



(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**
published in accordance with Art. 153(4) EPC

(43) Date of publication:
10.04.2013 Bulletin 2013/15

(51) Int Cl.:
A61B 8/00 (2006.01)

(21) Application number: **11786687.1**

(86) International application number:
PCT/JP2011/062016

(22) Date of filing: **25.05.2011**

(87) International publication number:
WO 2011/148988 (01.12.2011 Gazette 2011/48)

(84) Designated Contracting States:
**AL AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB
GR HR HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV MC MK MT NL NO
PL PT RO RS SE SI SK SM TR**

(72) Inventor: **NAKAJIMA, Shinji**
Mitaka-shi
Tokyo 181-8622 (JP)

(30) Priority: **27.05.2010 JP 2010121433**

(74) Representative: **Heim, Florian Andreas et al**
Weber & Heim
Patentanwälte
Irmgardstraße 3
81479 München (DE)

(71) Applicant: **Hitachi Aloka Medical, Ltd.**
Mitaka-shi
Tokyo 181-8622 (JP)

(54) **ULTRASOUND DIAGNOSIS DEVICE**

(57) The disclosed ultrasonic diagnosis device is provided with an attitude correction mechanism, between a tilt section and a display unit, for eliminating inclination of the display unit caused by drooping down of the end

portion of an arm mechanism. The attitude correction mechanism has a shaft member and a bearing, and rotates the display unit about the normal of a display surface thereof. A prong enters a slit, thereby preventing the display unit from rotating more than necessary.

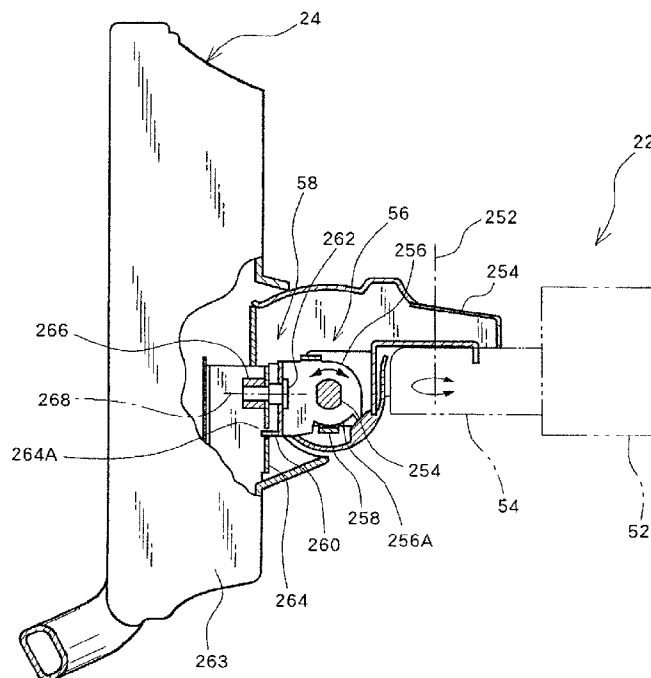


FIG. 25

Description

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates to an ultrasonic diagnosis device, and more particularly to an arm mechanism (a support mechanism) that changes position and attitude of a display unit.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] Ultrasonic diagnosis devices used in the field of medicine generally include a main unit (a cart), and an operation panel supported on the main unit. The main unit houses a plurality of electronic circuit boards and power source sections. The operation panel includes a switch, a pointing device, a rotary knob, a sub display, or the like. A display unit is mounted on the operation panel via an arm mechanism. In such a structure, the operation panel, the arm mechanism, and the display unit constitute a movable section. The display unit may be mounted directly on the main unit, rather than via the operation panel.

[0003] As disclosed in Patent Literature 1, an arm mechanism generally includes a plurality of pivot mechanisms and a plurality of arms. The arm mechanism further includes a tilt mechanism. A member having sufficient rigidity is used as each of the members forming the arm mechanism. Further, the arm mechanism is configured such that backlash is minimized in coupling portions between the members.

PRIOR ART DOCUMENTS

PATENT LITERATURES

[0004] Patent Literature 1: JP 2007-21088 A

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED BY THE INVENTION

[0005] However, when the display unit is drawn far from the main unit, particularly in the left-right direction, accumulation of fine slip or displacement may, under certain circumstances, actually cause the lower edge and the upper edge of the display unit not to be horizontal and to be inclined, although the arm mechanism supports the display unit so as to put it in a vertical attitude. This is not because the display unit is rotated or inclined with respect to the end portion (the display unit attaching end portion) of the arm mechanism, but because, as a result of drooping of the end portion itself, the end portion can no longer take a horizontal attitude. Specifically, the display unit appears to be rotated about the normal line of the display surface. The above problems become noticeable when a large size display unit is used or when the arm mechanism is capable of forming a large extension

distance. Even if the inclination of the display unit is approximately several degrees, this may make the user feel uncomfortable, uneasy, and unpleasant.

[0006] Here, there exist some types of PC display stands that enable the display unit to rotate by 90 degrees about a normal line that is vertical to the display surface; i.e. that can select a vertical attitude or a horizontal attitude. However, these devices are not aimed at maintaining intermediate angles or maintaining a slightly rotated state, nor do they enable the display unit to rotate in both directions. As the ultrasonic diagnosis devices are dedicated devices (i.e. as there is no need for displaying sentences on the display unit taking a vertical attitude as in a word processing operation, for example), such a rotation function is not necessary in the first place and a rotation mechanism has not therefore been mounted on conventional display units.

[0007] An advantage of the present invention is to enable the display unit that is inclined due to the arm mechanism to return to an apparently correct attitude.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEMS

[0008] Preferably, an ultrasonic diagnosis device includes a display unit that displays an ultrasonic image, and an arm mechanism that is disposed on a base and supports the display unit, wherein the arm mechanism includes an arm mechanism main unit that is composed of at least one arm member and at least one pivot mechanism, and an attitude correction mechanism that is provided between the arm mechanism main unit and the display unit and, when an apparent rotation caused by drooping of an end portion of the arm mechanism main unit on the display side is generated in the display unit, rotates the display unit in the opposite direction so that the apparent rotation of the display unit can be eliminated.

[0009] With the above structure, when the end portion in the arm mechanism (arm mechanism main unit) on the display unit side droops down to a position below an originally expected position to generate an apparent rotation of the display unit (inclination of the display unit), it is possible to cause the display unit to rotate in a direction opposite the apparent rotation by the attitude correction mechanism to make the lower edge and the upper edge of the display unit (or a display surface) horizontal (or to make the right edge and left edge of the display surface vertical to a floor plane). It is therefore possible to eliminate uncomfortable or uneasy feeling. In considering it in a converse manner, if the arm mechanism originally has sufficient mechanical strength or rigidity, the problems resulting from drooping of the end portion can be solved or reduced. There is therefore no need for excessive strength or rigidity in the arm mechanism.

[0010] Preferably, the attitude correction mechanism includes a rotation shaft that is provided on one of the end portion on the display unit side and the display unit, a bearing portion that is provided on the other of the end portion on the display unit side and the display unit and

is coupled with the rotation shaft, and a limitation portion that limits a rotation angle range of the display unit about the rotation shaft. This structure is aimed at supporting the display unit by an engagement relationship between the rotation shaft and the bearing, and rotating the display unit.

[0011] Preferably, the limitation portion includes a movable member that is provided on one of the end portion on the display unit side and the display unit, and a member that is provided on the other of the end portion on the display unit side and the display unit and limits a movable range of the movable member. As the attitude correction is intended for eliminating an inclination of approximately several degrees, for example, resulting from drooping of the end portion, a large rotation correction range is not required. By limiting the range, it is possible to perform fine adjustment easily and also to avoid adverse effects on other structures (a cable, for example) caused by rotating the display unit to a significant degree.

[0012] Preferably, a center line of the rotation shaft is provided in parallel with a normal line of a display surface of the display unit, and the center line of the rotation shaft passes a center line of a tilt shaft provided in the arm mechanism main unit such that the center line of the rotation shaft is orthogonal to the center line of the tilt shaft. With this structure, a tilt movement and an attitude correction movement can be performed simultaneously in a simple manner.

ADVANTAGEOUS EFFECTS OF THE INVENTION

[0013] According to the present invention, when the display unit is resultantly inclined due to the arm mechanism, it is possible to return the display unit to an apparently correct attitude.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014]

[FIGURE 1]

First perspective view illustrating an ultrasonic diagnosis device according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[FIGURE 2]

Second perspective view illustrating the ultrasonic diagnosis device according to the embodiment.

[FIGURE 3]

Side view schematically illustrating a movable mechanism that changes the position and attitude of a movable section.

[FIGURE 4]

Side view schematically illustrating a state in which the operation panel moves upward and forward.

[FIGURE 5]

First exploded perspective view illustrating the movable mechanism as viewed obliquely from above.

[FIGURE 6]

Second exploded perspective view illustrating the movable mechanism as viewed obliquely from below.

[FIGURE 7]

Perspective view illustrating a left-right slide mechanism which is inverted.

[FIGURE 8]

Perspective view illustrating a forward-backward slide mechanism.

[FIGURE 9]

Perspective view illustrating a mechanism which locks the forward-backward sliding motion.

[FIGURE 10]

Perspective view illustrating a brake mechanism which provides sliding resistance during a rotating motion.

[FIGURE 11]

View for explaining a change in the range of a rotatable angle in accordance with a forward and backward sliding position.

[FIGURE 12]

View illustrating operation examples of a rotation limit mechanism.

[FIGURE 13]

Perspective view illustrating another embodiment of the rotation limit mechanism.

[FIGURE 14]

Top view illustrating a first example state of an operation panel and a display unit.

[FIGURE 15]

Top view illustrating a second example state of an operation panel and a display unit.

[FIGURE 16]

Top view illustrating a third example state of an operation panel and a display unit.

[FIGURE 17]

Cross sectional view illustrating a home position lock mechanism.

[FIGURE 18]

Cross sectional view illustrating a shutter mechanism.

[FIGURE 19]

Cross sectional view illustrating a lower part structure of the shutter mechanism.

[FIGURE 20]

Cross sectional view illustrating an intermediate part structure of the shutter mechanism.

[FIGURE 21]

Cross sectional view illustrating an upper part structure of the shutter mechanism.

[FIGURE 22]

View for explaining the operation of the shutter mechanism.

[FIGURE 23]

Cross sectional view illustrating a state of a display unit restraint mechanism before being actuated.

[FIGURE 24]

Cross sectional view illustrating an actuated state of

the display unit restraint mechanism.

[FIGURE 25]

Partial cross sectional view illustrating an attitude correction mechanism.

[FIGURE 26]

View for explaining an operation of the attitude correction mechanism.

[FIGURE 27]

View for explaining inclination of the display unit due to drooping down of a motion end of an arm array.

MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

[0015] Preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be described with reference to the drawings.

(1) Basic Structure of an Ultrasonic Diagnosis Device (FIGS. 1 to 4)

[0016] FIG. 1 illustrates a preferred embodiment of an ultrasonic diagnosis device according to the present invention. This ultrasonic diagnosis device, which is used in the field of medicine, performs transmission/reception of ultrasound with respect to a living organism (particularly, a human body) captures a received signal, and forms an ultrasonic image based on the received signal.

[0017] The ultrasonic diagnosis device 10 includes a main unit 12, a movable section 14, and a movable mechanism 16. The main unit 12 has a box shape and houses therein a plurality of electronic circuit boards and power source sections. The lower part of the main unit 12 protrudes slightly forward to form a main unit base 12A. Four casters 26 are provided under the main unit base 12A. The projection portion of the main unit base 12A functions as a footrest on which a foot is placed. The main unit 12 includes a front face 12B, a side face 12C, and a top face 12D. A rounded convex corner surface is formed from the front face 12B over to the top face 12D. A connector unit 28 formed of a plurality of main unit side connectors is provided on the front face 12B.

[0018] A probe is to be removably mounted to each main unit side connector. More specifically, a probe is composed of a probe connector (a connector box), a probe cable, and a probe head. The probe connector is mounted to one of the main unit side connectors. A support column, which will be described below, is provided on the main unit base 12A, and is covered with a column cover 30. The support column is provided on the front face side of the unit 12, in the center in the left-right direction. A handle 12E is provided on the backward end of the main unit 12.

[0019] As will be described below, the movable mechanism 16 includes a lifting mechanism, a left-right slide mechanism, a forward-backward slide mechanism, and a rotation mechanism. The left-right slide mechanism, the forward-backward slide mechanism, and the rotation mechanism are provided in a layered structure and together form a horizontal movement mechanism. In FIG.

1, reference numeral 34 indicates a knob that constitutes a part of a home position lock mechanism.

[0020] In the present embodiment, the movable section 14 is composed of an operation panel 18, a base 20, an arm mechanism 22, and a display unit 24. The operation panel 18 is composed of a first operation section 36 and a second operation section 38 provided to rise from the back side of the first operation section 36. The first operation section 36 has a first operation surface, and the second operation section 38 has a second operation surface. A plurality of switches or the like are arranged on the first operation surface, and a sub display or the like is provided on the second operation surface. The angle of inclination of the second operation surface is larger than that of the first operation surface. A handle 18A is provided on the front side of the first operation section 36. This handle 18A also serves as a palm rest on which a wrist or a portion near the wrist is placed.

[0021] On the back side of the operation panel 18, the base 20 extending in the depth direction is provided, and the arm mechanism 22 is mounted on the base 20. The arm mechanism 22 is a mechanism for varying the position and attitude (orientation) of the display unit 24. The display unit 24 is formed as a flat panel display, and reference numeral 40 indicates a display unit main body. A handle 42 having an arc shape is provided on the lower portion on the front surface of the display unit main body 40. A user can hold the handle 42 to position the display unit 24 or direct the display unit 24 at a desired attitude. Further, by holding the handle 18A to move the handle 18A in the horizontal direction, the position of the movable section 14 in the left-right direction and the forward-backward direction can be determined and also the movable section 14 can be rotated about a predetermined rotation axis. Also, on the upper surface of an attachment end of the base 20, on the back side of the second operation section 38, a display unit restraint mechanism is provided.

[0022] FIG. 2 illustrates the ultrasonic diagnosis device illustrated in FIG. 1 as viewed obliquely from the back. As described above, the ultrasonic diagnosis device 10 includes the movable section which includes the operation panel 18, the base 20, the arm mechanism 22, and the display unit 24. The movable section is supported by the main unit 12. More specifically, the movable section is supported by the main unit 12 via the movable mechanism, which will be described below.

[0023] The arm mechanism 22 will be described in detail. On the backward end 20A of the base 20, a first pivot portion 44 is provided. One end of a first arm 46 is mounted on the first pivot portion 44, and a second pivot portion 48 is mounted on the other end of the first arm 46. An intermediate arm 50 which stands upright and has a short length is mounted on the second pivot portion 48, and an upper end of the intermediate arm 50 is coupled to one end of a second arm 52. The second arm 52 is an arm having parallel links capable of an inclined movement, and a third pivot portion 54 is provided on the other

end of the second arm 52. Further, a tilt portion 56 is provided between the third pivot portion 54 and the display unit 24, and an attitude correction mechanism 58 which will be described below is provided between the tilt portion 56 and the display unit 24.

[0024] The first arm 46 is a horizontal arm, and the other end portion of the first arm 46 is warped slightly upward. In the arm mechanism 22, the elements from the first pivot portion 44 to the tilt portion 56 form an arm mechanism main unit, and the attitude correction mechanism 58 is provided further to the arm mechanism main unit. As will be described below, the attitude correction mechanism 58 is a mechanism that cancels, when the end portion of the arm mechanism 22 on the display unit side droops down to make the display unit 24 appear to be inclined or rotated, such an inclination or rotation of the display unit 24.

[0025] FIG. 3 illustrates the principle of the movable mechanism 16. FIG. 3 illustrates a schematic structure, and the details of each mechanism will be illustrated in FIG. 5 and subsequent drawings. As described above, the main unit 12 includes the front face 12B and the top face 12D, and the rounded convex corner face 12F is formed from the front face 12B over to the top face 12D. The movable mechanism 16 has a lifting mechanism 60 and a horizontal movement mechanism 68. The horizontal movement mechanism 68 includes a left-right slide mechanism 62, a forward-backward slide mechanism 64, and a rotation mechanism 66. These mechanisms are stacked to form a layered structure, as described above.

[0026] The lifting mechanism 60 includes a support column formed of a fixed column 70 and a movable column 72. The movable column 72 is held by the fixed column 70 in a manner that the movable column 72 can move in the upward-downward direction. Reference numeral 73 indicates a holding member for this purpose. A movable base 74 that performs an up-down movement is coupled to an upper end portion 72A of the movable column 72. The movable base 74 is a horizontal plate that expands toward the forward direction from the upper end portion 72A.

[0027] The left-right slide mechanism 62 is mounted on the movable base 74. The left-right slide mechanism 62 includes a pair of rails 78 arranged in the front-back direction, and a pair of rail slots 76 that receive the rails 78 for allowing slide movement thereof in the left-right direction. Here, reference numeral 86 indicates the home position lock mechanism that includes a knob 34. The details of the home position lock mechanism 86 will be described below.

[0028] The forward-backward slide mechanism 64 includes a center case 79 having a bottom surface which is a left-right slide base. On the left-right slide base, a pair of rails 80 are arranged side by side in the left-right direction. A slider 82 is mounted on the pair of rails 80. The slider 82 constitutes a forward-backward slide base, on which the rotation mechanism 66 is mounted. Here, a rotation limitation mechanism which will be described

below is provided between the left-right slide base and the operation panel 18. Further, a shutter mechanism 84 is provided for opening/closing an opening portion formed on the upper surface side of the center case 79, as will also be described in detail below. The rotation mechanism 66 is a mechanism that allows the operation panel 18; i.e. the movable section 14, to rotate about a rotation center axis 67. The rotation center axis 67 is specifically positioned at a sliding position in the left-right and forward-backward directions (a two-dimensional position), which is defined by the left-right slide mechanism 62 and the forward-backward slide mechanism 64.

