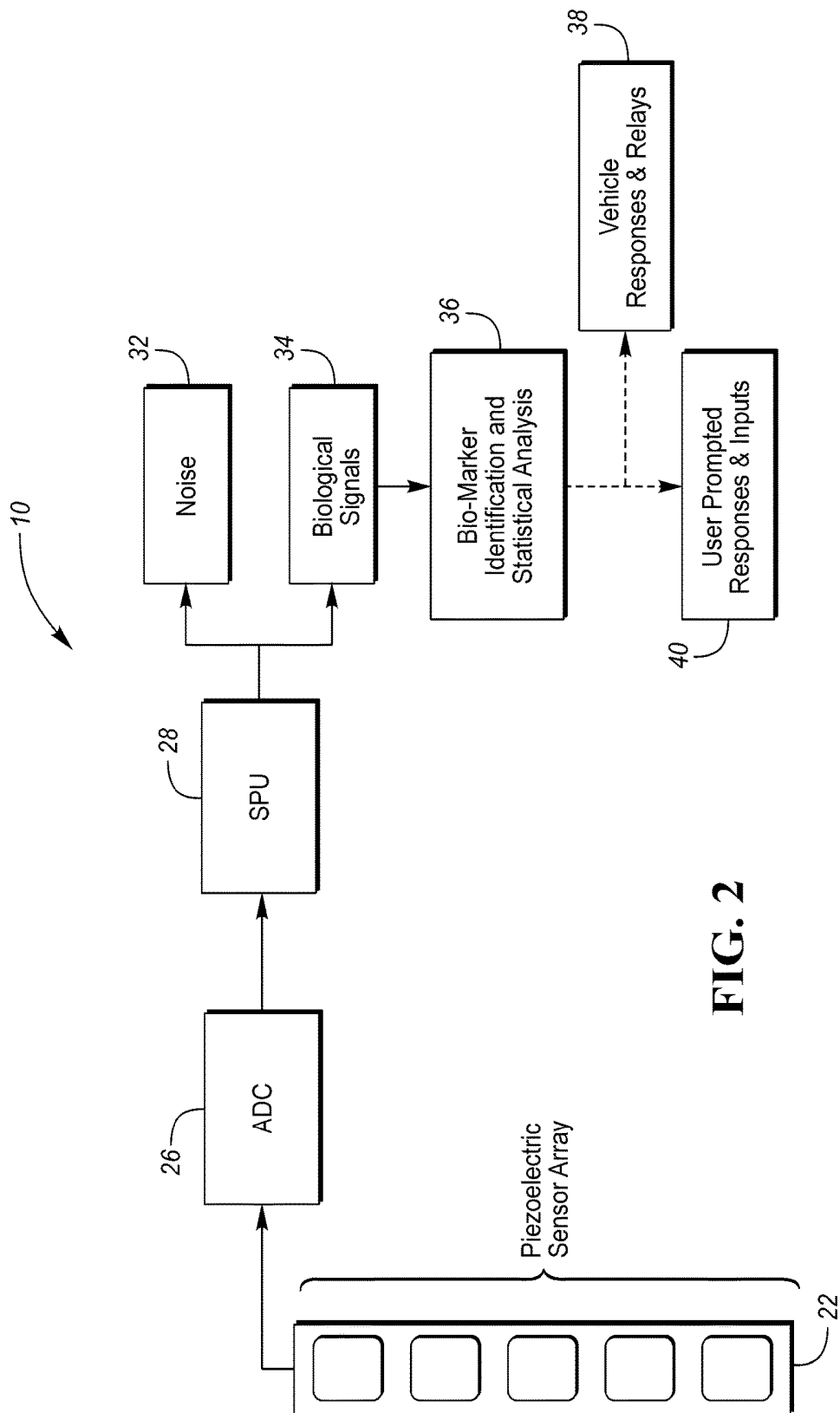
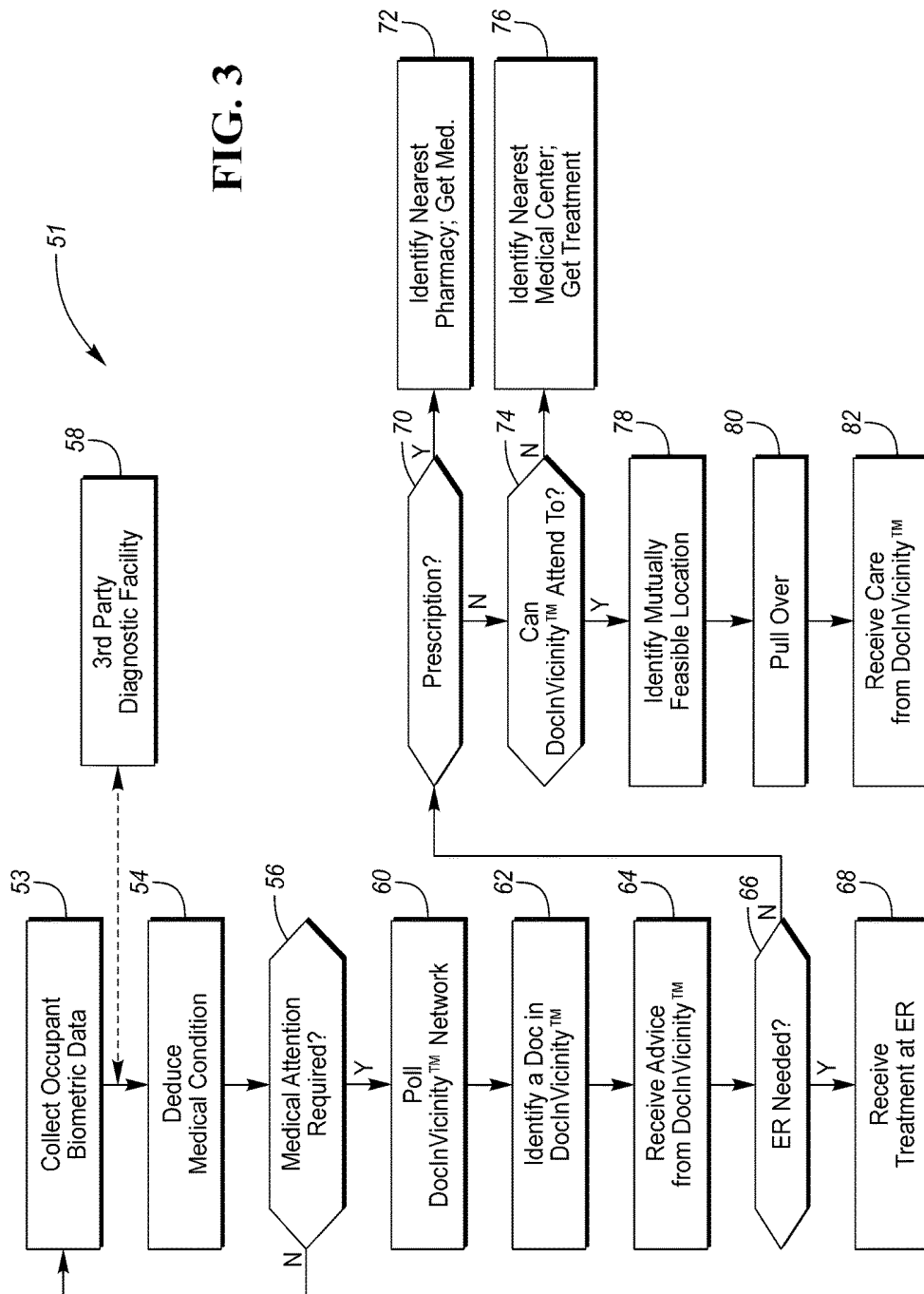
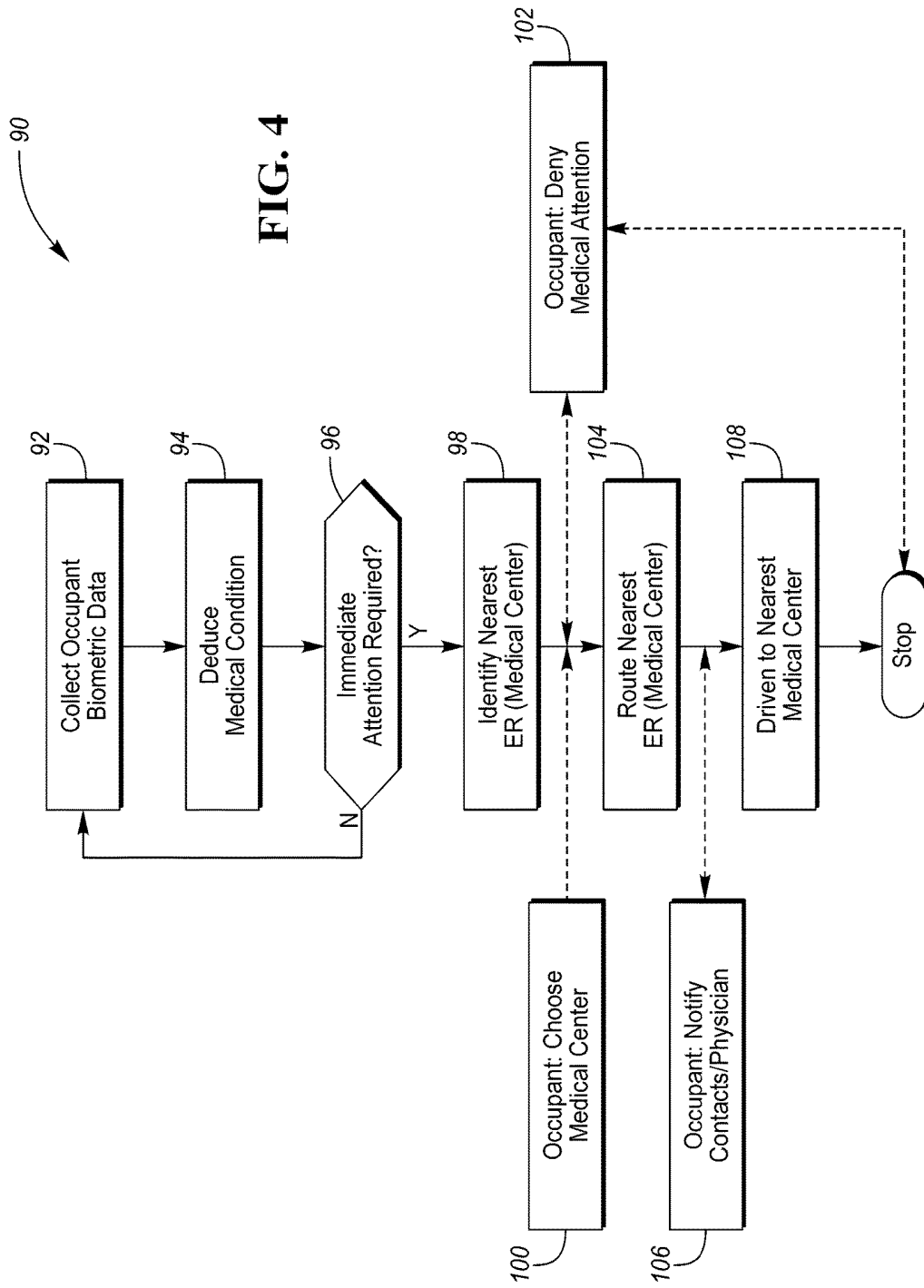