[0029] As described above, the operation panel 18 includes the first operation section 36 and the second operation section 38, and also includes the handle 18A provided on the front surface side. On the bottom wall of the operation panel 18, a rotation member (rotor) of the rotation mechanism 66 is coupled. The base 20 includes an attachment portion 20B and a rear end portion 20A. The attachment portion 20B is coupled to the operation panel 18 at an intermediate location on the back surface side thereof, and the base 20 extends therefrom toward the depth side, with the end portion of the base 20 being the rear end portion 20A. A display unit restraint mechanism, which will be described below, is placed on an upper surface 20D of the attachment portion 20B. The lower surface 20C of the base 20 is curved to have a concave shape as viewed from the side surface direction.

[0030] In FIG. 3, the movable section 14 is in a home position. More specifically, the movable section 14 is located at the lowermost end, the backward end, and the center position in the left-right direction, with the rotation angle being 0 degrees. In such a case, with respect to the rounded convex corner face 12F formed from the front face 12B over to the top face 12D of the main unit 12, the lower surface 20C, which is a similarly rounded concave curved surface, is in a close position. With such a positional relationship between these members, it is possible to avoid collision of the movable section 14 with the main unit 12 and also to position the operation panel 18 on the front face side of the main unit 12 at a lowest possible location.

[0031] In FIG. 3, the length from the rotation center axis 67 to the front end of the operation panel 18 is indicated as L1, and the length from the rotation center axis 67 to the rear end of the base 20 is indicated as L2. As illustrated, L2 is greater than L1. Accordingly, the operation panel 18 can be turned in a small radius even when the movable section is rotated, whereas with the rotation of the base 20 in a large radius, the region within which the display unit can move can be expanded. Here, the distance from the top face 12D to the lowermost position of the operation panel 18 is indicated as h1, and the distance from the top face 12D to the lower surface position of the movable base 74 is indicated as h2. In the present embodiment, because the lowermost position of the operation panel 18 can be lowered and also the thickness of the horizontal movement mechanism 68 is made small,

as indicated by h1 and h2, it is possible to form a large space under the horizontal movement mechanism 68 at all occasions. As the support column and the movable base 74 form an inverted L shape as viewed from the side face, in combination with such a configuration, it is possible to form a sufficient space under the horizontal movement mechanism 68. The user's foot and the like can be placed in such a space.

[0032] As described above, the horizontal movement mechanism 68 has a layered structure. From this point of view, the movable base 74 forms the lowermost layer, the left-right slide base forms a lower layer, the forward-backward slide base forms an intermediate layer, and the rotation base forms an upper layer. Then, the bottom wall of the operation panel 18 forms the uppermost layer. In this embodiment, with such a layered structure being assumed as a precondition, rotation limitation or the like can be attained with a simple mechanism. This will be described below.

[0033] FIG. 4 illustrates the movable section 14 which is located at the lifted position and is also at the forward end. Here, the rotation angle of the movable section 14 is 0 degrees. The center case 79 houses therein the forward-backward slide mechanism 64 and the main portions of the rotation mechanism 66. A side case 88 is provided on each of the right and left sides of the center case 79. These side cases 88 cover right and left end portions of the left-right slide mechanism 62, and each side case 88 is specifically formed of an upper cover 88A and a lower cover 88B. The side cases 88 are fixed to the center case 79 and move in the left and right directions with the left-right movement of the center case 79. Here, it is possible to form the side cases 88 integrally with the center case 79.

[0034] The upper surface of the center case 79 is opened, and the center portion thereof serves as a passage for the rotation member in the rotation mechanism 66. When the movable section 14 is positioned at the forward end, a large opening portion 79A is to be exposed on the rear side of the operation panel 18. However, such an exposure of the opening portion 79A would deteriorate the appearance and would also cause problems such as poor safety or entry of foreign matter. Accordingly, in the present embodiment, a shutter mechanism, which will be described below, is provided. By closing the opening portion 79A, which is exposed, with such a shutter mechanism 84, foreign matter externally entering as indicated by reference numeral 92 can be blocked. As the left-right slide mechanism 62 is covered with the side cases 88 as described above, this mechanism is also protected from an external force or the like, as indicated by reference numeral 90.

[0035] As described above, in the present embodiment, the various mechanisms are covered with the center case 79 and the side cases 88, which results in an increase in safety or the like. Further, the opening portion which is necessarily formed with the forward movement of the operation panel 18 can be specially closed by the

shutter mechanism 84.

(2) Movable Mechanism (FIGs. 5 to 13)

[0036] Next, the movable mechanism will be described in detail with reference to FIGs. 5 and 6. First, FIG. 5 will be referenced.

[0037] As described above, the lifting mechanism 60 includes the support column 94 and the movable base 74. The support column 94 is composed of the fixed column 70 and the movable column 72. The left-right slide mechanism 62 includes the center case 79, and a pair of upper portions 88a forming a portion of the side cases are provided on the right and left sides of the center case 79. Lower portions of the side case are omitted in the drawing. The center case and the side cases together form a mechanism case. The bottom wall of the center case 79 is the left-right slide base 96.

[0038] The forward-backward slide mechanism 64 includes a pair of forward-backward slide rails 98 that are members extending in the forward-backward direction. A forward-backward slide base 100 is mounted on the pair of forward-backward slide rails 98. Specifically, the forward-backward slide base 100 is provided on a pair of forward-backward sliders 102 such that the forward-backward slide base 100 can move in the forward-backward direction. More specifically, on the left-right slide base 96, the pair of forward-backward slide rails 98 is fixed, and also a block 104 and a guide shaft 110 are fixed. The block 104 includes projecting portions 106 and 108, as will be described below. The projecting portions 106 and 108 are rollers that constitute a portion of the rotation limitation mechanism.

[0039] The rotation mechanism 66 includes a non-rotational base (stator) 112, a rotor (a rotational base serving as a rotor) 114, and a non-rotational gear 116. The rotor 114 performs a rotational movement about the rotation center axis and is coupled to a bottom wall 119 of the operation panel 18. The non-rotational base 112 and the non-rotational gear 116 are coupled integrally. The upper surface of the center case 79 is opened and serves as a space for movement of the assembly including the rotor 114. The shutter mechanism 84 is provided so as to close such an opening portion as required. While the shutter mechanism 84 is in a closed state in FIG. 5, the shutter mechanism 84 is placed in an opened state when the forward-backward slide base 100 is located at the backward end. When the forward-backward slide base 100 is located at the forward end, the shutter mechanism 84 is in a closed state as illustrated in FIG. 5.

[0040] The operation panel 18 includes a panel frame 118 having the bottom wall 119. The panel frame 118 includes a handle portion 118A on the front side thereof and also has a hollow interior. An opening portion 119A is formed in the bottom wall 119 slightly toward the backward side with respect to the center thereof. The rotor 114 is attached to the opening portion 119A, and the non-rotational gear 116 protrudes into the panel frame

118 via the opening portion 119A.

[0041] The base 20 includes a rear end portion 20A in which an opening portion 20E for mounting the pivot mechanism and for passing a cable therethrough is formed. A passage 20F serving as a slot is formed continuously to the opening portion 20E, so as to allow a cable to be externally inserted into the rear end portion after the movable section is set onto the main unit.

[0042] In the hollow portion of the handle portion 118A, a release lever 124 is disposed, and also cables 126 and 128 are also disposed as required. The release lever 124 is operated for releasing a lock state when the operation of the left-right slide mechanism 62 and the forward-backward slide mechanism 64 is in a stop state; i.e. in a lock state, in the present embodiment. The lock state is attained by holding the shaft member with a fixed force, and at this time, the lock state is attained by increasing the frictional resistance. A brake mechanism 120 is placed on the bottom wall 119 of the panel frame 118, and engages the non-rotational gear 116 to exert a constant braking force with the rotation movement of the operation panel 18. As the frictional resistance of the brake mechanism 120 is relatively large, the operation panel 18 is prevented from performing rotation movement by itself, even if an external force acts on the display unit to move the arm mechanism. The cable 122 performs a locking operation when the brake mechanism 120 functions as a lock mechanism.

[0043] FIG. 6 illustrates an exploded perspective view of the movable mechanism as viewed obliquely from below. As has been already described, from bottom to top, the left-right slide mechanism, the forward-backward slide mechanism, the rotation mechanism, and the operation panel are stacked. The left-right slide mechanism 62 will be described. The left-right slide base 96 is a horizontal plate, and a pair of left-right slide rails 130, which are members extending in the left-right direction, are provided on the lower surface side thereof. A guide shaft 132 is attached to the left-right slide base 96. Reference numeral 134 indicates a left-right slide lock mechanism, which holds the guide shaft 132 to thereby lock the slide movement in the left-right direction. Further, reference numeral 136 indicates a home position lock mechanism, which will be described below. Reference numeral 128 indicates a rail stand which is fixed to the movable base 74. The left-right slide base 96 moves freely in the left-right direction on the rail stand 128. On the left-right slide base 96, the rotation mechanism moves freely in a sliding manner in the forward-backward direction by means of the forward-backward slide mechanism 64.

[0044] On the bottom wall 119 of the operation panel, a frame body 140 projecting downward from the lower surface side thereof is formed. Specifically, the frame body 140 is formed on the bottom surface 119B. The frame body 140 defines a movement region 142 for receiving a projecting portion pair 138 serving as a moving element and allowing the projecting portion pair 138 to move therein. The frame body 140 and the moving ele-

ments 138 serving as the projecting portion pair constitute a rotation limitation mechanism. The rotation limitation mechanism is a mechanism that variably sets the rotatable angle range in accordance with the sliding position of the operation panel in the forward-backward direction. In the present embodiment, the rotatable angle range is set to zero when the operation panel is located at the backward end, and the rotatable angle range gradually increases towards the forward end. In order to define such a change, the frame body 140 has a left-right width that gradually widens from the front side toward the rear side thereof. Here, FIG. 6 also illustrates the shutter mechanism 84 in its closed position. When the forward-backward slide base is located at the backward end on the forward-backward slide mechanism 64, the shutter mechanism 84 is in an opened state as described above. The bottom wall 119 includes the opening portion 119A formed therein, into which a portion of the rotor 114 is inserted.

[0045] Next, with reference to FIGs. 7 to 11, each of the mechanisms described above will be individually described.

[0046] FIG. 7 illustrates the left-right slide mechanism 62, although the left-right slide base 96 is illustrated as being inverted. On the lower surface side of the left-right slide base 96, the pair of left-right slide rails 130 is provided as described above. The pair of left-right slide rails 130 are provided at a fixed interval in the front-rear direction. The pair of slide rails 130 engage the rail stand 128 such that the left-right slide base 96 is movable with respect to the rail stand 128 in the left-right direction. The left-right slide lock mechanism 134 is mounted on the rail stand 128. The left-right slide lock mechanism 134 is a mechanism that locks the slide movement in the left-right direction by holding the guide shaft 132. The operation force of the left-right slide lock mechanism 134 is applied by a cable 136, a spring, or the like. Actually, a release force is applied by the cable 136. The left-right slide lock mechanism 134 includes a slide block 138 for holding the guide shaft 132, and the slide block 138 includes, on the front surface side thereof, an engagement surface 139. The engagement surface 139 has an engagement hole that receives a horizontal pin provided in the home position lock mechanism. The surfaces on the right and left sides of the engagement hole are slanted.

[0047] FIG. 8 illustrates the forward-backward slide mechanism 64. The forward-backward slide mechanism 64 includes a pair of forward-backward slide rails 98 which are provided in the left-right direction at a fixed distance. The forward-backward slide mechanism 64 further includes a guide shaft 110. A block 104, which is provided on the front end side of the guide shaft 110, is fixed to the left-right slide base. On the forward-backward slide rails 98, the forward-backward slide base 100, which is movable in the forward-backward direction, is mounted via a pair of sliders 142. The non-rotational base 112 is mounted on the forward-backward base 100. The non-rotational base 112 includes a hollow portion formed

in the center portion, in which the forward-backward slide lock mechanism 144 is disposed. As illustrated in FIG. 9, the forward-backward slide lock mechanism 144 is a mechanism that locks a slide movement in the forward-backward direction by holding the guide shaft 110. The cable 146 or a spring mechanism is provided for applying such an operation force. More specifically, the cable 146 transmits a release force.

[0048] Referring back to FIG. 8, on the forward-backward slide base 100, a pair of slide pins 220 are formed at a fixed distance in the left-right direction so as to project therefrom. Each slide pin 220, which is a member projecting upward, constitutes an important element of the shutter mechanism. Specifically, when the forward-backward slide base 100 moves in the forward-backward direction, the pair of slide pins 220 also move in the forward-backward direction accordingly, such that the pair of slide pins 220 operate in accordance with the sliding position in the forward-backward direction to thereby determine the degree of opening of the shutter plate, as will be described below.

[0049] FIG. 10 illustrates an example of the brake mechanism 120. The rotor 114 is coupled to the bottom wall in a fixed manner. As such, the operation panel can rotate freely with the rotor 114. A pair of racks; i.e. a first rack 148 and a second rack 150, engage with the non-rotational gear 116. The second rack 150 is held by the block 151 such that the second rack 150 can move in the axial direction. A guide shaft 154 is coupled to the second rack 150 via a pair of arm members 152, and a pair of sliders 156 are provided on the guide shaft 154. The first rack 148 is fixed to these sliders 156. A grip portion 158 is provided at the center portion of the guide shaft 154 and is fixed to the first rack 148.

[0050] When the operation panel rotates, the first rack 148 and the second rack 150 that are engaged with the non-rotational gear 116 move in a sliding manner in opposite directions. In this case, the guide shaft 154 also moves in a sliding manner with respect to the grip portion 158. By exerting a predetermined brake force on the grip portion 158, the sliding movement of the guide shaft 154 is restricted; specifically, the brake force acts on the rotation movement of the operation panel. Although the cable 122 is used to control the operation of the grip portion 158, this cable 122 is not necessary if the brake force is continuously exerted on the grip portion 158. Further, a single rack may be provided, rather than two racks.

[0051] FIG. 11 illustrates the release lever 124. The release lever 124 is a member which is operated by a user to release (an unlock operation) the plurality of lock mechanisms collectively. Specifically, wires 160 and 162 are wound around the rotational shaft of the release lever 124 via a guide 164, and a wire 166 is similarly wound around the rotational shaft of the release lever 124 via a guide 168. Accordingly, by holding the release lever 124, it is possible to place the three lock mechanisms into a released state simultaneously. In the present embodiment, however, as a brake force continuously acts on

the rotation mechanism, the release mechanism actually functions only on the left-right slide mechanism and the forward-backward slide mechanism. More specifically, only two wires are actually wound around the rotational shaft of the release lever 124. As a matter of course, the release lever 124 can be operated to perform a lock operation. In any case, such a structure, in which it is possible to achieve a plurality of lock (unlock) operations by a single action, is simple and can provide good operability.

[0052] FIG. 12 illustrates an operation of the rotation limitation mechanism. FIG. 12(A) illustrates a state in which the operation panel is at the backward end; FIG. 12(B) illustrates a state in which the operation panel is at the center position in the forward-backward direction; and FIG. 12(C) illustrates a state in which the operation panel is at the forward end. In FIG. 12, the left side corresponds to the front side of the operation panel and the right side corresponds to the rear side of the operation panel. Reference numeral 67 indicates a rotation center axis.

[0053] In FIG. 12(A), the frame body 140 defines a movement region 142 of a moving element 138. More specifically, the frame body 140 is formed by a regulation wall 170. In the movement region 142, the width d in the left-right direction gradually increases from the front side toward the rear side. Reference numeral 142A indicates a front side position, reference numeral 142B indicates an intermediate position, and a reference numeral 142C indicates a rear side position. In FIG. 12(A), the moving element 138 is positioned at the forward end of the movement region 142, and is not in a state in which the moving element can move in the left-right direction. At such a home position, the rotational movement of the operation panel is inhibited. In other words, the rotatable angle range is zero. As such, because the rotational movement of the operation panel is restricted when the operation panel is at the backward end, it is possible to avoid the problem that the movable section collides with the main unit.

[0054] In FIG. 12(B), the moving element 138 is at the intermediate position; i.e., the operation panel is drawn toward the front side to the intermediate position. In such a state, the moving element 138 can move over a predetermined range in the left-right direction; more specifically, can move along an arc. In FIG. 12(C), the operation panel is drawn to the forward end, and in this state, the moving element 138 can move maximally in the left-right direction; more specifically, in the arc direction, and a large rotatable angle range is set.

[0055] As described above, with the rotation limitation mechanism, it is possible to adaptively set the rotatable angle range in accordance with the sliding position of the operation panel in the forward-backward direction. Accordingly, there can be obtained the advantage that the angle range which is appropriate for the sliding position can be set while avoiding collision between the movable section and the main unit. In particular, as a very large

rotation is permitted when the operation panel is located at the forward end or near the forward end, the advantage of significantly improved usability can be achieved.

[0056] FIG. 13 illustrates another embodiment of the rotation limitation mechanism. On a left-right slide base 172, a single forward-backward slide rail 176 is provided, and two guide shafts 178 are provided via a predetermined member. On the forward-backward slide rail 176, a forward-backward slide base 174 is mounted. Further, a frame body 186 which defines a movement region of a contact element 182 is mounted on the left-right slide base 172. The width of the frame body 186 in the left-right direction is increased from the rear side toward the front side. Specifically, the change of size in the frame body 186 is opposite that of the frame body illustrated in FIG. 12.

[0057] The contact element 182 described above is mounted on a rotator; i.e., a rotation base 180, via a coupling shaft 184. FIG. 13 illustrates a state in which the operation panel is located at the backward end, in which state the contact element 182 is located at the rearmost position, and the movement of the contact element 182 in the left-right direction is completely restricted by the frame body 186. In other words, at such a home position, the rotation movement of the operation panel is inhibited. With the sliding movement of the operation panel in the forward direction, movement of the contact element 182 in the left-right direction is permitted. Specifically, the rotation of the operation panel is allowed in accordance with the left-right width of the frame body 186.