FIG. 2





VEHICLE SEATING SYSTEM WITH SEAT OCCUPANT VITAL SIGN MONITORING

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a vehicle seat system configured to monitor or sense presence, physiological attributes, conditions, and/or states of a person sitting in a vehicle seat.

BACKGROUND

Approaches to monitor the physiological state of a person include attaching adhesive electrodes to the skin of the person. These approaches are cumbersome and are not suitable for use with vehicular applications involving a person sitting in a vehicle seat of an operating vehicle.

SUMMARY

A vehicle seating system for a vehicle includes a vehicle seat, piezoelectric sensors individually positioned at respective locations within the seat corresponding to anatomical locations of a person sitting in the seat, and a controller. The sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the sensors from biologically motivated force inputs of the person. The controller to detect, from the electrical signals generated by the sensors, biometric information of the person corresponding to the biologically motivated force inputs of the person.

A subset of the sensors may be individually positioned at respective locations within the seat corresponding to cardiac anatomical locations of the person. The subset of the sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the subset of the sensors from force inputs caused by cardiac spatial displacement from the heart of the person. The controller to detect, from the electrical signals generated by the subset of the sensors, biometric information of the heart of the person.

A subset of the sensors may be individually positioned at respective locations within the seat corresponding to respiratory anatomical locations of the person. The subset of the sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the subset of the sensors from force inputs caused by respiratory spatial displacement from one or more lungs of the person. The controller to detect, from the electrical signals generated by the subset of the sensors, biometric information of the one or more lungs of the person.

A subset of the sensors may be individually positioned at respective locations within the seat away from cardiac and respiratory anatomical locations of the person. The subset of the sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the subset of the sensors from force inputs caused by twitching and/or fidgeting of the person. The controller to detect, from the electrical signals generated by the subset of the sensors, biometric information of the twitching and/or fidgeting of the person. The controller may control the seat based on the twitching and/or fidgeting of the person to change a seating position of the person.

The vehicle seating system may further include one or more piezoelectric noise sensors individually positioned at respective locations within the seat away from the anatomical locations of the person, the noise sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the sensors from noise. The controller to detect, from the

electrical signals generated by the noise sensors, the noise. The controller to use the detected noise to remove noise from the electrical signals generated by the sensors from which the controller detects the biometric information of the person corresponding to the biologically motivated force inputs of the person.

The vehicle seating system may further include a digital signal processor (DSP) sensor. The controller to use the DSP sensor to remove noise from the electrical signals generated by the sensors from which the controller detects the biometric information of the person corresponding to the biologically motivated force inputs of the person. The vehicle seating system may further include an inertial measurement unit (IMU) attached to the seat. The controller may use the IMU alone or in combination with the DSP sensor to assist in the signal processing.

The controller may control a component of the vehicle to control an operation of the vehicle depending on the detected biometric information of the person.

The controller may control a display of the vehicle to communicate to an occupant of the vehicle information regarding the detected biometric information of the person.

The controller may control an autonomous vehicle drive control system of the vehicle to have the autonomous vehicle drive control system drive the vehicle to a medical facility depending on the detected biometric information of the person.

The controller may control a component of the vehicle to generate an alarm depending on the detected biometric information of the person and a detected status of the vehicle.

The controller may control a wireless communication transceiver of the vehicle to communicate the detected biometric information of the person to first responders when the vehicle is in an accident.

The controller may store in a database the detected biometric information of the person for future assessment by the person or a third-party entity.

A method for a vehicle includes detecting, from one or more sensors in a seat of the vehicle, biometrics of a person sitting in the seat. The one or more sensors may be piezoelectric sensors. The method further includes detecting from the detected biometrics, by a controller in communication with the one or more sensors, that the person requires medical attention. The method further includes communicating, via V2X communications from a V2X transceiver of the vehicle, a request for assistance for the person to medical practitioners near the vehicle.

The method may further include receiving, by the controller, a response from a medical practitioner responding to the request for assistance. The method may further include communicating the biometrics of the person to the responding medical practitioner and receiving, by the controller, a recommended course of action from the responding medical practitioner. The method may further include determining that the recommended course of action is to seek immediate medication attention and autonomously driving the vehicle to a medical facility.

A method for a vehicle includes detecting, from one or more sensors in a seat of the vehicle, biometrics of a person sitting in the seat. The one or more sensors may be piezoelectric sensors. The method further includes detecting from the detected biometrics, by a controller in communication with the one or more sensors, that the person requires medical attention. The method further includes autonomously driving the vehicle to a medical facility in response to the detecting that the person requires medical attention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 illustrates a vehicle seating system including a perspective view of a vehicle seat of the vehicle seating system and a block diagram of other components of the vehicle seating system;

FIG. 2 illustrates a functional block diagram of the vehicle seating system;

FIG. 3 illustrates a block diagram of a first operation process of the vehicle seating system; and

FIG. 4 illustrates a block diagram of a second operation process of the vehicle seating system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Detailed embodiments of the present invention are disclosed herein; however, it is to be understood that the disclosed embodiments are merely exemplary of the invention that may be embodied in various and alternative forms. The figures are not necessarily to scale; some features may be exaggerated or minimized to show details of components. Therefore, specific structural and functional details disclosed herein are not to be interpreted as limiting, but merely as a representative basis for teaching one skilled in the art to variously employ the present invention.

Referring now to FIG. 1, a vehicle seating system 10 is shown. Vehicle seating system 10 is implemented on a vehicle 12. Vehicle 12 may be a car, truck, or the like. Vehicle seating system 10 includes a seat 14. A perspective view of seat 14 is shown in FIG. 1.

Seat 14 includes a seat bottom (i.e., a seat cushion) 16 and a seat back 18. Seat bottom 16 is configured to support the sitting region of a person sitting in seat 14. Seat back 18 is configured to support the back of the person sitting in seat 14. Seat back 18 is pivotably connected to seat bottom 16 to extend upright relative to the seat bottom. Seat 14 further includes a cover 20 which covers or upholsters seat bottom 16 and seat back 18.

As shown in phantom in FIG. 1, seat 14 further includes an array of piezoelectric sensors 22. Due to its piezoelectric characteristics, each sensor 22 generates an electrical charge, response, or signal ("electrical signal") in response to mechanical stress applied on that sensor.

Biologically motivated force inputs of a person sitting in seat 14 cause mechanical stress on sensors 22. The biologically motivated force inputs include cardiac spatial displacements from the person's heart as the person's heart beats and respiratory spatial displacements from the person's lungs as the person inhales and exhales while breathing. Other force inputs of the person sitting in seat 14 causing mechanical stress on sensors 22 include voluntary movements of the person when the person moves to sit differently while sitting in seat 14. Involuntary movements of the person, such as twitching, are also force inputs causing mechanical stress on sensors 22.

The noted force inputs of the person sitting in seat 14 apply mechanical stress on sensors 22. Characteristics of the mechanical stress applied on sensors 22, such as the amount, position, force profile, duration, etc., correspond to the force inputs. Sensors 22 generate electrical signals in correspondence with the mechanical stress applied on the sensors. As the mechanical stress is in correspondence with the force inputs of the person sitting in seat 14, the electrical signals generated by sensors 22 are in correspondence with the force inputs of the person applied from the person to seat 14 and thereby applied to sensors 22. For instance, the electrical signals generated by sensors 22 in response to the mechani-

cal stress applied on the sensors due to the person's heart beating are indicative of the person's heart beating.

Accordingly, the force inputs (e.g., heart beating, lungs inhaling and exhaling, intended movement, involuntary twitching, etc.) of the person can be deduced by analyzing the electrical signals of sensors 22. The heart and lungs of the person generate a displacement of the person's chest and abdominal cavity that introduces force inputs from the person to seat 14. These force inputs are applied to sensors 22 causing the sensors to generate electrical signals in response to the force inputs. As such, the person's heart can be monitored by analyzing the electrical signals generated by sensors 22 due to the mechanical stress applied on the sensors from displacement caused by the person's heart beating. The breathing of the person can be monitored by analyzing the electrical signals generated by sensors 22 due to the mechanical stress applied on the sensors from displacement caused by the person's lungs inhaling and exhaling.

The person's voluntary movement, such as the person moving from one seating position to another seating position while sitting in seat 14, also introduces force inputs from the person to seat 14. This type of movement involves voluntary, non-periodic muscle movements. The person's involuntary movement (e.g., the person twitching) while sitting in seat 14 introduces force inputs from the person to seat 14. The person's voluntary and involuntary movements can be monitored by analyzing the electrical signals generated by sensors 22 due to mechanical stress applied on the sensors from displacement caused by these movements.