(3) Setting Examples (FIGs. 14 to 16)

[0058] Next, various setting examples will be described with reference to FIGs. 14 to 16. Referring to FIG. 14, the handle 18A is provided on the front side of the operation panel 18. The user can move the movable section 14 while holding the handle 18A, thereby setting the position and attitude of the operation panel 18 as desired. Further, the handle 42 is provided on the display unit 24, and the display unit 24 can be set to a desired position and attitude by moving the display unit 24 while holding the handle 42. As described above, the movable mechanism which supports the movable section 14 is normally in a locked state or in a state in which a friction is exerted, and the arm mechanism is also in such a locked state. However, because, in the present embodiment, the brake force in the movable mechanism is set to be always greater than the brake force in the arm mechanism, it is possible to prevent the movable section 14 from moving by itself when the display unit 24 is moved.

[0059] In FIG. 14, the operation panel 18 is located at the center position in the left-right direction and at the backward end in the forward-backward direction. The pivot angle of the operation panel in this state is set to 0 degrees. In other words, the operation panel 18 is located at the home position. Meanwhile, due to the action of the arm mechanism 22, the display unit 24 is drawn to the

position above the operation panel 18.

[0060] FIG. 15 illustrates a state in which the movable section is slid to the left direction from the state illustrated in FIG. 14. Further, FIG. 16 illustrates a state in which the operation panel 18 is further drawn in the forward direction and to the right direction from the state of the operation panel 18 as illustrated in FIG. 14 and is then further pivoted counterclockwise. In another example, by positioning the operation panel at the right end and forward end and then pivoting the operation panel 18 clockwise, even when a user, who is located a certain distance from the main unit, takes a slanted posture with respect to the main unit, it is possible to position the operation panel right in front of the user and further direct the operation panel toward the user. Also, in the present embodiment, it is possible to move the display unit in back of the main unit and further direct the display unit toward the rear side. It is also possible to locate the display unit to the right side of the main unit and then lower and position the display unit near the head of the user lying in a bed. As such, in the present embodiment, as the base extends in the depth direction and the arms in the arm mechanism have a certain degree of length, the movable region of the display unit 24 is significantly large.

(4) Home Position Lock Mechanism (FIG. 17)

[0061] With reference to FIG. 17, the home position lock mechanism 136 will be described. The home position lock mechanism 136 is a mechanism which inhibits the slide movement in both the left-right direction and the forward-backward direction when the operation panel; i.e., the movable section, is at a home position. In this state, the operation panel is prohibited from moving by merely gripping the release lever 124.

[0062] The knob 34 is connected to a shaft 188, and with the rotation of the knob 34, the shaft 188 rotates, which further causes a cam member 190 to rotate. Here, the cam member 190 and the peripheral structure thereof are illustrated in a simplified manner. With the action of the cam member 190, a horizontal pin 192 is driven forward. The horizontal pin 192 is urged forward by a spring 196. Stated conversely, the horizontal pin 192 is capable of retreating movement over a predetermined distance.

[0063] On the movable base, the slide block 138 is provided. The slide block 138 has, as a front surface, an engagement surface 139 having an engagement hole 194. The right and left sides of the engagement hole 194 are formed as slope surfaces. Accordingly, if, in a state in which the horizontal pin 192 projects, the left-right slide base 96 moves horizontally to reach the center position, the leading end portion of the horizontal pin 192 ascends the slope surface formed on the engagement surface 139 and finally comes into the engagement hole 194. In this state, the movement of the left-right slide base 96 in the left-right direction is prohibited; i.e., the left-right slide base 96 is placed into a locked state in the left-right direction.

[0064] On the other hand, with the rotation movement of the shaft 188, a member 198 extending in the vertical direction is thrust upward to thereby thrust a first vertical pin 202 and a second vertical pin 206 upward. However, a spring 204 is interposed between the first vertical pin 202 and the second vertical pin 206, and the second vertical pin 206 is urged upward with respect to the first vertical pin 202. As such, a structure which extends through a block 104 in the up-down direction is formed in the block 104, and the thrust-up force of the first vertical pin 202 is applied to the second vertical pin 206 via the spring 204. The upper portion of the second vertical pin 206 is formed as a thrust portion 108, which is a roller. As described above, the frame body 140 defines a movement space of the thrust portion 108 and includes a recess portion 142a formed at a position corresponding to the home position. The recess portion 142a is a hollow and therefore has a shape which is retracted upward with respect to the bottom surface 119B. Accordingly, when the knob 34 is operated, an upward urging force is continuously applied to the thrust portion 108, so that the thrust portion 108 moves horizontally while remaining in contact with the bottom surface 119B. Then, when the thrust portion 108 is fitted into the recess portion 142a, the horizontal movement of the thrust portion 108 is inhibited; specifically, the bottom wall 119 is fixed with respect to the left-right slide base 96. In this state, the slide movement in the forward-backward direction and the rotation movement are inhibited. As such, it is possible to lock the left-right movement, the forward-backward movement, and also the rotation movement by simply operating the knob 34. In addition, the operation of the knob 34 can be performed at positions other than the center position or the forward end position, and when the center position is achieved in the slide movement, a lock state is automatically formed, and also when the rotation angle becomes 0 degrees at the backward end position, a lock state in the forward-backward direction and the rotation direction can be automatically formed. In the present embodiment, by using the layered relationship to exert an acting force through a plurality of layers as described above, the integral lock mechanism can be achieved.

(5) Shutter Mechanism (FIGs. 18 to 22)

[0065] Next, with reference to FIGs. 18 to 22 the shutter mechanism will be described in detail. Referring to FIG. 18, the pair of forward-backward slide rails 98 are provided on the left-right slide base 96, and the forward-backward slide base 100 is mounted on these forward-backward slide rails 98. In FIG. 18, the forward-backward slide base 100 is at the forward end. On the forward-backward slide base 100, the rotor 114 is rotatably mounted, and the non-rotational gear 116 is further provided. The rotor 114 is fitted into an annular base 119B formed in the bottom wall 119, and is integrated with the bottom wall 119 in such a fitted state. The non-rotational

gear 116 enters the panel frame via the opening portion 119A. Only a slight gap is present between the forward-backward slide base 100 and the bottom wall 119, and in the present embodiment, the shutter mechanism 84 is disposed in such a gap. The shutter mechanism 84 may be coupled with the left-right slide base 96 or placed within the center case. The shutter mechanism 84 includes a pair of lower plates 208, a pair of first shutter plates 210, a pair of second shutter plates 212, and a pair of upper plates 214. Each of the plates 208, 210, 212, and 214 is a thin sheet-like member which is formed of a resin having a black color, for example. Each plate is desirably formed of an opaque member.

[0066] On the pair of lower plates 208, a pair of rotational shafts 218 are spaced at an interval in the left-right direction. Each rotational shaft 218 functions as a rotational shaft for the respective first shutter plate 210 and second shutter plate 212. The pair of rotational shafts 218 and the pair of upper plates 214 may be coupled in a fixed manner. Each of the pair of lower plates 208, the pair of first shutter plates 210, and the pair of second shutter plates 212 has a single pin slot formed therein as will be described below, and a slide pin 220 is inserted in each pin slot. A pair of slide pins 220 are provided at a distance in the left-right direction on the forward-backward slide base 100, and perform a slide movement with the forward-backward slide movement of the forward-backward slide base 100. Meanwhile, the pair of rotational shafts 218 do not slide in the forward-backward direction, although the pair of rotational shafts 218 slide in the left-right direction with the movement of the slide base 96. As indicated by reference numeral 216, the opening in the upper portion of the main case serves as a movement space for the rotor 114; specifically, an exposed opening portion is uncovered on the rear side of the operation panel, and this leads to a problem that the internal mechanisms are exposed through such an opening portion as indicated by reference numeral 216. The shutter mechanism is a mechanism which conceals such an opening portion with the slide movement of the operation panel in the forward-backward direction.

[0067] FIG. 19 illustrates the pair of lower plates 208. In FIG. 19, the upper side corresponds to the front direction of the operation panel and the lower side corresponds to the rear side of the operation panel. In FIG. 19, the forward-backward slide base 100 is at the forward end. Each lower plate 208 includes a linear pin slot 222. The pair of slide pins 220 spaced in the left-right direction are provided on the forward-backward slide base 100. In addition, a pair of rotational shafts 218 are provided as fixed shafts.

[0068] FIG. 20 illustrates a pair of the first shutter plates 210. Each first shutter plate 210 performs rotational movement about the rotational shaft 218. A pin slot 224 is formed in each of the first shutter plates 210. Each pin slot 224 has a bent shape including a linear portion and a portion directed inwardly therefrom as illustrated in FIG. 20. In FIG. 20, the pair of the first shutter plates

210 are in a closed state. The pair of first shutter plates 210 in an opened state are indicated by reference numeral 210A. The pair of first shutter plates 210 serve to conceal especially the back area in the exposed space portion.

[0069] FIG. 21 illustrates a pair of second shutter plates 212. Each second shutter plate 212 performs a rotational movement about the rotational shaft 218. In the state illustrated in FIG. 21, a pin slot 226 is formed of an inwardly directed portion and a straight portion. In other words, the pin slot 226 has a bent shape. In FIG. 22, the pair of second shutter plates 212 are in a closed state. The pair of first shutter plates 212 in an opened state are indicated by reference numeral 212A. The pair of second shutter plates 212 serve to conceal the portion of the exposed opening portion from the intermediate area to the rear area.

[0070] Next, with reference to FIG. 22, the operation of the shutter mechanism will be described. FIG. 22(A) illustrates a state in which the forward-backward slide base 100 is at the backward end; FIG. 22(B) illustrates a state in which the forward-backward slide base 100 is at the intermediate position; and FIG. 22(C) illustrates a state in which the forward-backward slide base 100 is at the forward end. First, in the state illustrated in (A), all the shutter plates are in the opened state. Specifically, because the operation panel is located at the backward end and the opening portion is covered by the operation panel located above, the problem of exposure of the opening portion does not arise. Here, a passage of the rotational shaft member is formed between the two layered members provided on the left and right sides, and this passage forms the exposed opening portion at the rear portion of the moving rotational shaft member.

[0071] In FIG. 22(B), the operation panel is at the intermediate position, and in such a state, only the pair of first shutter plates 210 is placed in the closed state and the exposed opening portion formed on the rear side of the rotational shaft member is partially covered. In the state illustrated in FIG. 22(C), the operation panel is at the forward end, and a large exposed opening portion is formed on the back of the rotational shaft member. By placing the pair of second shutter plates 212 into the closed state, such an exposed opening portion is substantially covered. More specifically, when the operation panel moves from the backward end to the forward end, the pair of first shutter plates first start the closing movement, and subsequently the pair of second shutter plates start the closing movement. As such, by shifting the operation times for the two shutter plate pairs located at the upper and lower levels and also by allocating separate areas to be covered to these shutter plate pairs, even when a relatively large exposed opening portion is generated, such an opening portion can be concealed effectively and rapidly.

[0072] In the shutter mechanism described above, the pin slot is formed in each shutter plate, and the slide pin moves within the pin slot. The contact relationship be-

tween the pin slot and the slide pin changes depending on the lateral displacement of the pin slot; i.e., the shape of the pin slot, resulting in generation of a rotational force of the shutter plates. In the present embodiment, by employing the double shutter plates which are vertically layered and allowing these shutter plates to operate stepwise, and also by separating the areas covered by these shutter plates in the forward-backward direction, it is possible to conceal the exposed opening at an appropriate timing with the movement of the rotational shaft member and also to exert the concealing effect over the whole opening portion even if the opening portion to be concealed is large.

[0073] The pair of cover plates described above may be provided as required. Providing such a pair of cover plates can provide an advantage of enabling smooth movement of the shutter plates and also allowing physical protection of the shutter plates. In the present embodiment, because the two shutter plates are sandwiched by pairs of plates located above and below these shutter plates, it is possible to enable the two shutter plates to move smoothly in the horizontal direction. As the shutter mechanism of the present embodiment is configured to have the layered plate structure as described above, it is possible to reduce the overall thickness of the shutter mechanism to be significantly thin, which results in the advantage that the thickness of the horizontal movement mechanism can be reduced.

(6) Display Unit Restraint Mechanism (FIGs. 23 and 24)

[0074] Next, with reference to FIGs. 23 and 24, the display unit restraint mechanism will be described. Referring to FIG. 23, the operation panel 18 includes the second operation section 38, the upper end portion 38A of which is illustrated in an enlarged view in FIG. 23. Meanwhile, the base 20 is coupled to the back surface side of the operation panel 18, and FIG. 23 illustrates the attachment end of the base 20. A display unit restraint mechanism 228 is provided in a gap having a triangular cross section which is sandwiched by the top face front end 20D of the base 20 and the back surface 38B of the upper end portion 38A.

[0075] The display unit restraint mechanism 228 is a mechanism which holds the handle 42 provided to the display unit to restrain the display unit itself during transportation of the device or the like. The display unit restraint mechanism 228 includes a fixed portion 230 and a rotation portion 232. The fixed portion 230 includes a catch member 236 forming a receiving groove 234. The catch member 236 has an opening which is opened toward the upward direction, which functions as a receiving port of the handle 42.

[0076] The rotation portion 232 is capable of rotational movement about a predetermined rotation center axis. The rotation portion 232 includes a cover portion 240 serving as a forward end on the rotation side. The surface of the cover portion 240 on the outer side is curved out-

ward and bent, where a catching surface 240A is formed. By catching the catching surface 240A by finger tips to cause the cover portion 240 to move, it is possible to rotate the entire rotation portion 232.

[0077] The rotation portion 232 includes a hook member 242 which performs a rotation movement about a fixed axis 244. A spring 248 applies an urging force to the hook member 242 in a direction in which the hook member 242 rises up. The outer surface of the hook member 242 is a saw-toothed uneven surface 242A having projections and depressions, and a fixing pin 246 is in contact with the uneven surface 242A in the state illustrated in FIG. 23. As the urging force toward the outside acts on the hook member 242 by the spring 248, the fixing pin 246 fits into the depression of the uneven surface 242A, and, when the rotational section 232 is rotated, a consecutive click feeling can be obtained. Meanwhile, the upper end portion 38A includes a cut-out portion in which a hook slot 250 is formed. Further, the rotation portion 232 is held so as to prevent the rotation portion 232 from popping out of the position illustrated in FIG. 23 easily.

[0078] FIG. 23 illustrates an unactuated state of the display unit restraint mechanism 228. Meanwhile, FIG. 24 illustrates an actuated state of the display unit restraint mechanism 228. In FIG. 24, a handle main unit 42A fits into the receiving groove 234. The handle main unit 42A is a rod-like member extending in the horizontal direction. The cover portion 240 of the rotation portion 232 covers over the handle main unit 42A, so that the upward movement of the handle main unit 42A is restricted by the cover portion 240. Specifically, by cooperation of the fixed portion and the rotation portion 232, the handle main unit 42A is held firmly.

[0079] In a state in which the rotation portion 232 is rotated clockwise as illustrated in FIG. 24, the rising movement of the hook member 242 is permitted to thereby allow the leading end 236A thereof to be fitted into the hook slot 250. Specifically, in the housed state in which the rotation portion 232 is rotated counterclockwise, rise of the hook member 242 is inhibited by the pin or other structures, whereas by rotating the rotation portion 232 clockwise, a free movement of the hook member 242 is permitted so that the hook member 242 can rise by the action of the spring 248. In this case, the hook member 242 functions as a strut between the main unit of the rotation portion 232 and the operation panel to inhibit counterclockwise rotation of the rotation portion 232. Then, by pushing the outer surface of the hook member 242 to place the hook member 242 in a fallen state, it is possible to rotate the rotational member 232 counterclockwise to thereby restore the display restraint mechanism 228 in the unactuated state. In this state, it is possible to pull the handle main unit 32A upward out of the receiving groove 234. Here, while in the state in which the display unit is restrained, the display unit is in a substantially vertical state, the display unit may be slightly inclined forward.

[0080] In the present embodiment, as the display unit restraint mechanism 228 is disposed in a triangular gap space at the back side of the operation panel, there can be achieved advantages that the dead space can be effectively used and that the display unit restraint mechanism 28 can be placed out of sight of the user who is sitting so as to make the appearance of the device preferable. As a matter of course, when the user is standing, it is possible for the user to visually recognize the display unit restraint mechanism 228, and it is also easy to insert the user's hand into the triangular gap space.

(7) Attitude Correction Mechanism (FIGs. 25 to 27)

[0081] Next, the attitude correction mechanism will be described with reference to FIGs. 25 to 27. FIG. 25 illustrates a portion of the arm mechanism 22; more specifically, schematically illustrates the second arm 52 and the third pivot portion 54. Reference numeral 252 indicates a pivot center axis in the third pivot portion 54. The tilt portion 56 is coupled to the third pivot portion 54. The tilt portion 56 is disposed within the cover 254 and includes a tilt axis 254 as a horizontal axis. A fitting 256 is coupled to the tilt axis 254. A slot 256A is formed on the lower side of the fitting 256, and a side prong 258 coupled to the third pivot portion 54 is placed within the slot 256A. As such, due to the contact relationship between the slot 256A and the side prong 258, a limitation is imposed on the maximum tilt rotational angle in the tilt portion 56.