Sensors 22 are distributed at respective locations across seat bottom 16 and seat back 18. Some of sensors 22 are positioned at respective locations on seat back 18 to be adjacent to the back side of the chest cavity of a person sitting in seat 14. These sensors 22 are collectively represented in FIG. 1, as an example, by sensors 22a and 22b. Sensors 22a and 22b are at respective locations on seat back 18 corresponding with cardiac anatomical locations of the person sitting in seat 14. The locations of sensors 22a and 22b in seat back 18 are optimized to gather cardiac and respiratory displacements based on greatest displacement. By being located at these positions on seat back 18 sensors 22a and 22b are subject to mechanical stress caused by cardiac spatial displacements of the person. Thus, the electrical signals generated by sensors 22a and 22b are primarily indicative of the cardiac (i.e., heart beating) and respiratory (i.e., lung inhaling and exhaling) actions of the person. Of course, sensors 22a and 22b can also detect voluntary and involuntary movements (e.g., twitching and/or fidgeting) of the person sitting in seat 14.

Other sensors 22 positioned at other respective locations on seat bottom 16 and/or seat back 18 are collectively represented in FIG. 1, as an example, by sensors 22c and 22d. Sensors 22c and 22d are at respective locations away from the cardiac anatomical locations of the person sitting in seat 14. The locations of sensors 22c and 22d on seat bottom and/or seat back 18 are optimized for detecting voluntary and involuntary movement of the person sitting in seat 14. Excessive movement or involuntary movement of the person sitting in seat 14 may be indicative of discomfort or pain of the person.

Sensors 22c and 22d are subject to mechanical stress caused by voluntary movement of the person sitting in seat 14 as the person moves and sits differently. For instance, sensors 22c and 22d are positioned on seat 14 to be subject

to mechanical stress caused by movement of the person's extremities (e.g., the upper legs, buttocks, shoulder/upper arms, etc., of the person).

Sensors **22c** and **22d** are also subject to mechanical stress caused by involuntary movement (e.g., twitching and/or fidgeting) of the person, such as by the person's extremities, while the person is sitting in seat **14**. Thus, the electrical signals generated by sensors **22c** and **22d** are primarily indicative of movement actions, voluntary and involuntary, of the person sitting in seat **14**. Of course, sensors **22c** and **22d** can also detect cardiac and respiratory displacements of the person sitting in seat **14**.

All sensors **22** are capable of detecting heart, respiration, and voluntary and involuntary movements. That is, sensors **22** are susceptible to movement of the person as well as the ballistocardiographic signature of the person's heart. Certain sensors **22** such as sensors **22a** and **22b** are optimized for detecting heart and respiration movements by being positioned near the cardiac and respiratory anatomical locations of the person sitting in seat **14**. Other sensors **22** are optimized for detecting movement, for example, of the person's lower region by being positioned on seat bottom **16**. However, from each individual sensor **22**, independently of their positions, heart, respiration, and voluntary and involuntary movements can be derived.

Seat **14** further includes at least one other piezoelectric sensor **23**. Sensor **23** is positioned at a respective location outside of the portions of seat bottom **16** and seat back **18** that are in contact with the person sitting in seat **14**. For instance, sensor **23** may be on the lower frame, the tracks, etc., of seat **14** to be located at a position in which sensor **23** is unable to detect any of heart, respiration, and voluntary and involuntary movements of the person sitting in seat **14**. As shown in FIG. 1, as an example, sensor **23** is on the bottom side of the frame of seat bottom **16** and therefore is not influenced by heart, respiration, and voluntary and involuntary movements of the person sitting in seat **14**. As such, sensor **23** is strategically placed within the structure of seat **14** in one or more areas that are not susceptible to biological processes of the person. Thus, sensor **23** is isolated from biological force inputs while being susceptible to the same non-biological force inputs (i.e., noise such as vehicle noise, road noise, etc.) that the other sensors are susceptible. The electrical signal generated by sensor **23** is therefore indicative only of the noise. The electrical signal generated by sensor **23** can be used in signal processing to eliminate the noise from the electrical signals generated by the other sensors.

Sensor **23** thus functions as a noise sensor to be used for processing the electrical signals generated by the other sensors. The other sensors **22** (e.g., sensors **22a**, **22b**, **22c**, **22d**) generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on these sensors by movement (e.g., the person's heart beating, the person changing seating positions, the person twitching, etc.) of the person sitting in seat **14**. Sensor **23** is affected by the same noise affecting the other sensors **22**, but sensor **23** is not affected by movement of the person. In this way, the electrical signal generated by sensor **23** is indicative of the noise. The electrical signals generated by the other sensors in response to mechanical stress from the person include corresponding noise components. Thus, these noise components can be cancelled out from the electrical signals of the other components using the noise detected by sensor **23**.

Piezoelectric sensors **22** are components of vehicle seating system **10**. Vehicle seating system **10** employs sensors **22** to monitor or sense physiological or psychological attri-

butes, conditions, and/or states (collectively "physiological state") of a person sitting in seat **14** of vehicle **12**. That is, vehicle seating system **10** is a vital sign monitoring system for vehicle seating. As described, sensors **22** are part of an array of piezoelectric sensors which generate electrical signals in response to being mechanically stressed by biologically motivated force inputs such as respiratory and cardiac spatial displacements. Sensors **22** are integrated in seat bottom **16** and seat back **18** and function independently or in conjunction with one another to emphasize different force inputs. Sensors **22** are geometrically arranged within the structure of seat **14** to gather the force inputs from biological processes transmitted to the seat from the person sitting in the seat.

In being located at respective positions of seat bottom **16** and seat back **18**, sensors **22** may be integrated into the trim, foam, and/or frame of seat **14** or freestanding between subcomponents of the seat (i.e., the sensors may be free-form within or between the trim, foam, and/or frame of the seat). Sensors **22** may be composed of basic piezoelectric materials, crystalline structures, smart fabric piezoelectric materials, and the like. Piezoelectric foam, fabrics, leathers and frames may form sensors **22** themselves. The piezoelectric sensing component, in addition to existing separate from core components, can be integrated within the core components via the use of piezoelectric foundations and materials, i.e., piezoelectric foam and textiles.

In other embodiments, any of sensors **22** may be embodied as piezo-resistive, pressure, capacitive, and Doppler sensors which generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the sensors from biologically motivated force inputs of the person sitting in seat **14**, displacement of the sensors caused from biologically motivated force inputs of the person sitting in the seat, and/or proximity detection by the sensors of the person sitting in the seat.

Vehicle seating system **10** further includes a controller **24**. Controller **24** is an electronic hardware device such as a computer or processor. Controller **24** is connected to communication buses of vehicle **12**. Controller **24** may be a vehicle controller of some sort that is a dedicated component of vehicle **12**. Controller **24** includes sub-component electronic hardware devices in the form of an analog-to-digital converter (ADC) **26**, a signal processing unit (SPU) **28**, and an analyzer (or diagnostics module) **30** as shown in FIG. 1. Controller **24** includes other sub-component electronic hardware devices not shown in FIG. 1 for performing functions associated with vehicle seating system **10** including the functions described herein.

ADC **26** is in communication with sensors **22** to receive the electrical signals generated by the sensors. For instance, ADC **26** is connected to sensors **22** via electrical wires and the like. ADC **26** converts the electrical signals, which are in analog format, into digital format. SPU **28** receives the digitized electrical signals from ADC **26**. SPU **28** performs signal corrections and calculations on the digitized electrical signals. SPU **28** provides the digitized electrical signals as further processed to analyzer **30**. The digitized electrical signals from SPU **28** are clean electrical signals for analysis of bio-markers. Analyzer **30** analyzes the digitized electrical signals for biomedical assessment, identification, medical condition assessment, medical emergency assessment, etc., of the person sitting in seat **14** as described herein.

Referring now to FIG. 2, with continual reference to FIG. 1, a functional block diagram of vehicle seating system **10** is shown. As described, sensors **22** have mechanical force (biological or noisy motion) applied to them from the person

sitting in seat **14**. Sensors **22** generate electrical signals due to the piezoelectric effect in correspondence with mechanical force applied on the sensors.

Each electrical signal generated by a sensor **22** includes an information component and a noise component. The information component is due to the mechanical stress applied on the sensor from the biologically motivated force inputs of the person sitting in seat **14**. The noise component is due to mechanical stress applied on the sensor caused by, for instance, vibration of vehicle **12** and/or seat **14** as the vehicle is in operation.

ADC **26** of controller **24** receives the electrical signals generated by sensors **22** and provides digitized versions of the electrical signals to SPU **28** of controller **24**. SPU **28** processes the digitized versions of the electrical signals to remove the noise component therefrom. The removed noise component from the electrical signals is identified as noise **32** in FIG. 2. The resulting electrical signals are clean electrical signals having just the information component. SPU **28** outputs the clean electrical signals, identified as biological signals **34** in FIG. 2, to analyzer **30** of controller **24**.

Analyzer **30** analyzes biological signals **34** for various bio-marker information and statistical analysis as indicated by functional block **36**. As described, biological signals **34** are indicative of biologically motivated force inputs of the person on sensors **22**. That is, each biological signal **34** obtained from the electrical signal generated by a sensor **22** is indicative of biologically motivated force inputs on that sensor. The periodic nature of such biological vital inputs and the correlation between force applied and electrical signal response aid in the positive identification of these inputs. Accordingly, biological signals **34** are indicative, for instance, of "clean" respiratory and heart signatures. Analyzer **30** can thus analyze biological signals **34** to extract various vital criteria including heart rate, breathing rate, heart rate variability, etc.

Controller **24** may use the bio-marker information obtained by analyzer **30** and the statistical analysis performed by the analyzer in various ways. In general, controller **24** may control other components of vehicle seating system **10** and vehicle **12** as a function of the bio-marker information and/or statistical biological data analysis, as indicated by functional block **38**. Controller **24** may interact with the person sitting in seat **14** as a function of the bio-marker information and/or statistical biological data analysis, as indicated by functional block **40**.

Referring to FIG. 1, vehicle seating system **10** includes other components. The other vehicle seating system components include a display or alarm **42**, a vehicle status detector **44**, a wireless communications transceiver **46**, one or more sensors **48** (labeled DSP sensor as in Digital Signal Processor sensor), an autonomous vehicle control system **50** (for the situation that vehicle **12** is an autonomous vehicle), and one or more other vehicle component control systems **52**.

Display or alarm **42** is configured to display information for persons in vehicle to view and generate an alarm for persons in vehicle to hear. Controller **24** can control display or alarm **42** to communicate status, commands, requests, etc., with the person sitting in seat **14** or other vehicle occupants and generate an alarm for the person or other vehicle occupants to advise of an alarm situation.

Vehicle status detector **44** is configured to monitor various conditions or statuses of vehicle **12**. For instance, vehicle status detector **44** can detect vehicle **12** being in an accident, the vehicle being turned off, and the like. Controller **24** is in

communication with vehicle status detector **44** to be apprised of any of the monitored conditions or statuses of vehicle **12**.

Wireless communication transceiver **46** configured to wirelessly communicate with communication devices external to the vehicle **12**. For instance, transceiver **46** may include a cellular transceiver operable to make cellular calls and/or a "V2X" transceiver to make calls from vehicle **12** to communication devices of other vehicles, infrastructure communication devices, communication devices of other persons, etc. (The V2X transceiver may be for vehicle to vehicle (V2V) communications, vehicle to infrastructure (V2I) communications, vehicle to pedestrian communications, etc.) Controller **24** is operable to employ transceiver **46** to make automatic communications with the communication devices of other vehicles, infrastructure communication devices, communication devices of other persons, etc.

DSP sensor **48** may include one or more accelerometers, gyroscopes, Doppler sensors, and the like. DSP sensor **48** is for use by SPU **28** of controller **24** in performing digital signal processing of the electrical signals from sensors **22**. SPU **28** may perform DSP processing techniques on the digitized versions of the electrical signals of sensors **22** using the information from DSP sensor. In this way, SPU **28** employs adaptive filtering to clean up the electrical signals by removing non-biological impulses (e.g. noise) from the electrical signals.

Autonomous vehicle control system **50** is configured to autonomously control vehicle **12** in some manner. For instance, autonomous vehicle control system **50** may provide vehicle **12** with level three or level four autonomous vehicle capability, as defined by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) standards (the Society of Automotive Engineer (SAE) uses five level nomenclature). Level three autonomous vehicle capability enables the driver of vehicle **12** to cede full control of all safety critical functions under certain traffic and environmental conditions. In this case, the driver is available for occasional control. With level four autonomous vehicle capability, vehicle **12** is designed to perform all safety critical functions and monitor roadway conditions for an entire trip. In this case, the driver is not expected or required to be available to take control of vehicle **12** during the trip. Controller **24** is operable to activate autonomous vehicle control system **50** and instruct the autonomous vehicle control system to drive vehicle **12** to a location designated by the controller automatically or by any of the vehicle occupants.