[0082] The attitude correction mechanism 58 is illustrated between the tilt portion 56 and the display unit 24. The attitude correction mechanism 58 includes a shaft member 262 provided on the front plate of the fitting 256. The shaft member 262 is coupled to a frame 264 provided within the case 263 of the display unit 24. Reference numeral 268 indicates a correction movement center axis. Due to the engaging relationship between the shaft member 262 and a bearing 266, the display unit 24 can perform rotational movement in both directions about the correction movement center axis 268 with the maximum angle being ± 5 degrees, for example. Such a correction rotation range can be determined arbitrarily. In the present embodiment, as will be described in detail below, because the attitude correction mechanism 58 is provided in order to eliminate an apparent rotation of the display unit 24 resulting from drooping of the end portion of the arm mechanism, the maximum correction angle is desirably selected to be within a range of ± 2 to ± 20 degrees, and more desirably within a range of ± 2 to ± 10 degrees. As it becomes difficult to protect the interior members if too large a rotational movement is permitted, such a degree of the correction angle range as described above is desirable. However, a ± 90 degrees rotational mechanism may be provided. The frame 264 includes an arc-shape slit 264A extending in the left-right direction formed therein, and a forward prong 260 which is a portion of the fitting 256 is inserted in the slit 264A. Specifically, with the relative rotational movement of the display unit

24, the forward prong 260 moves in the left-right direction within the slit 264A, and further rotation of the display unit 24 is inhibited when the forward prong 260 reaches the left and right ends of the slit 264A.

[0083] In the structure illustrated in FIG. 25, as the correction movement center axis 268 passes through the horizontal tilt center axis of the tilt axis 254, the correction movement center axis 268 and the tilt axis 254 are in an orthogonal relationship. With such a structure, it is easy to hold the display unit 24 with both hands to allow the display unit 24 to perform the tilt movement and the rotation movement simultaneously. In the present embodiment, the attitude correction mechanism 58 is provided as a portion of the arm mechanism 22. More specifically, the attitude correction mechanism 58 is provided in order to solve the problem of an apparent rotation of the display unit caused by the arm mechanism main unit in the arm mechanism 22.

[0084] FIG. 26 illustrates an action of the attitude correction mechanism. Reference numeral 262 indicates the shaft member, and FIG. 26 further illustrates a fitting relationship between the slit 264A having an arc shape and the forward prong 260. Reference numeral 24 indicates the display unit, and in the present embodiment, it is possible to cause the display unit 24 to rotate in both the clockwise and counterclockwise directions about the shaft member 262. These states are illustrated by reference numerals 24A and 24B.

[0085] FIG. 27 illustrates a specific action of the attitude correction mechanism. A base 276 is provided on a main unit 274, and an arm mechanism 270 is mounted on the base 276. The arm mechanism 270 includes a plurality of pivot mechanisms and a plurality of arm mechanisms, and reference numerals 278, 282, and 286 indicate pivot axes. Further, as the plurality of arms, a first arm 280 and a second arm 284 are illustrated. In FIG. 27, warp or drooping of the end portion caused by these arms 280 and 284 or the pivot mechanisms is illustrated in an exaggerated manner. Specifically, with respect to the vertical pivot axis 278, the pivot axis 282 is slightly inclined, and the pivot axis 286 is largely inclined at an inclination angle of θ .

[0086] Consequently, the end portions of the plurality of arms droop down, which makes the display unit 272, which is mounted at a correct angle with respect to the end portion, appear to be rotated or drooping down. Such a problem is likely to occur when the plurality of arms are extended to a great degree toward the right or left side of the main unit. When such drooping occurs, the upper edge and the lower edge of the display unit 272 are inclined with respect to the horizontal level by the angle θ . Such a state is not desirable to the user, who may feel uncomfortable or uneasy. Accordingly, in the present embodiment, it is possible to cause the display unit 272 to slightly rotate about a correction movement center axis 288; more specifically, the attitude of the display unit can be corrected to the attitude which is parallel to the vertical line, as indicated by reference numeral 272A. As a result,

even if drooping occurs in the arm mechanism, the display unit itself is parallel to the horizontal line, whereby the uncomfortable or uneasy feeling felt by the user can be eliminated.

[0087] By providing the attitude correction mechanism as described above, even if a predetermined amount of drooping of the end portion is allowed, this does not cause any adverse effects on the user. Thus, an advantage that benefits will accrue in the design or the like of the arm mechanism 270 can be obtained. As a matter of course, it is not necessary to actually operate the attitude correction mechanism if no such drooping problems occur. Further, if the user feels no discomfort, the display unit 272 which appears to rotate may be used in such a condition.

REFERENCE SYMBOLS

[0088] 10 ultrasonic diagnosis device, 12 main unit, 14 movable section, 16 movable mechanism, 18 operation panel, 20 base, 22 arm mechanism, 24 display unit, 42 handle, 58 attitude correction mechanism, 60 lifting mechanism, 62 left-right slide mechanism, 64 forward-backward slide mechanism, 65 rotation limitation mechanism, 66 rotation mechanism, 68 horizontal movement mechanism, 84 shutter mechanism, 136 home position lock mechanism, 228 display unit restraint mechanism.

Claims

1. An ultrasonic diagnosis device, comprising:

a display unit that displays an ultrasonic image; and
an arm mechanism that is disposed on a base and supports the display unit, wherein

the arm mechanism includes:

an arm mechanism main unit that is composed of at least one arm member and at least one pivot mechanism; and
an attitude correction mechanism that is provided between the arm mechanism main unit and the display unit and, when an apparent rotation caused by drooping of an end portion of the arm mechanism main unit on the display side is generated in the display unit, rotates the display unit in the opposite direction so that the apparent rotation of the display unit can be eliminated.

2. The ultrasonic diagnosis device according to Claim 1, wherein

the attitude correction mechanism includes:

a rotation shaft that is provided on one of the end portion on the display unit side and the dis-

play unit;

a bearing portion that is provided on the other of the end portion on the display unit side and the display unit and is coupled with the rotation shaft; and

5

a limitation portion that limits a rotation angle range of the display unit about the rotation shaft.

3. The ultrasonic diagnosis device according to Claim 2, wherein
the limitation portion includes:

10

a movable member that is provided on one of the end portion on the display unit side and the display unit; and

15

a member that is provided on the other of the end portion on the display unit side and the display unit and limits a movable range of the movable member.

20

4. The ultrasonic diagnosis device according to Claim 3, wherein
a center line of the rotation shaft is provided in parallel with a normal line of a display surface of the display unit, and
the center line of the rotation shaft passes a center line of a tilt shaft provided in the arm mechanism main unit such that the center line of the rotation shaft is orthogonal to the center line of the tilt shaft.