Vehicle component control systems **52** include control systems such as the braking system of vehicle **12** and the flasher light system of the vehicle. Controller **24** is operable to activate vehicle component control systems **52**. For instance, controller **24** may activate the flasher light system of vehicle **12** to generate an alarm for outsiders to come and investigate. Controller **24** may activate the braking system of vehicle **12** based on certain detected statuses (e.g., stress, fatigue, drowsiness, distraction) of the person sitting in seat **14** and the person is the driver of the vehicle (i.e., seat **14** is the driver vehicle seat).

As described, controller **24** is in communication with and can control or interact with each of display **42**, vehicle status detector **44**, transceiver **46**, DSP sensor **48**, autonomous vehicle control system **50**, and vehicle component control system **52**. Controller **24** uses the bio-marker information and the statistical biological data analysis from analyzer **30** in controlling or interacting with these other vehicle seating system components.

Controller 24 may use the bio-marker information and the statistical biological data analysis to control and/or interact with the other vehicle seating system components and/or the person sitting in seat 14 in the following various ways. First, as a general measure of biometric data for assessment of physiological and/or psychological status (e.g., stress, fatigue, drowsiness, distraction, etc.) of the person sitting in seat 14. The physiological and/or psychological status of the person sitting in seat 14 can particularly impact the operational safety of vehicle 12 when the person is the driver of the vehicle. Controller 24 may control and/or interact with the other vehicle seating system components and/or the person based on the detected physiological/psychological status of the person. In this way, vehicle seating system 10 can identify and react to stress/fatigue/discomfort etc. of the person to thereby increase safety of vehicle operation.

Second, as a life detection system for the prevention of loss of life of occupants, such as small children, animals, or disabled or elderly persons, left within stationary and unpowered vehicle 12 during dangerous conditions. Controller 24 can detect from vehicle status detector 44 whether vehicle 12 is stationary and unpowered, whether the windows of the vehicle are closed, the temperature inside the vehicle, the ambient temperature outside the vehicle, etc. Controller 24 uses the bio-marker information to detect whether a person is sitting in seat 14. In the case where a person is detected to be sitting in seat 14 and vehicle 12 is detected to be stationary and unpowered, controller 24 can trigger alarm 42, employ transceiver 46, trigger vehicle component control system 52 in the form of the flasher light, etc., to generate a warning, especially when high temperatures are detected, to request assistance from others to remedy the situation involving the person being left alone in the vehicle.

Third, as a means of critical assessment (triage) during emergency situations where vital sign data can be transmitted to first responders thereby increasing the likelihood of survival during such incidents. Controller 24 can detect from vehicle status detector 44 that vehicle 12 has been in an accident. Controller 24 obtains the biological status information generated by sensors 22 before, during, and after vehicle 12 has been in the accident. The biological status information includes vital sign information (e.g., heart rate, breathing rate, etc.) of the person sitting in seat 14. Controller 24 can employ transceiver 46 to communicate the vital sign information to first responders. In this way, vehicle seating system 10 provides an emergency response function and can be used as an assessment tool for vehicle occupants to determine vital sign activity and criticality of the situation (emergency triage). At the least, vehicle seating system 10 can be used as a relay of the number of patients to the first responders thereby allowing for optimal responder/patient ratios and communicate the vital measurements of the patients to the first responders as a pre-arrival triage tool. This assessment should improve response time for more critically injured vehicle occupants thus resulting in a greater likelihood of survival.

Fourth, as a long-term database of biomedical statistics that the person sitting in seat 14 may use to assess personal health and potentially share with their medical practitioners. Controller 24 may include a database for storing long-term biological status information of the person sitting in seat 14. In this way, vehicle seating system 10 can be used as a means for personal health tracking for vehicle occupants and their healthcare providers when sharing is desired.

Fifth, as a physical detector for discomfort or pain of the person sitting in seat 14. Analyzer 30 of controller 24 may

determine from analyzing the biological status information of the person sitting in seat 14 that the person is in some sort of discomfort or pain. Controller 24 may react to this determination by providing some sort of advice or notification on display 42 regarding the detected discomfort or pain for the person to see, by adjusting the position of seat 14 to change the seating position of the person to try to alleviate the person's discomfort or pain, or by some other manner. In this way, vehicle seating system 10 can perform fidget detection and be used as a means of assessing discomfort or pain via non-periodic biological inputs (e.g., force inputs caused by twitching of the person sitting in seat 14).

Sixth, as a detector of occupant physiological make-up (e.g., size/mass) for safety system engagement. Analyzer 30 may determine from analyzing the biological status information of the person sitting in seat 14 whether the person is an adult or a child and the person's position in space inside the vehicle. In this way, vehicle seating system 10 can perform physiological make-up detection of the person sitting in seat 14.

As described, vehicle seating system 10 employs a multi-sensor array design of seat 14 to distinguish biological inputs of a person sitting in the seat from non-biological inputs. Vehicle seating system 10 directly uses seating technology to access, assess, and run statistical analysis of biological inputs such as heart and respiratory rates to compute bio-markers like heart rate variability and arousal for status consideration (stress, drowsiness, pain, etc.). Vehicle seating system 10 also focuses on non-periodic motion of the person (i.e., fidgeting). Vehicle seating system 10 is integrated with emergency response communication via transceiver 46 or other third-party application. Vehicle seating system 10 may also be integrated with life preserving methods for vehicle occupants that are incapable of self-protection. Vehicle seating system 10 is configured to cause some sort of auto-start, alarm, authority alert, etc., to notify others and request assistance as part of the life preserving methods. Vehicle seating system 10 provides full vehicle, multi-occupant simultaneous monitoring for emergency events, presence, and condition.

Referring now to FIG. 3, with continual reference to FIG. 1, a block diagram of a first operation process 51 of vehicle seating system 10 is shown. First operation process 51 may be employed when transceiver 46 of vehicle seating system 10 is a V2X transceiver. First operation process 51 uses a safety system of seat 14, such as provided by controller 24 and sensors 22, in conjunction with V2X communications of transceiver 46 to communicate with medical practitioners (e.g., physicians) the biological status of the person sitting in the seat.

In operation, analyzer 30 of controller 24 analyzes the biological status of the person sitting in seat 14 from the electrical signal information generated by sensors 22. Analyzer 30 detects when the biological status information of the person indicates that the person requires medical attention. Controller 24 in turn causes transceiver 46 to communicate, via V2X, biological status information of the person, a request for assistance, the location of vehicle 12 to medical practitioners in the vicinity of vehicle 12 (i.e., to medical practitioners in other vehicles near vehicle 12, medical practitioner pedestrians near vehicle 12, and medical practitioners located in physician or hospital offices near vehicle 12), etc. A medical practitioner responding to the request can be apprised of the status of the person from the biological status information. The responding medical practitioner can act to provide medical assistance to the person based on the status of the person. In this way, first operation process 51

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employs biometrics and V2X communications to consult a medical practitioner in the vicinity of the person in vehicle 12 for medical help for the person.

As shown in FIG. 3, first operation process 51 commences by collecting biometric data of the person sitting in seat 14, as indicated in block 53. The biometric data is provided by sensors 22. Alternatively, other ECG, and/or EEG in-seat or on-board sensors in vehicle 12 may be used to provide the biometric data. Analyzer 30 of controller 24 analyzes the biometric data to deduce the medical condition of the person, as indicated in block 54. Analyzer 30 determines from the deduced medical condition of the person whether a medical condition for the person exists, as indicated in decision block 56. Alternatively, the biometric data is periodically transmitted via transceiver 46 to a third-party diagnostic facility which analyzes the biometric data and diagnoses whether a medical condition for the person exists, as indicated in block 58.

Upon it being determined that a medical condition for the person in vehicle 12 exists, controller 24 causes transceiver 46 to use V2X communications to poll for medical practitioners in the vicinity of vehicle 12 with requests for assistance, as indicated in block 60. Each request for assistance at least includes a request that assistance of a medical practitioner be provided for an occupant of vehicle 12. Each request for assistance may further include the biological status information of the person, the location of vehicle 12, an indication of the severity of the need for assistance, and the like. Any of this additional information may be communicated as part of the broadcasted initial request for assistance or may be communicated individually to just the responding medical practitioners.

The person in vehicle 12 is a subscriber to a medical practitioner network. Medical practitioners are invited beforehand to join this network as medical service providers. Medical practitioners who opt into this network are to be apprised via V2X communications of persons in vehicles in need of medical attention and in the same geographic area as (i.e., preferably in the vicinity of or near) the medical practitioners. The medical practitioners are intended to respond to persons in need of medical attention. As such, transceiver 46 uses V2X communications to poll for medical practitioners in the medical practitioner network who are in the vicinity of vehicle 12. This medical practitioner network is indicated in FIG. 3 as the DocInVicinity™ network.

A medical practitioner who has received and has responded to the request for assistance is identified, as indicated in block 62. For instance, the medical practitioner communicates an acknowledgment receipt of the request for assistance via V2X communications to transceiver 46. The medical practitioner may also communicate the identity and contact information of the medical practitioner and the current location of the medical practitioner. The biological status information of the person is communicated via V2X transceiver to the medical practitioner. The medical practitioner analyzes the biological status information of the person to determine an appropriate course of action (e.g., a prescription, an ER visit, a pullover vehicle to be attended, etc.) for the person. The medical practitioner uses V2X communications to communicate to controller 24 via transceiver 46 a recommendation of the appropriate course of action for the person, as indicated in block 64.

Controller 24 processes the recommended course of action to determine whether an emergency room visit for the person is recommended by the responding medical practitioner, as indicated in decision block 66. If an emergency room visit for the person is recommended, then controller 24

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uses display 42 to advise the driver of vehicle 12 (who may be the person requiring assistance) that the person needs to be taken to the emergency room, as indicated in block 68. In the case of autonomous vehicle control system 50 being available, controller 24 may instruct the autonomous vehicle control system to autonomously drive vehicle 12 to the emergency room.

Controller 24 processes the recommended course of action to determine whether a prescription for the person is recommended by the responding medical practitioner, as indicated in decision block 70. If a prescription for the person is recommended, then controller 24 uses display 42 to advise the person of the prescription recommended, as indicated in block 72. Controller 24 may also employ navigation information from a navigation system of vehicle 12 to identify and advise of the nearest pharmacy.

Controller 24 processes the recommended course of action to determine whether an in-person visit with a medical practitioner is recommended and whether the responding medical practitioner can handle the in-person visit, as indicated in decision block 74. If an in-person visit is recommended, but the responding medical practitioner cannot handle the in-person visit, then controller 24 uses the display 42 to advise the person that an in-person medical visit is recommended, as indicated in block 76. Controller 24 may also employ navigation information of vehicle 12 to identify and advise of the nearest medical practitioner treatment facility.

If an in-person visit is recommended and the responding medical practitioner can handle the in-person visit, then any of the vehicle occupants, controller 24, and/or an appropriate vehicle component control system 52 and the responding medical practitioner can communicate using V2X communications to identify a mutually feasible location to meet, as indicated in block 78. The driver of vehicle 12 then drives the vehicle to the designated pull over location, as indicated in block 80. In the case of autonomous vehicle control system 50 being available, controller 24 may instruct the autonomous vehicle control system to autonomously drive vehicle 12 to the designated pull over location. The responding medical practitioner meets with the person at the designated pull over location to provide care to the person, as indicated in block 82.

Additionally, in response to any of the recommended courses of action and advice from the responding medical practitioner via the V2X communications, the person that is the subject of the recommended course of action can choose other options. For instance, the person can choose to go to a medical facility, deny the medical attention, choose to visit a primary care physician instead of the responding medical practitioner, indicate that family and other designated contacts be notified of the recommended courses of action communicated to the person, and the like. Further, medical practitioners in the vicinity of vehicle 12 and non-practitioners who subscribe to the service to receive medical help can opt-in or opt-out of the ability to communicate with occupants of other vehicles who subscribe to the service.

Referring now to FIG. 4, with continual reference to FIG. 1, a block diagram of a second operation process 90 of vehicle seating system 10 is shown. Second operation process 90 may be employed when autonomous vehicle control system 50 is part of vehicle seating system 10. Second operation process 90 uses a safety system of seat 14, such as provided by controller 24 and sensors 22, in conjunction with autonomous vehicle control system 50 to autonomously drive vehicle 12 to a medical facility upon deter-

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mining from the biological status of the person sitting in seat 12 that the person requires medical attention.

In operation, analyzer 30 of controller 24 analyzes the biological status of the person sitting in seat 14 from the electrical signal information generated by sensors 22. Analyzer 30 detects when the biological status information of the person indicates that the person requires medical attention. Controller 24 in turn causes autonomous vehicle control system 50 to drive vehicle 12 to a medical facility when it is determined that the person requires medical attention. In this way, second operation process 90 employs biometrics and autonomous driving to drive vehicle 12 to a medical facility near vehicle 12 upon detecting that person in seat 14 of vehicle 12 requires medical attention.