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

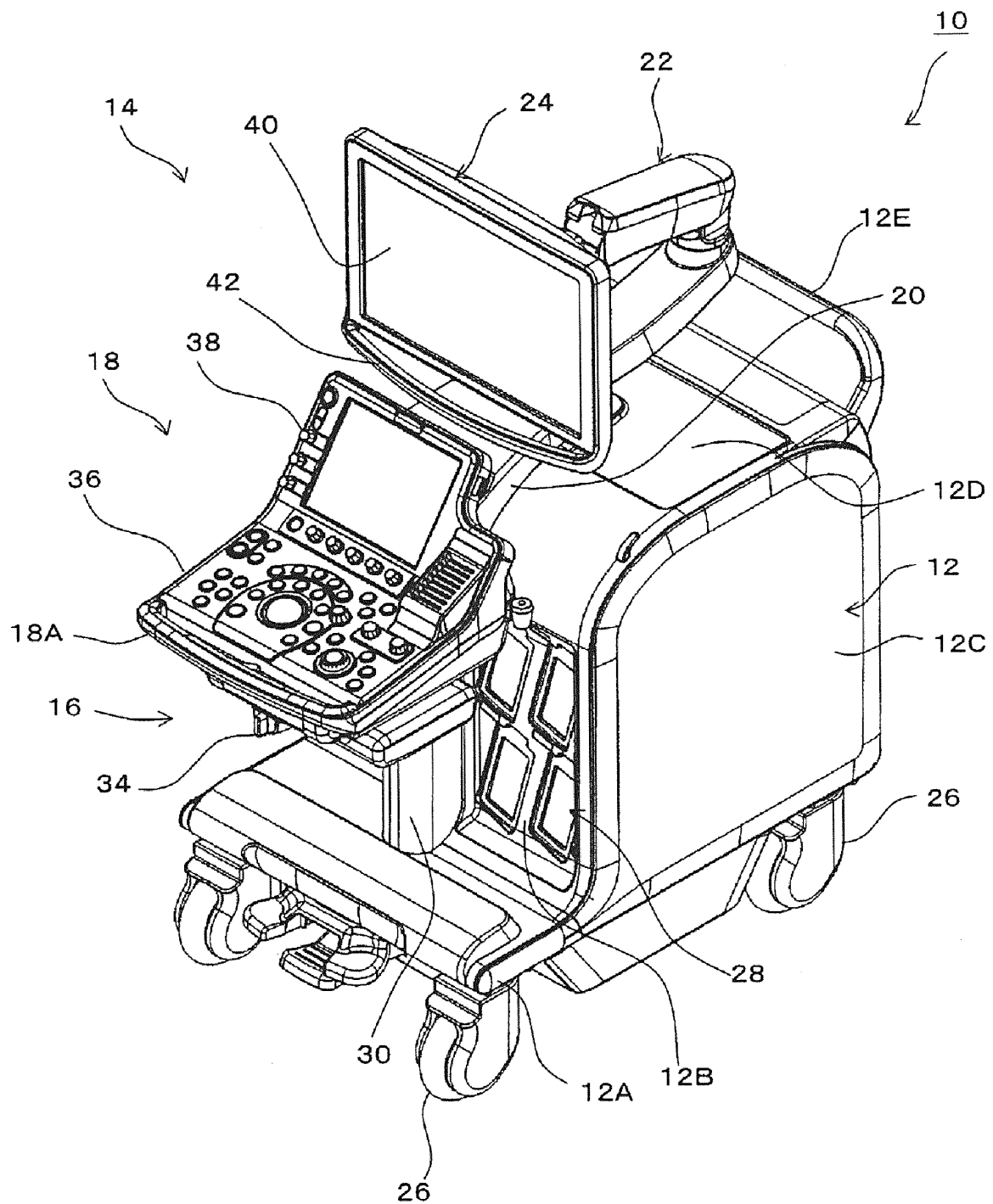


FIG. 1

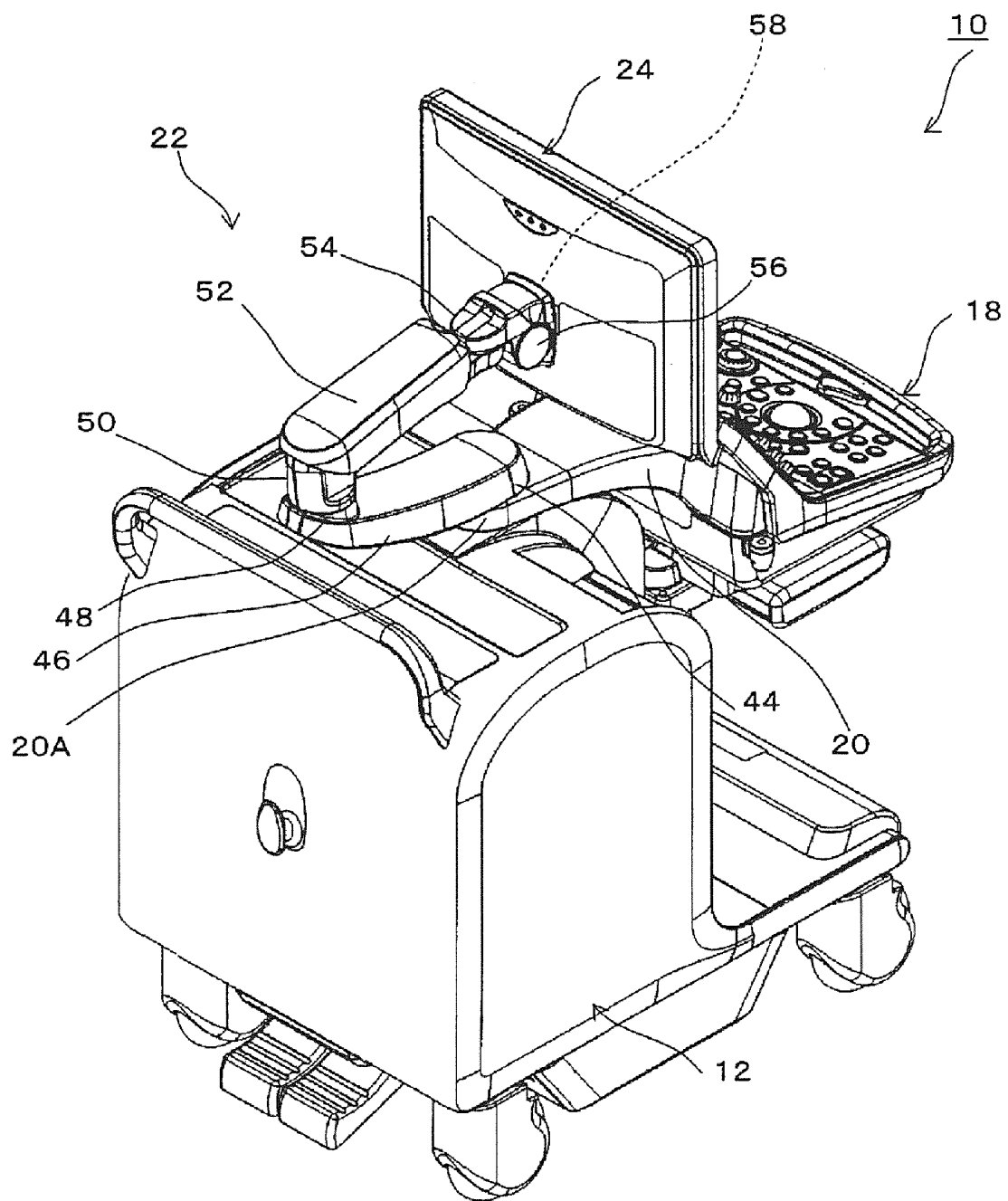


FIG. 2

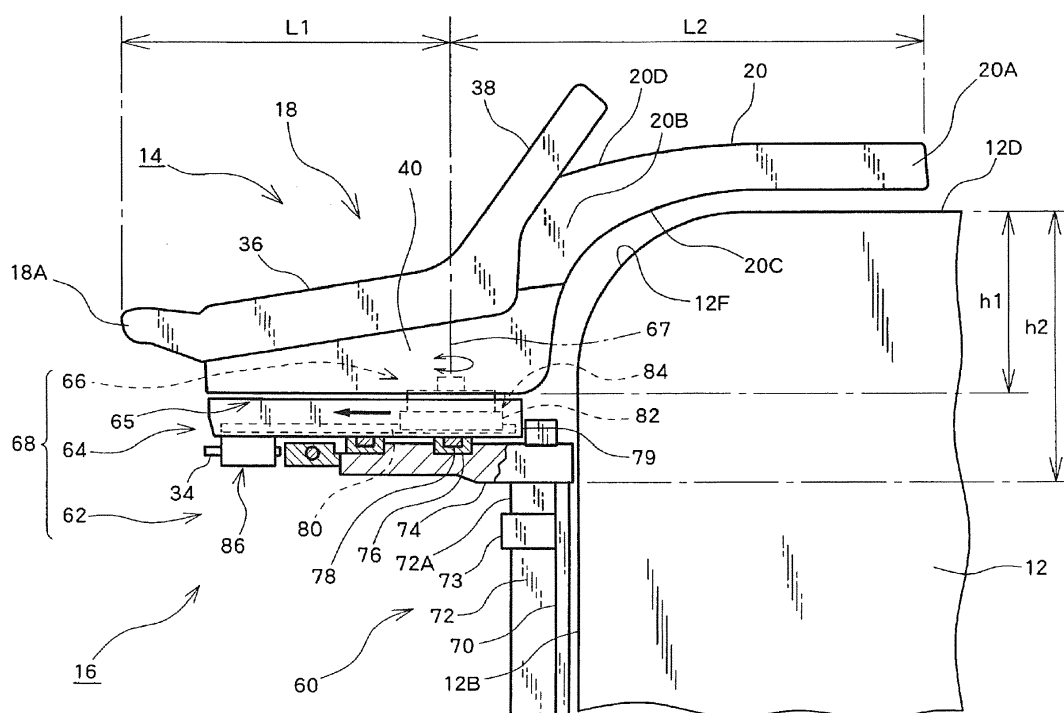


FIG. 3

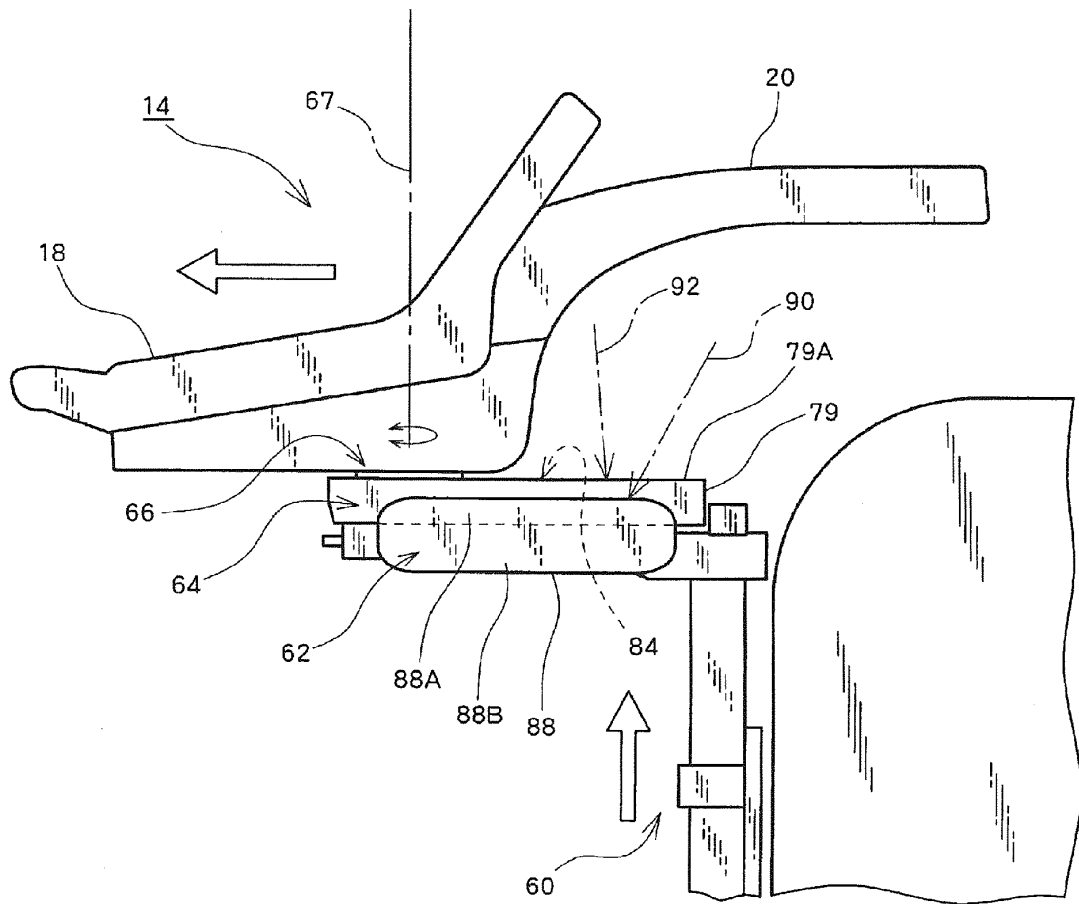


FIG. 4

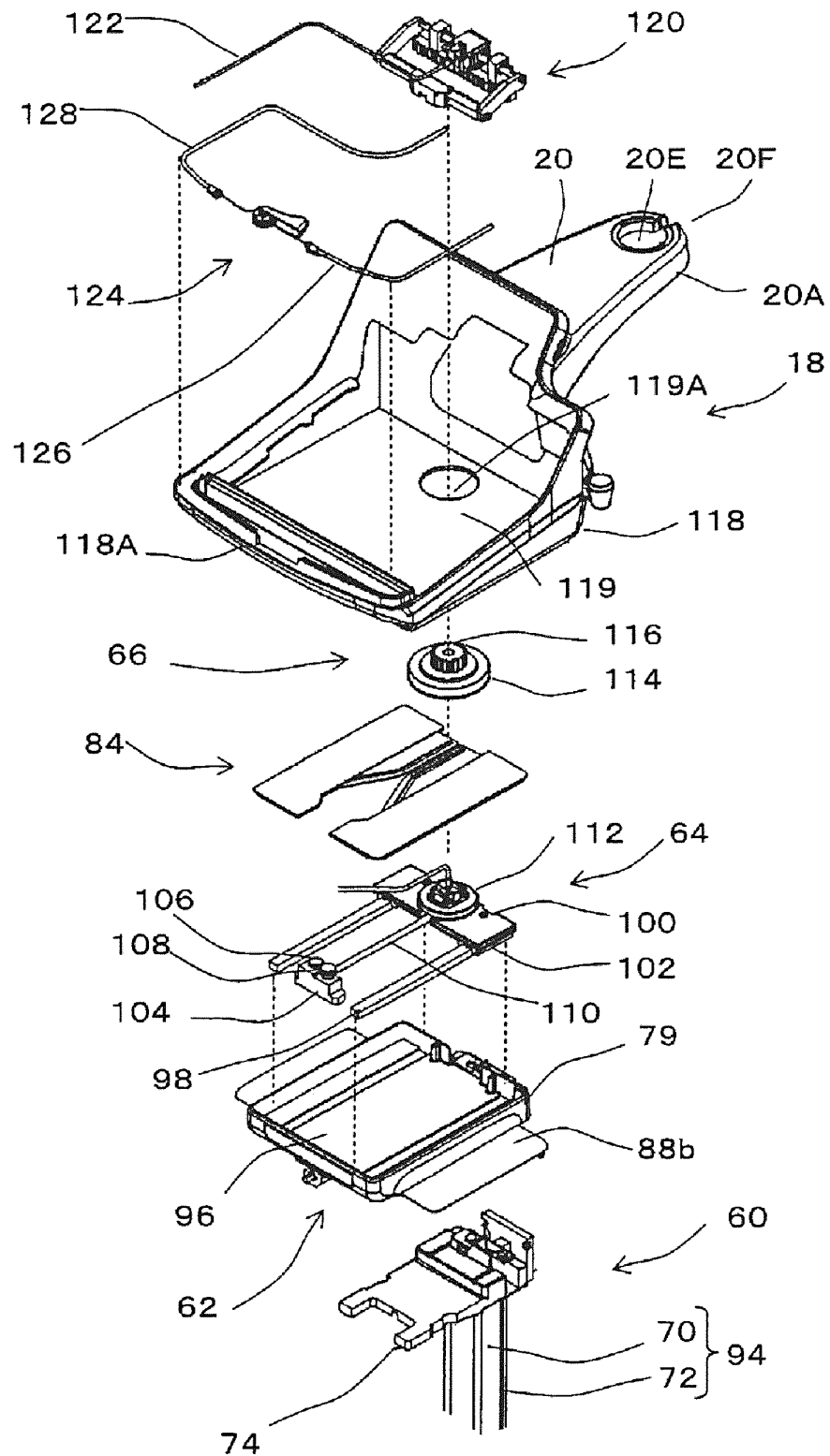


FIG. 5

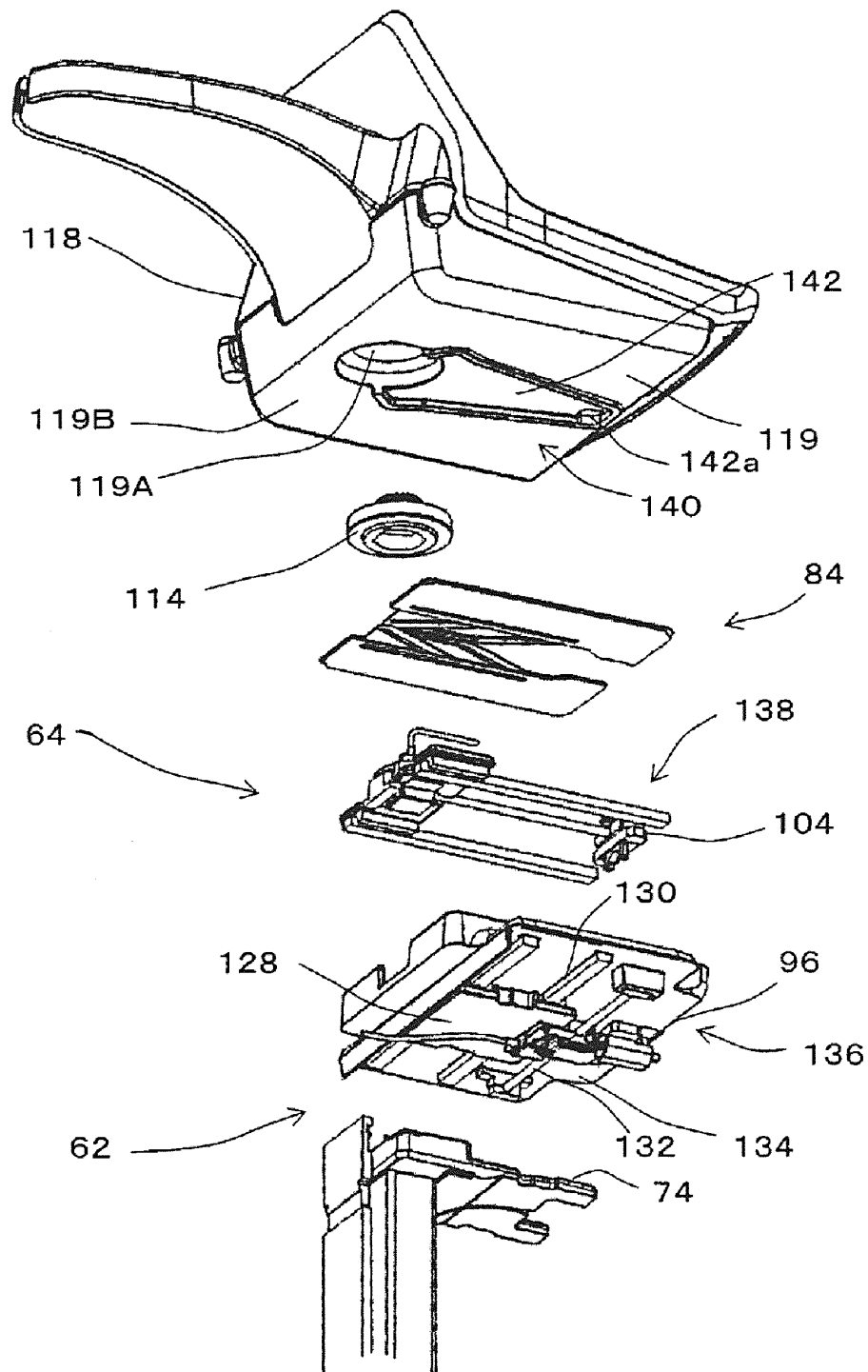


FIG. 6

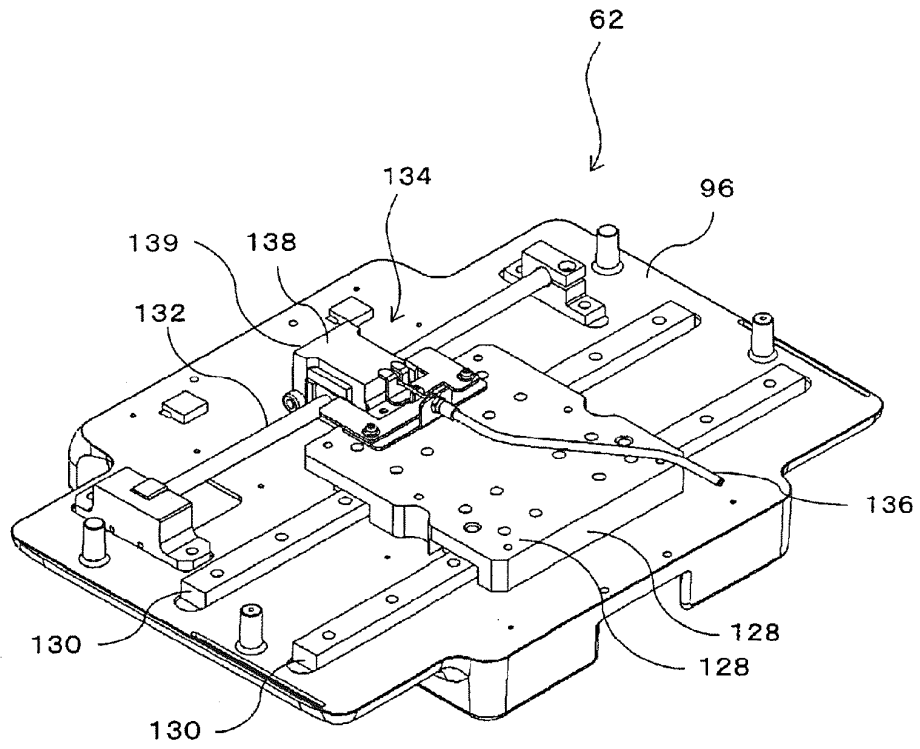


FIG. 7

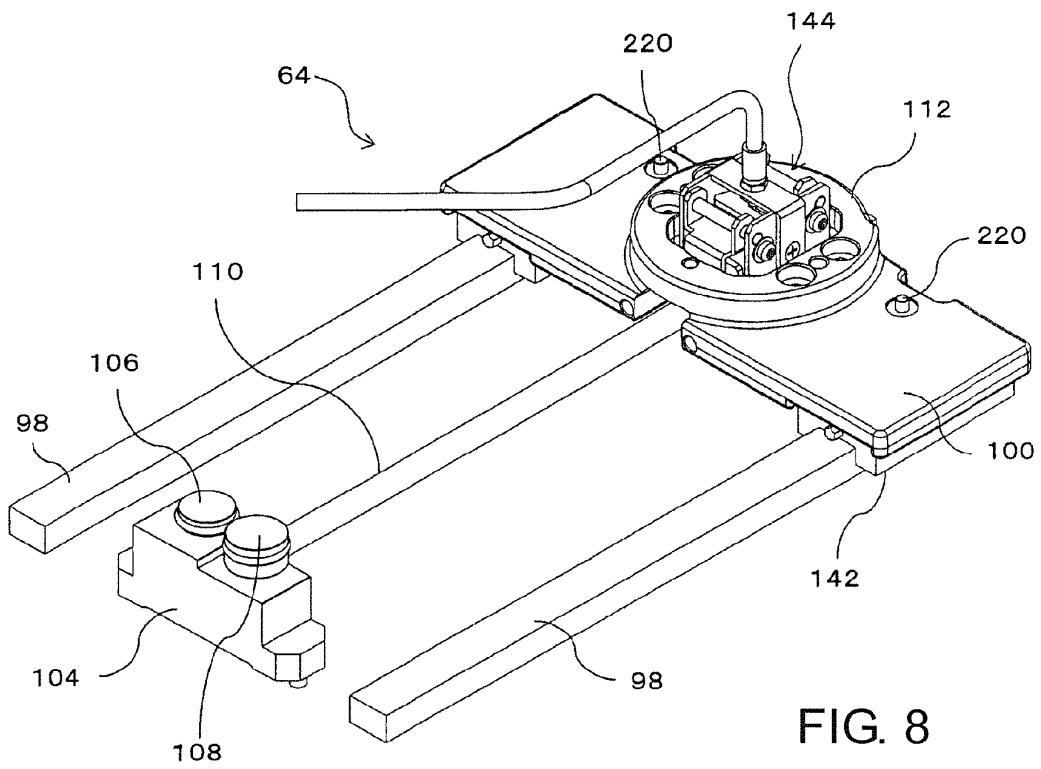


FIG. 8

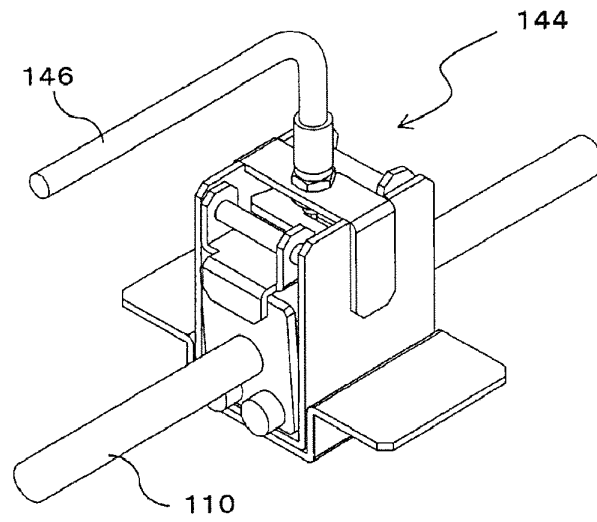


FIG. 9

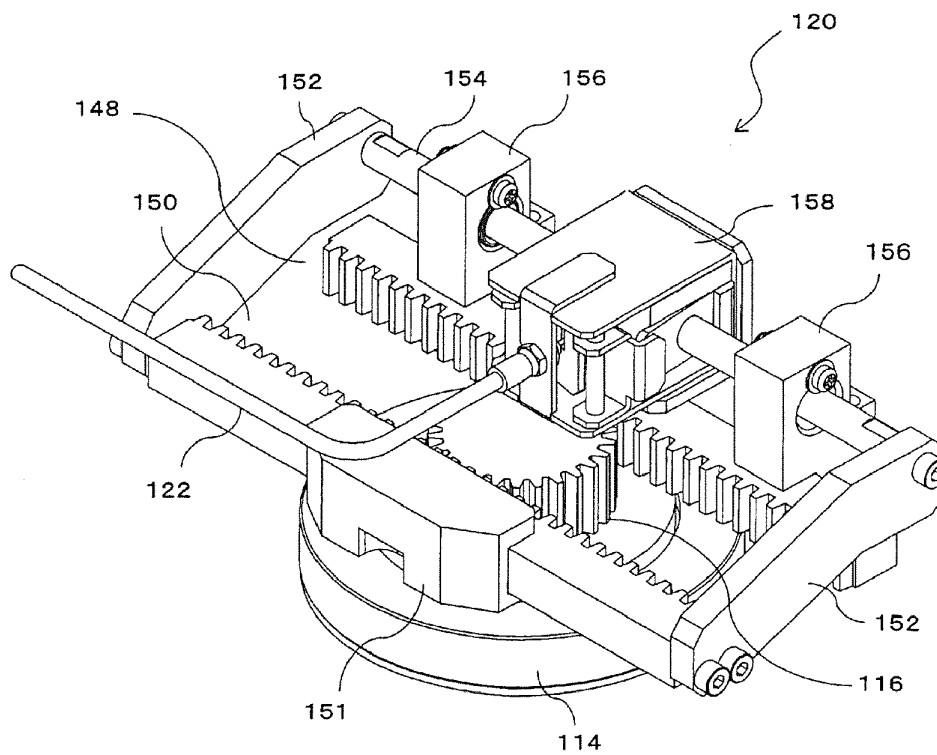


FIG. 10

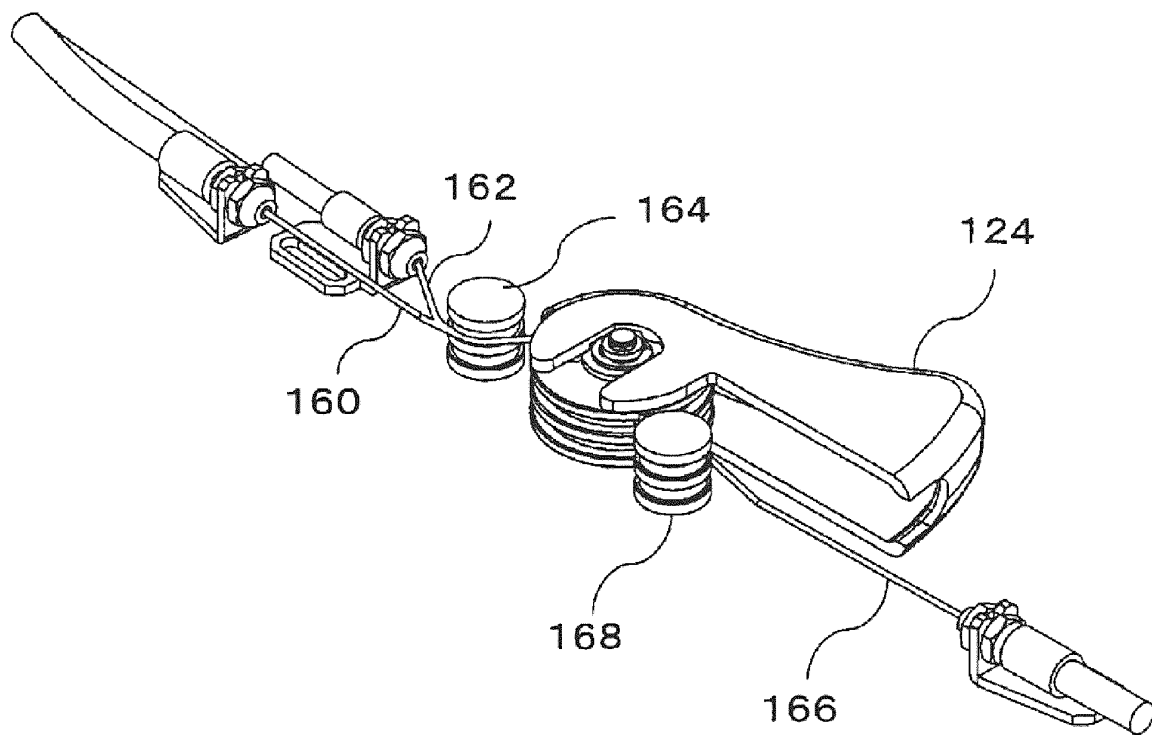


FIG. 11

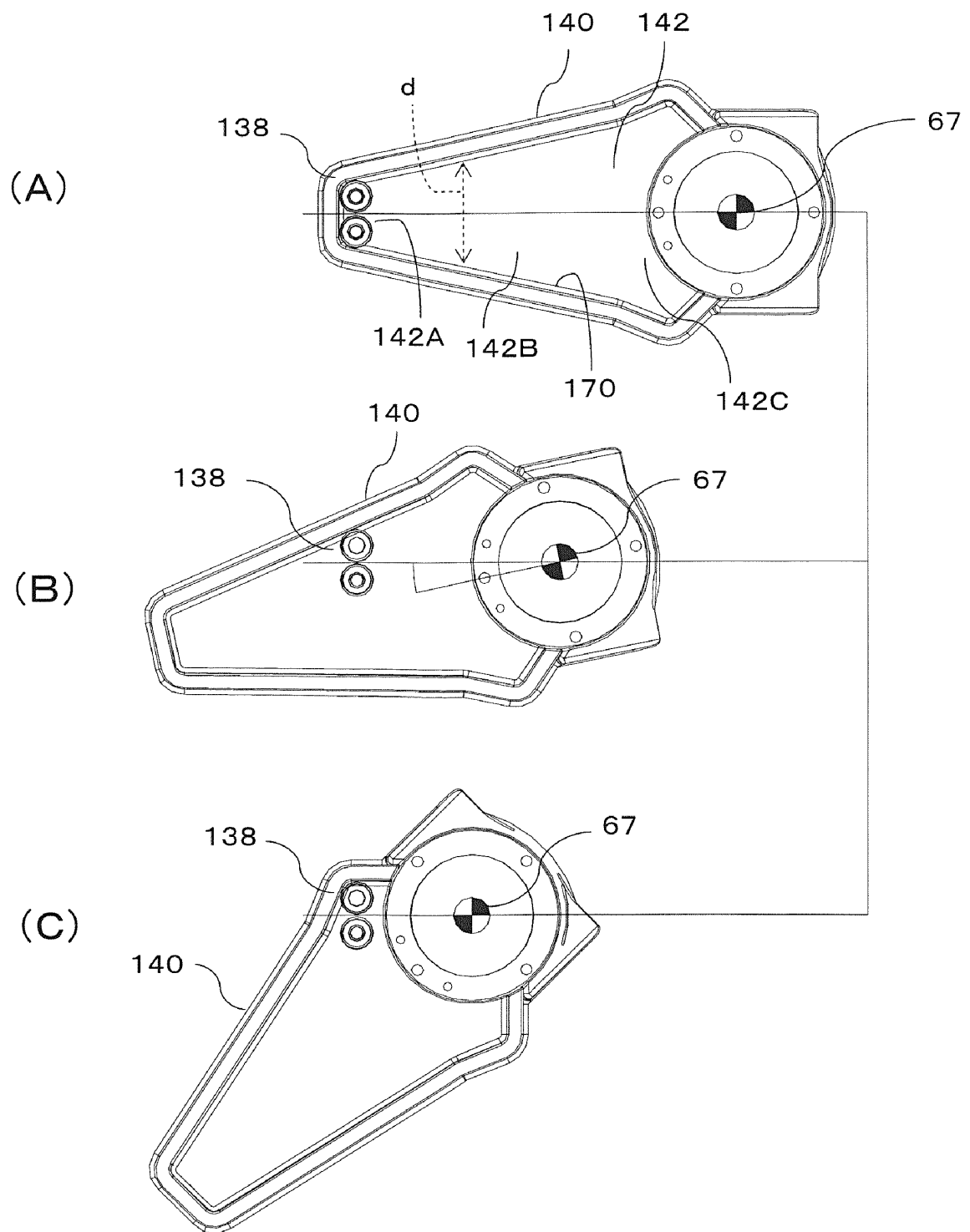


FIG. 12

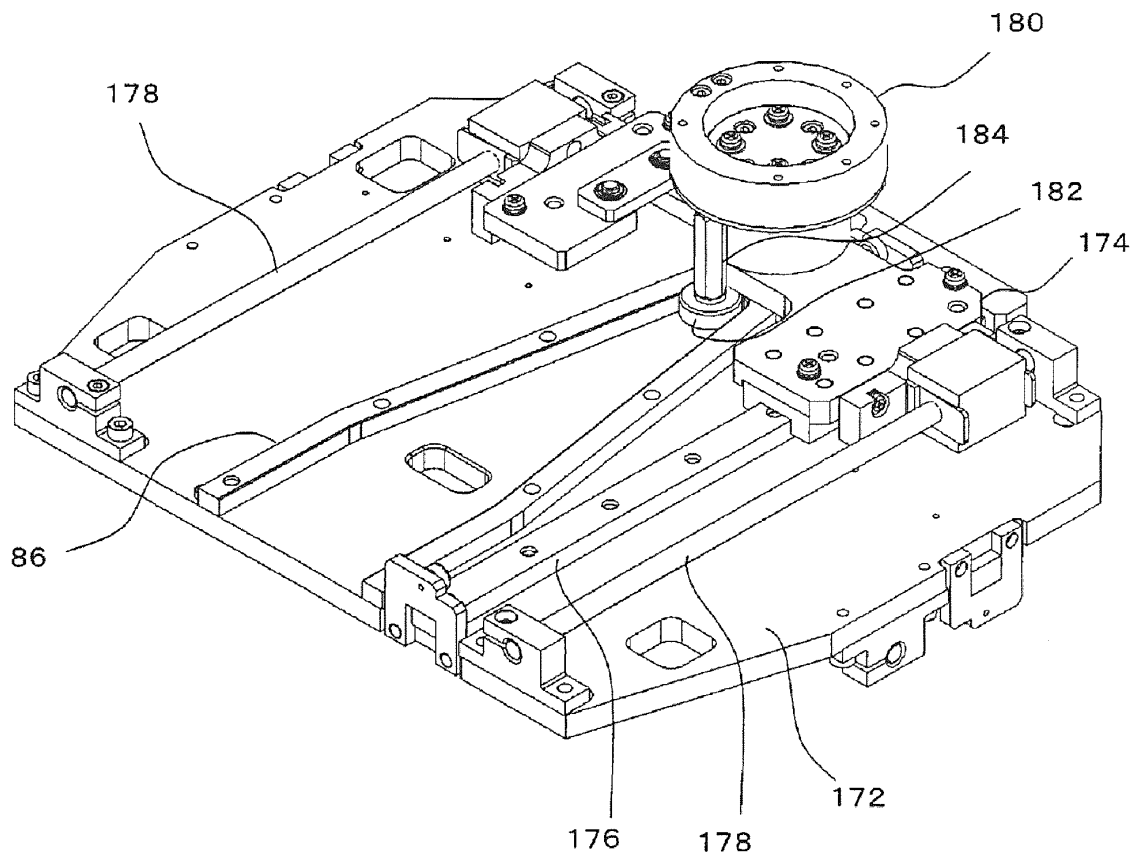


FIG. 13

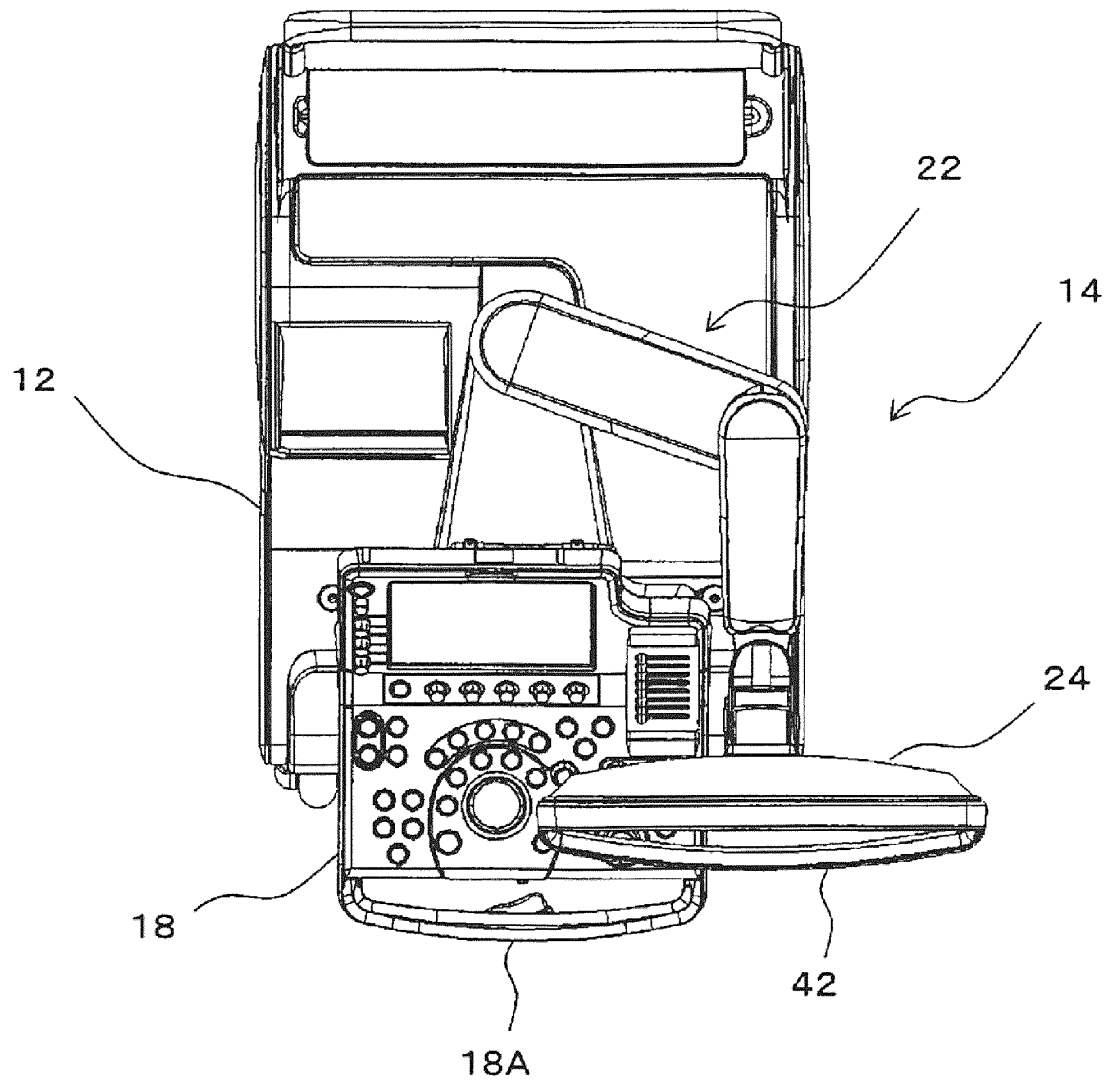


FIG. 14

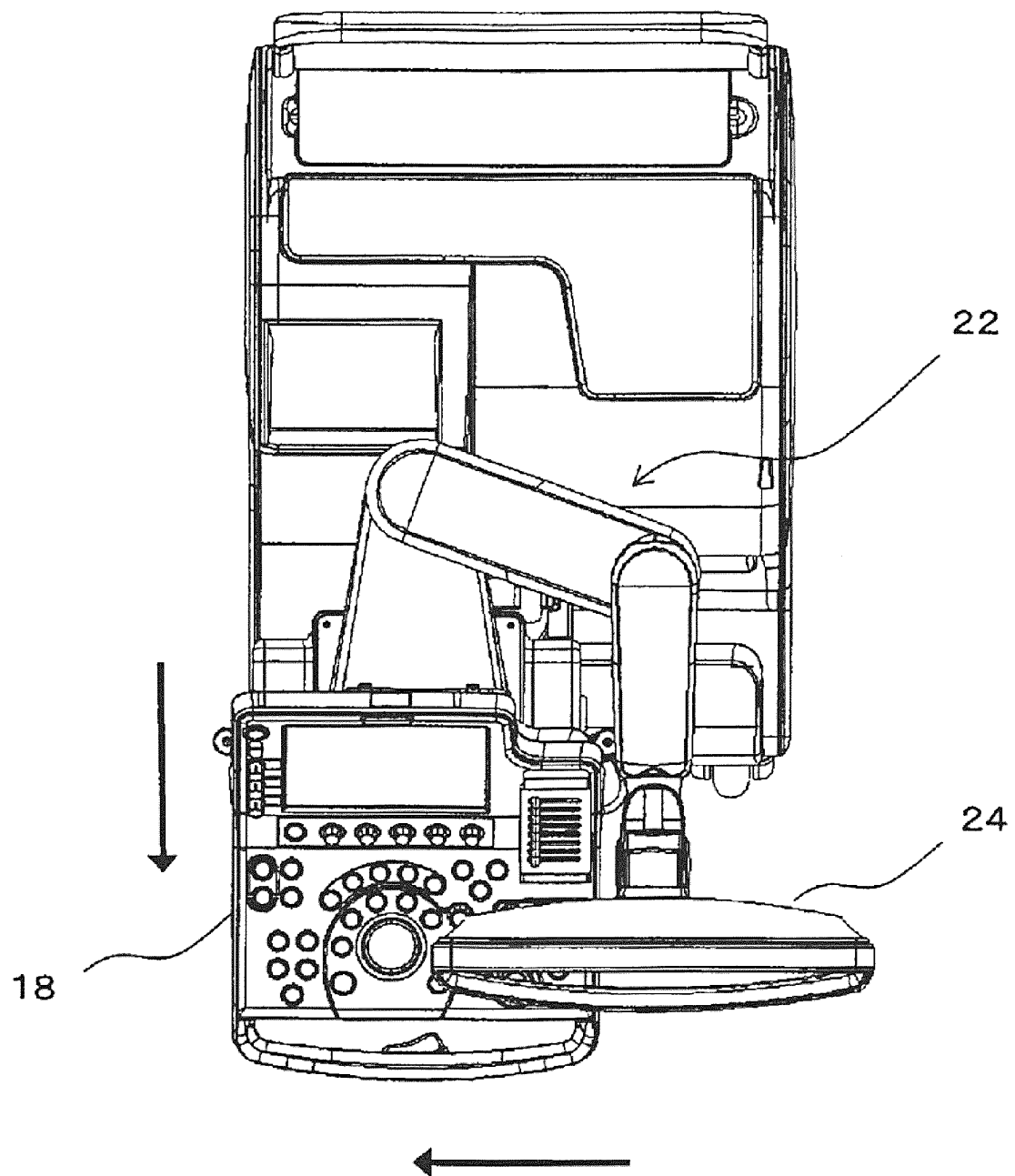


FIG. 15

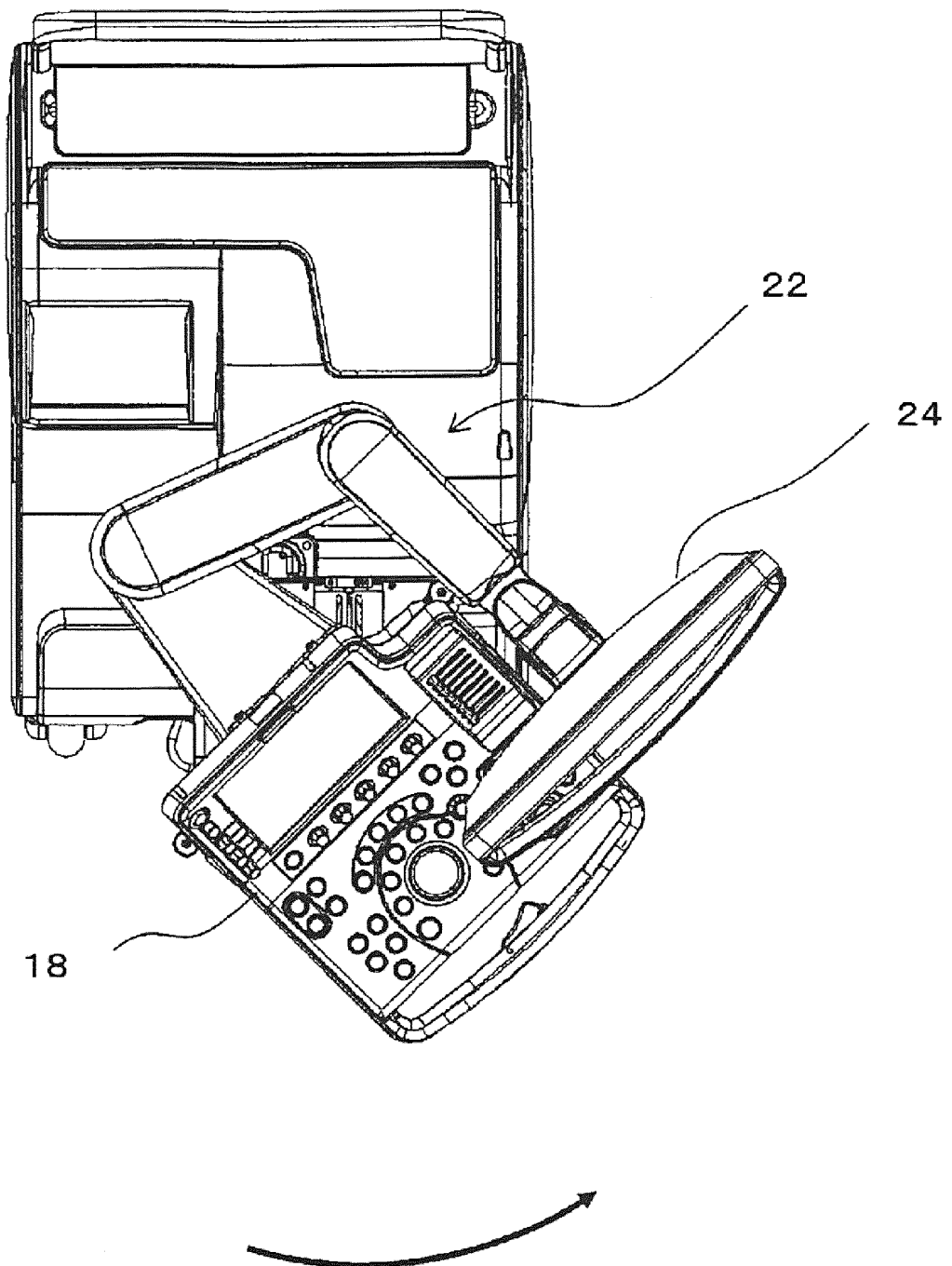


FIG. 16

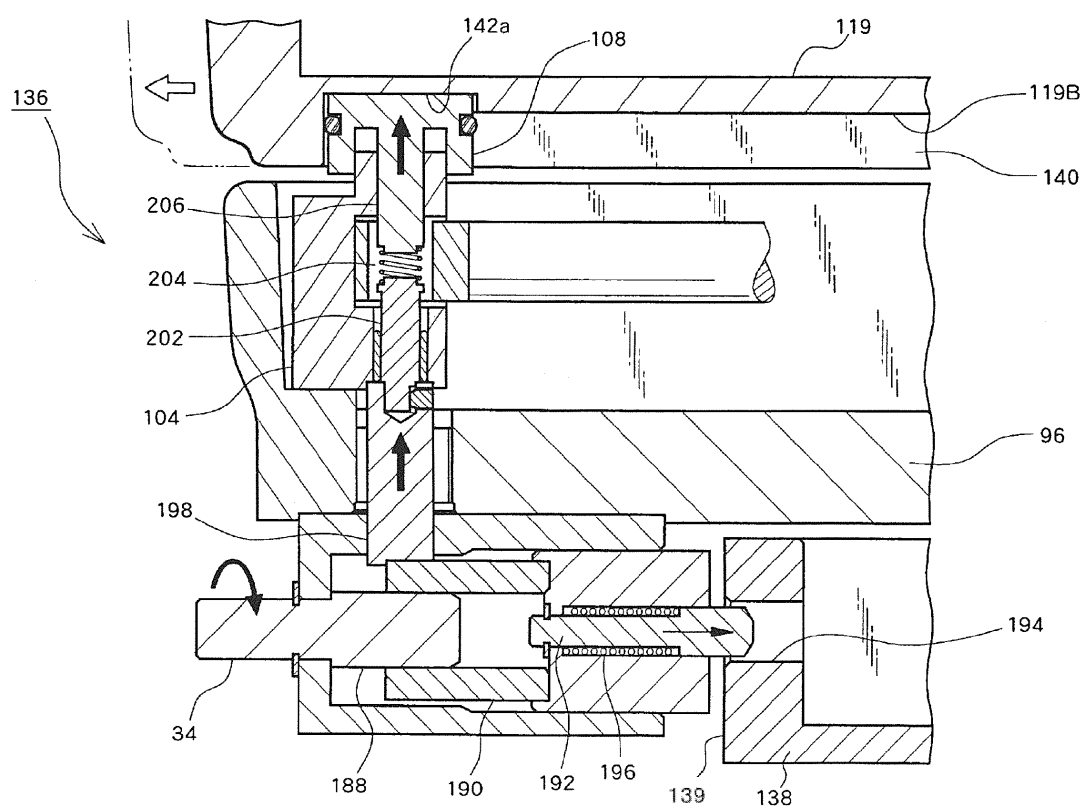


FIG. 17

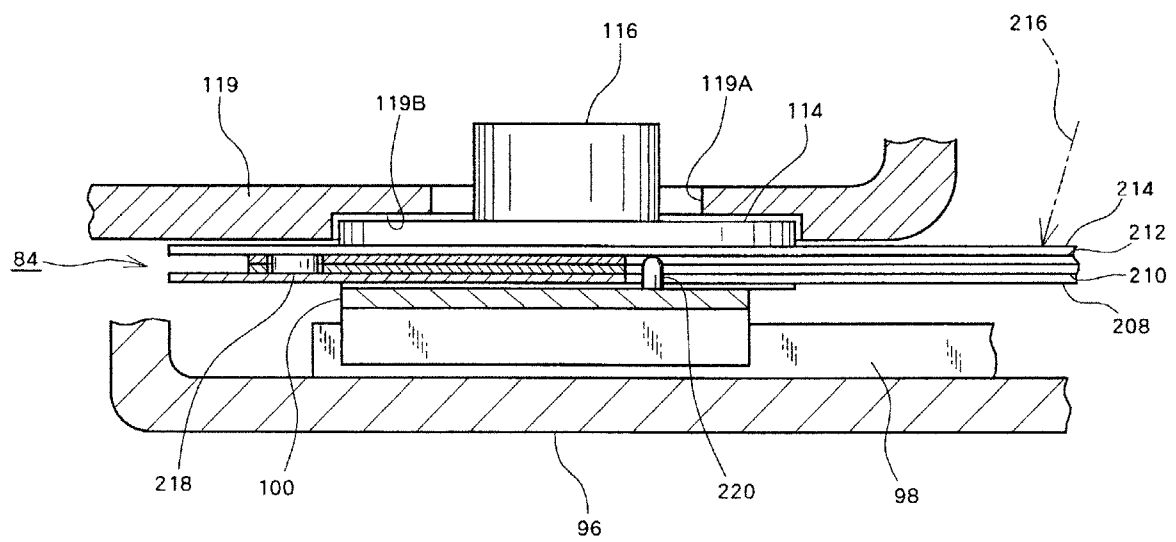


FIG. 18

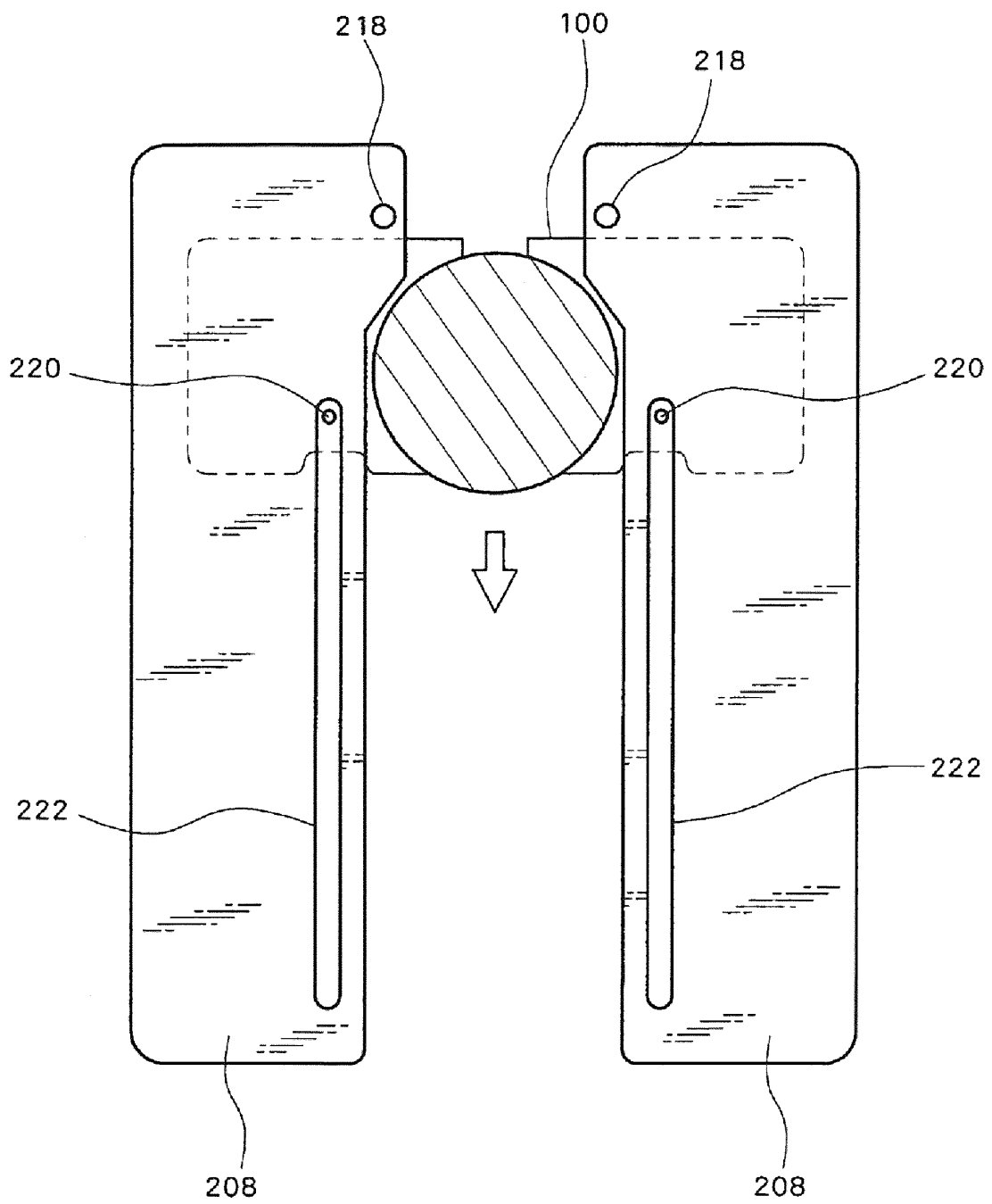


FIG. 19

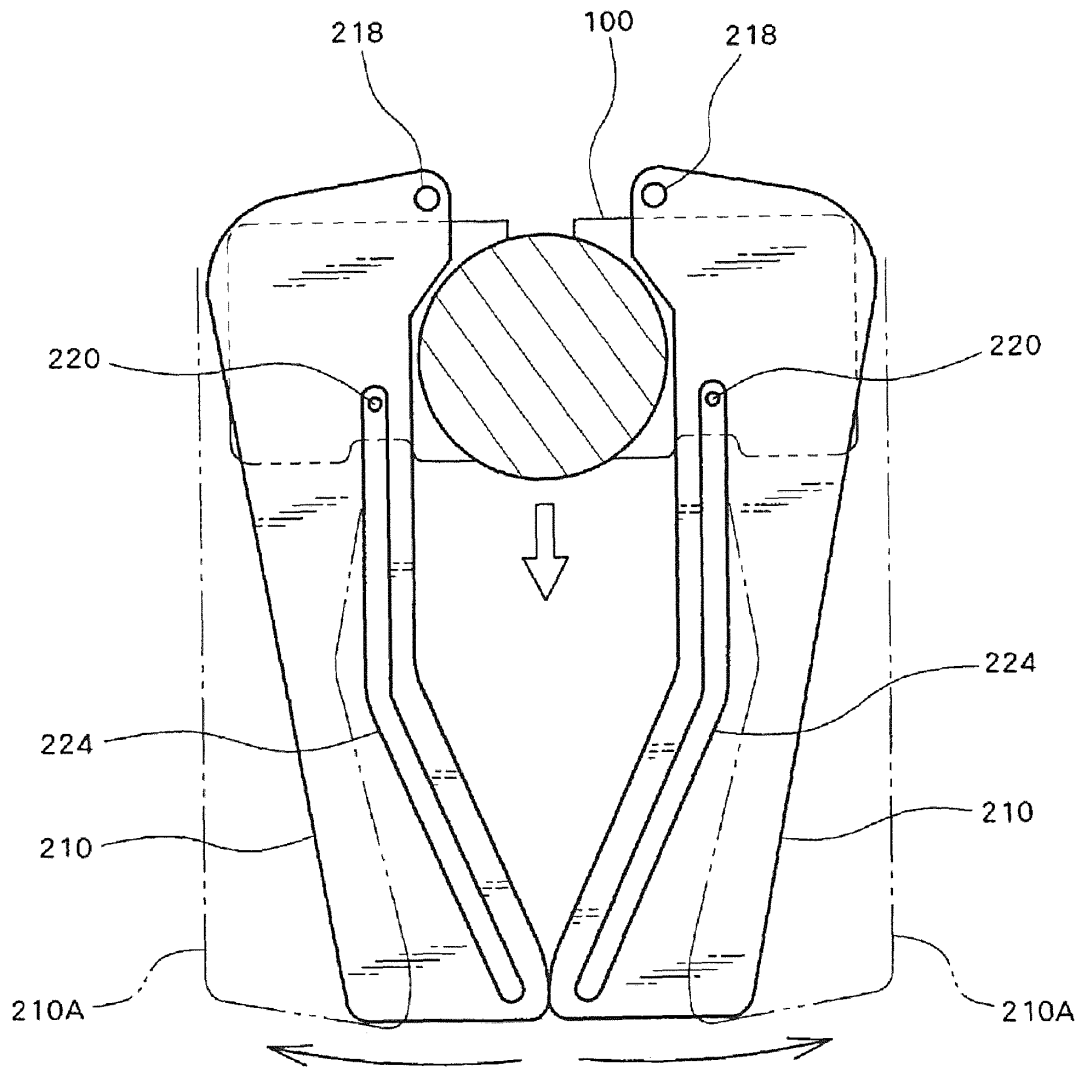


FIG. 20

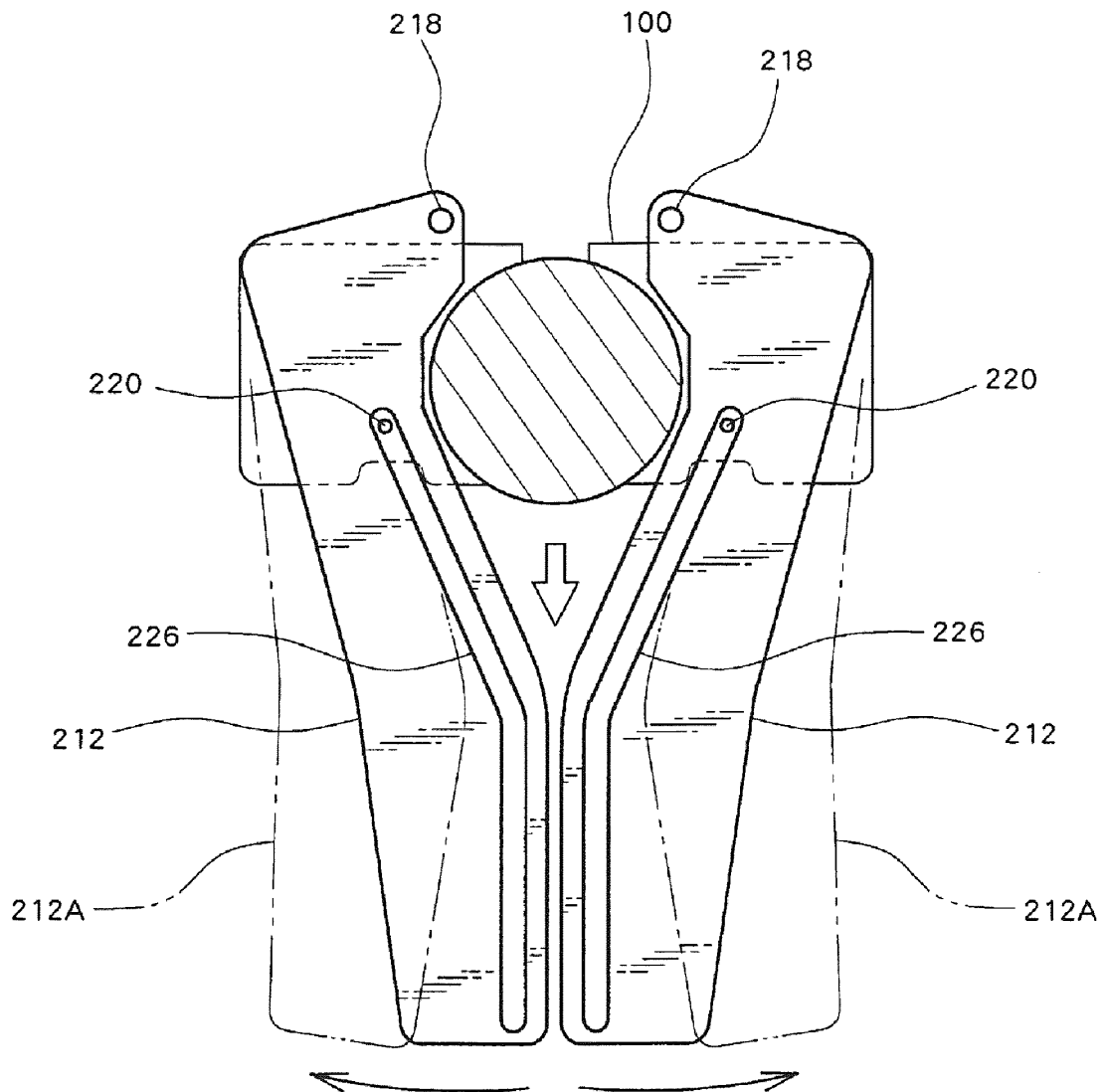


FIG. 21

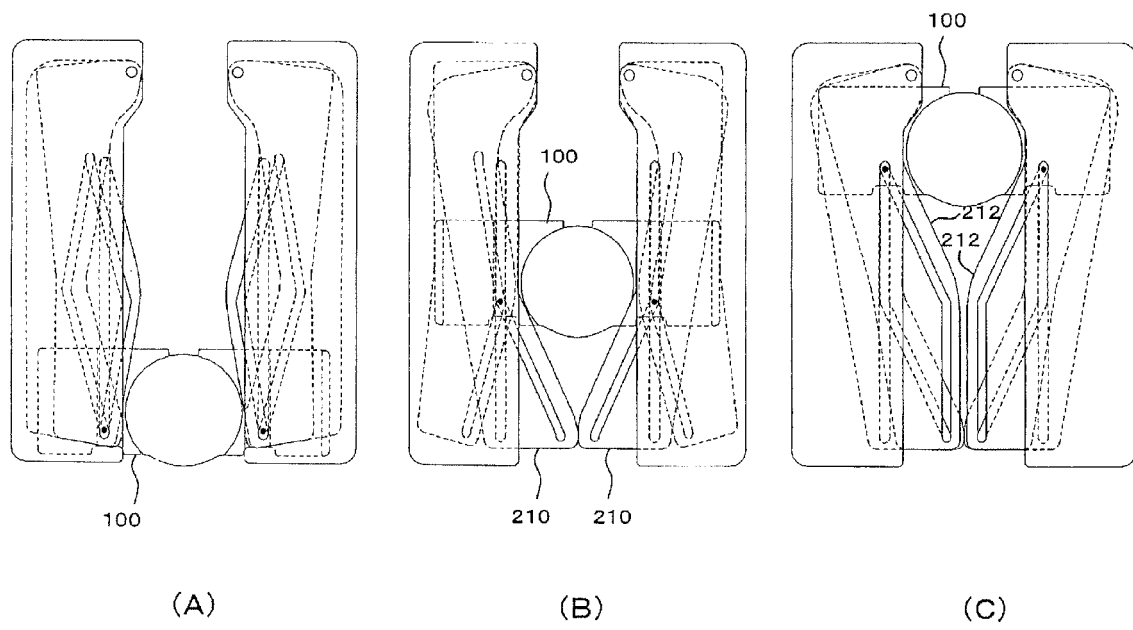


FIG. 22

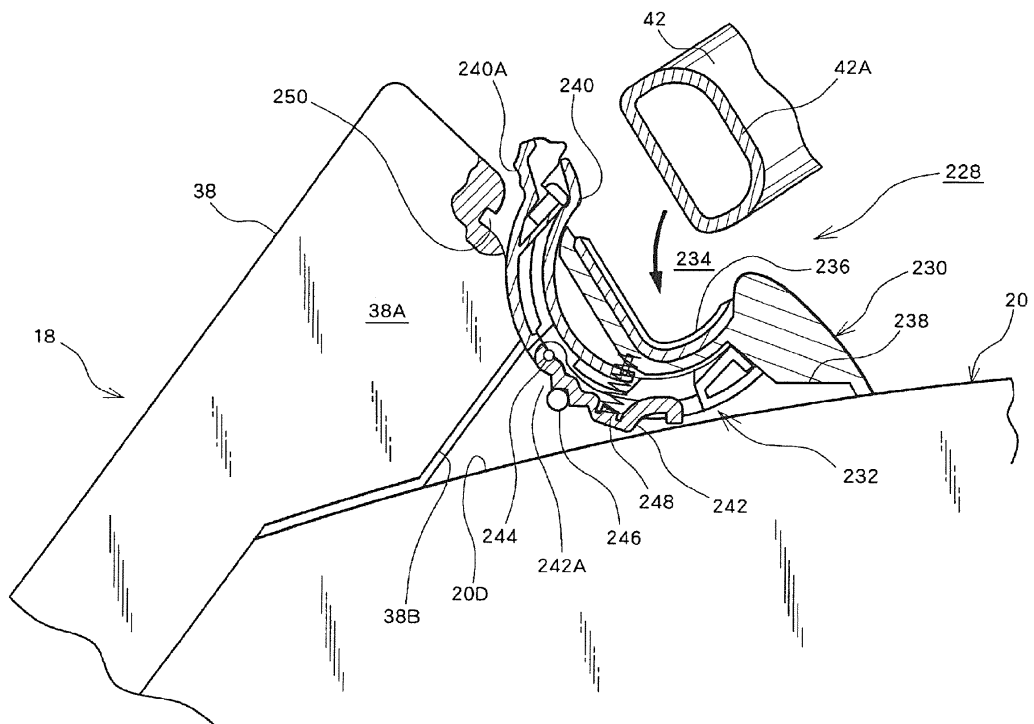


FIG. 23

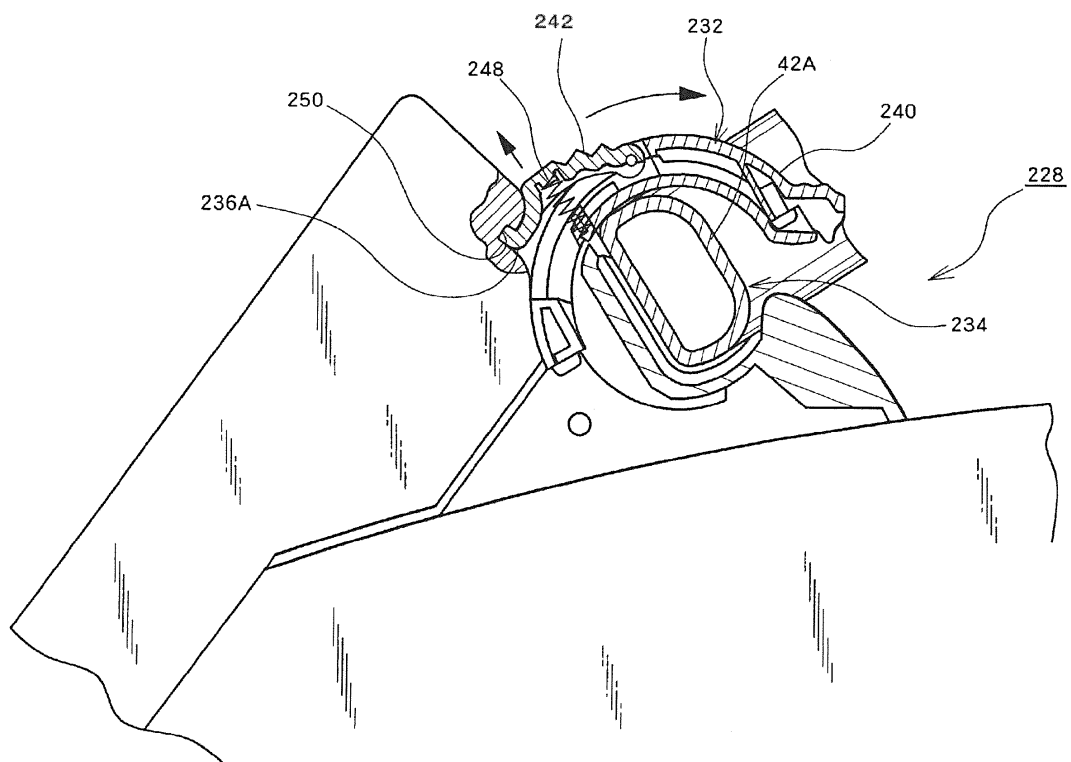


FIG. 24

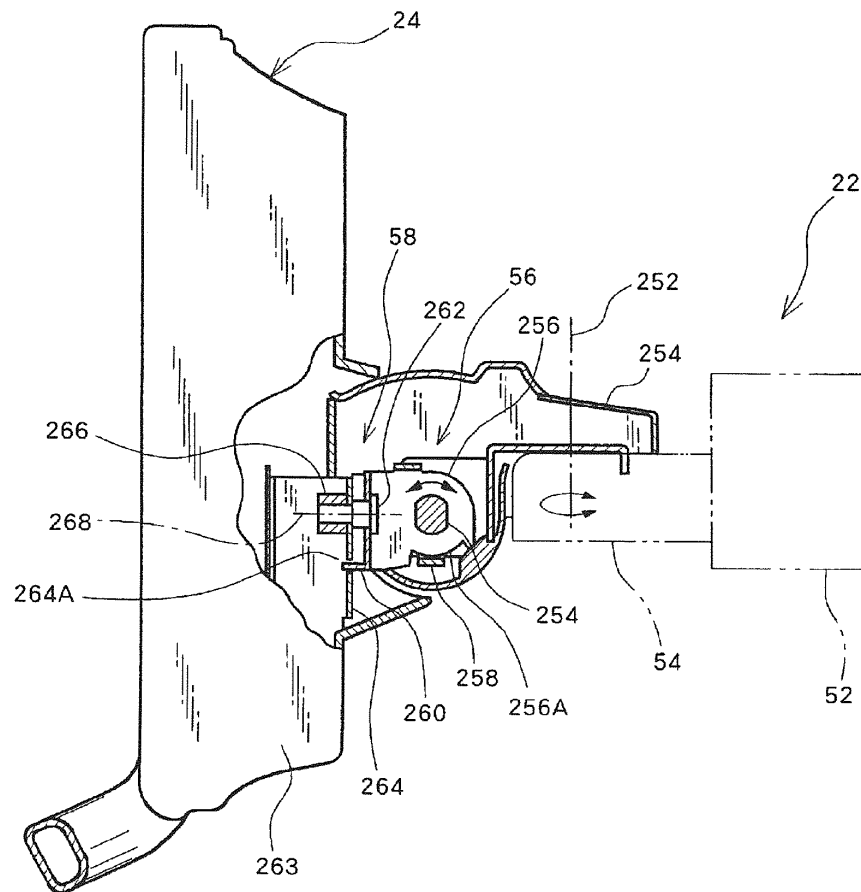


FIG. 25

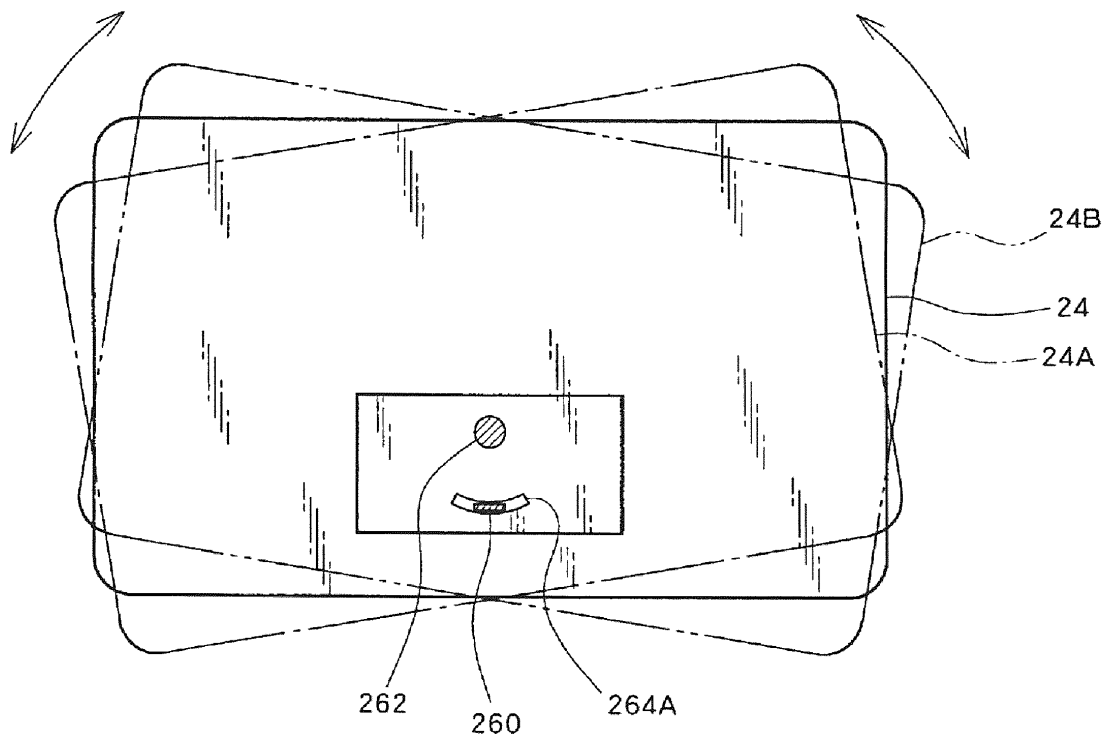


FIG. 26

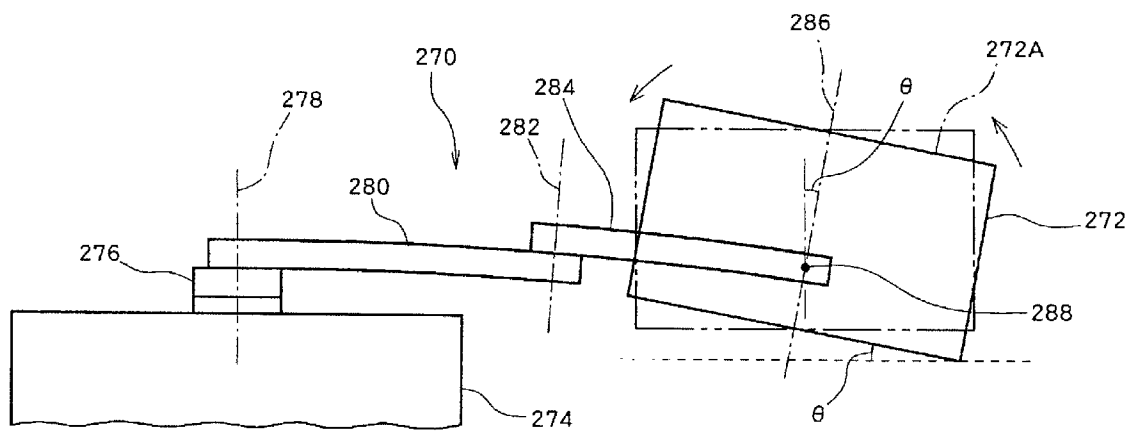


FIG. 27

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP2011/062016

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

A61B8/00 (2006.01) i

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

A61B8/00

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Jitsuyo Shinan Koho	1922-1996	Jitsuyo Shinan Toroku Koho	1996-2011
Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho	1971-2011	Toroku Jitsuyo Shinan Koho	1994-2011