As shown in FIG. 4, second operation process 90 commences by collecting biometric data of the person sitting in seat 14, as indicated in block 92. The biometric data is provided by sensors 22. Alternatively, other ECG and/or EEG in-seat or on-board sensors in vehicle 12 may be used to provide the biometric data. Analyzer 30 of controller 24 analyzes the biometric data to deduce the medical condition of the person, as indicated in block 94. Analyzer 30 determines from the deduced medical condition of the person whether immediate medical attention for the person is required, as indicated in decision block 96.

Upon it being determined that immediate medical attention for the person is required, controller 24 uses navigation system information to identify the nearest medical facility, such as an emergency room, as indicated in block 98. Controller 24 may control display 42 to advise the person that the person requires immediate medical attention and to advise of the nearest medical facility. The person or another occupant of vehicle 12 may use a human-machine interface (HMI) device connected to controller 24 to advise the controller of a different medical facility to be chosen, as indicated in block 100. The person or other occupant of vehicle 12 may use the HMI device to advise controller 24 that the person does not want the medical attention and that the vehicle is not to be driven to the nearest medical facility, as indicated in block 102.

Second operation process 90 continues with controller 24 using the navigation system information to identify a route to the nearest or chosen medical facility, as indicated in block 104. Controller 24 may also communicate via transceiver 46 to notify the contacts and physician of the person that the person requires medical attention, the biological status information of the person, and/or the fact that the person will be driven (or will drive) to the identified medical facility, as indicated in block 106. This communication may be conducted via V2X communications and/or wireless communications such as cellular or satellite communications. Controller 24 then controls autonomous vehicle control system 50 to drive vehicle 12 to the identified medical facility along the identified route, as indicated in block 108.

While exemplary embodiments are described above, it is not intended that these embodiments describe all possible forms of the present invention. Rather, the words used in the specification are words of description rather than limitation, and it is understood that various changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. Additionally, the features of various implementing embodiments may be combined to form further embodiments of the present invention.

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What is claimed is:

1. A seating system for a vehicle, comprising:
a vehicle seat;

a plurality of piezoelectric sensors individually positioned at respective locations within the vehicle seat corresponding to anatomical locations of a person sitting in the vehicle seat, the sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the piezoelectric sensors from biologically motivated force inputs of the person;

wherein a first subset of the piezoelectric sensors is individually positioned at respective locations within the vehicle seat away from cardiac and respiratory anatomical locations of the person, the first subset of the piezoelectric sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the first subset of the piezoelectric sensors from force inputs caused by twitching of the person; and

a controller to detect, from the electrical signals generated by the piezoelectric sensors, biometric information of the person corresponding to the biologically motivated force inputs of the person including a discomfort of the person indicative from the twitching of the person, the controller further to control the vehicle seat based on the twitching of the person to adjust a position of the vehicle seat to change a seating position of the person to thereby attempt to alleviate the discomfort of the person indicative from the twitching of the person.

2. The seating system of claim 1 wherein:

a second subset of the piezoelectric sensors is individually positioned at respective locations within the vehicle seat corresponding to cardiac anatomical locations of the person, the second subset of the piezoelectric sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the second subset of the piezoelectric sensors from force inputs caused by cardiac spatial displacement from a heart of the person; and

the controller to detect, from the electrical signals generated by the second subset of the piezoelectric sensors, biometric information of the heart of the person.

3. The seating system of claim 1 wherein:

a third subset of the piezoelectric sensors is individually positioned at respective locations within the vehicle seat corresponding to respiratory anatomical locations of the person, the third subset of the piezoelectric sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the third subset of the piezoelectric sensors from force inputs caused by respiratory spatial displacement from one or more lungs of the person; and

the controller to detect, from the electrical signals generated by the third subset of the piezoelectric sensors, biometric information of the one or more lungs of the person.

4. The seating system of claim 1 further comprising:

one or more piezoelectric noise sensors individually positioned at respective locations within the vehicle seat away from the anatomical locations of the person, the piezoelectric noise sensors to generate electrical signals in response to mechanical stress applied on the piezoelectric noise sensors from noise;

the controller to detect, from the electrical signals generated by the piezoelectric noise sensors, noise information corresponding to the noise; and

the controller to use the detected noise to remove noise from the electrical signals generated by the piezoelectric sensors from which the controller detects the biometric information of the person corresponding to the biologically motivated force inputs of the person.

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5. The seating system of claim 1 further comprising:
a digital signal processor (DSP) sensor; and
the controller to use the DSP sensor to remove noise from
the electrical signals generated by the piezoelectric
sensors from which the controller detects the biometric
information of the person corresponding to the biologi- 5
cally motivated force inputs of the person.
6. The seating system of claim 1 wherein:
the controller further to control a component of the
vehicle to control an operation of the vehicle depending 10
on the biometric information of the person.
7. The seating system of claim 1 wherein:
the controller further to control a display of the vehicle, to
communicate to an occupant of the vehicle, informa- 15
tion regarding the biometric information of the person.
8. The seating system of claim 1 wherein:
the controller further to control an autonomous vehicle
drive control system of the vehicle to have the autono- 20
mous vehicle drive control system to drive the vehicle
to a medical facility depending on the biometric infor-
mation of the person.
9. The seating system of claim 1 wherein:
the controller to control a component of the vehicle to
generate an alarm depending on the biometric infor- 25
mation of the person and a detected status of the
vehicle.

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10. The seating system of claim 1 wherein:
the controller to control a wireless communication trans-
ceiver of the vehicle to communicate the detected
biometric information of the person to first responders
when the vehicle is in an accident.
11. The seating system of claim 1 wherein:
the controller to store in a database the biometric infor-
mation of the person for future assessment by the
person or a third-party entity.
12. A seating system for a vehicle, comprising:
a vehicle seat;
a plurality of piezoelectric sensors individually positioned
at respective locations within the vehicle seat corre-
sponding to anatomical locations of a person sitting in
the vehicle seat, the piezoelectric sensors to generate
electrical signals in response to mechanical stress
applied on the piezoelectric sensors from force inputs
caused by twitching of the person; and
a controller to detect, from the electrical signals generated
by the piezoelectric sensors, a discomfort of the person
indicative from the twitching of the person and to
control the vehicle seat based on the twitching of the
person to adjust a position of the vehicle seat to change
a seating position of the person to thereby attempt to
alleviate the discomfort of the person indicative from
the twitching of the person.

* * * * *

专利名称(译)	车辆座椅系统，座椅乘员生命体征监控		
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摘要(译)

一种车辆座椅系统，包括车辆座椅，单独定位在座椅内的相应位置处的压电传感器，其对应于坐在座椅中的人的解剖位置，以及控制器。传感器响应于从人的生物驱动的力输入施加在传感器上的机械应力而产生电信号。控制器从传感器产生的电信号中检测对应于人的生物学动力输入的人的生物信息。