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X A	JP 2007-97775 A (Toshiba Corp., Toshiba Medical Systems Corp., Toshiba Medical Systems Engineering Co., Ltd.), 19 April 2007 (19.04.2007), paragraph [0029]; fig. 3 to 6 (Family: none)	1-3 4
A	JP 5-15529 A (Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd.), 26 January 1993 (26.01.1993), entire text; all drawings (Family: none)	1-4
A	JP 8-140970 A (Toshiba Corp.), 04 June 1996 (04.06.1996), entire text; all drawings (Family: none)	1-4



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

21 June, 2011 (21.06.11)

Date of mailing of the international search report

12 July, 2011 (12.07.11)

Name and mailing address of the ISA/
Japanese Patent Office

Authorized officer

Facsimile No.

Telephone No.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP2011/062016

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	JP 2009-254725 A (Aloka Co., Ltd.), 05 November 2009 (05.11.2009), entire text; all drawings (Family: none)	1-4

Form PCT/ISA/210 (continuation of second sheet) (July 2009)

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

This list of references cited by the applicant is for the reader's convenience only. It does not form part of the European patent document. Even though great care has been taken in compiling the references, errors or omissions cannot be excluded and the EPO disclaims all liability in this regard.

Patent documents cited in the description

- JP 2007021088 A [0004]

专利名称(译)	超声诊断装置		
公开(公告)号	EP2578160A1	公开(公告)日	2013-04-10
申请号	EP2011786687	申请日	2011-05-25
[标]申请(专利权)人(译)	日立阿洛卡医疗株式会社		
申请(专利权)人(译)	日立ALOKA MEDICAL. , LTD.		
当前申请(专利权)人(译)	日立ALOKA MEDICAL. , LTD.		
[标]发明人	NAKAJIMA SHINJI		
发明人	NAKAJIMA,SHINJI		
IPC分类号	A61B8/00		
CPC分类号	A61B8/4405 A61B8/462 A61B8/463 A61B8/54		
优先权	2010121433 2010-05-27 JP		
其他公开文献	EP2578160A4 EP2578160B1		
外部链接	Espacenet		

摘要(译)

所公开的超声波诊断装置在倾斜部分和显示单元之间设置有姿态校正机构，用于消除由于臂机构的端部下垂而引起的显示单元的倾斜。姿态校正机构具有轴构件和轴承，并使显示单元围绕其显示表面的法线旋转。插脚进入狭缝，从而防止显示单元旋转超过必要的程度。

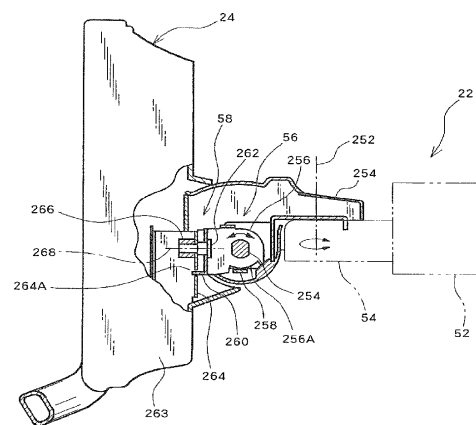


FIG. 25