



US 20050149152A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2005/0149152 A1****Bertolero et al.**(43) **Pub. Date: Jul. 7, 2005**(54) **CARDIAC ABLATION DEVICES AND METHODS**(52) **U.S. Cl. 607/96**(76) Inventors: **Arthur A. Bertolero**, Danville, CA (US); **Tamer Ibrahim**, Pleasant Hill, CA (US)(57) **ABSTRACT**

Correspondence Address:

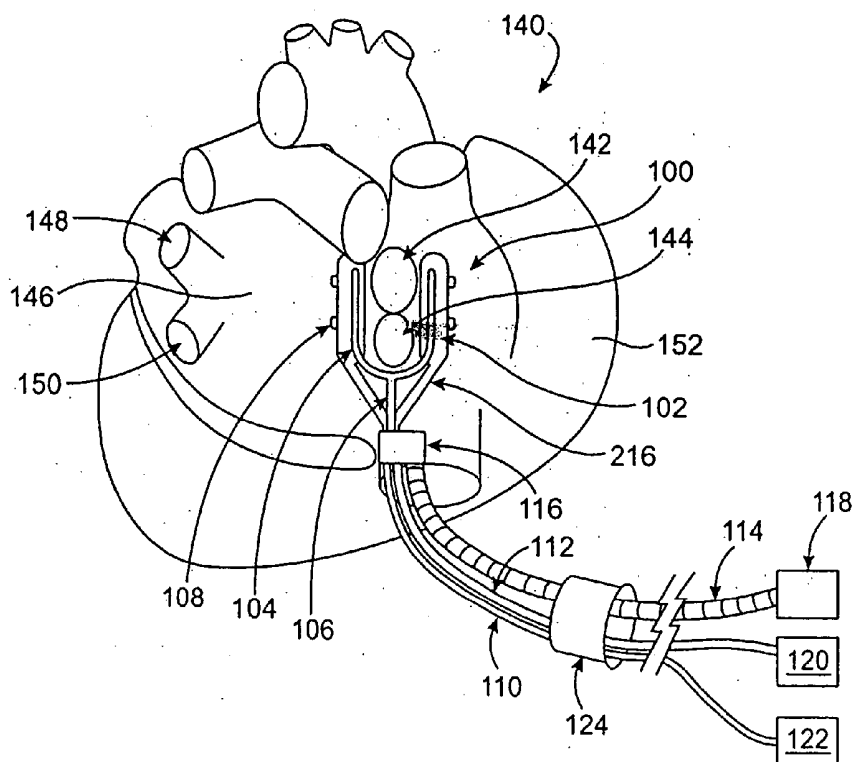
GREGORY SMITH & ASSOCIATES
3900 NEWPARK MALL ROAD, 3RD FLOOR
NEWARK, CA 94560 (US)(21) Appl. No.: **10/988,021**(22) Filed: **Nov. 12, 2004****Related U.S. Application Data**

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 10/410,618, filed on Apr. 8, 2003, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 10/272,446, filed on Oct. 15, 2002, now Pat. No. 6,849,075.

(60) Provisional application No. 60/337,070, filed on Dec. 4, 2001. Provisional application No. 60/519,726, filed on Nov. 12, 2003.

Publication Classification(51) **Int. Cl.⁷ A61F 7/00**

Devices and methods provide for ablation of cardiac tissue for treating cardiac arrhythmias such as atrial fibrillation. Although the devices and methods are often be used to ablate epicardial tissue in the vicinity of at least one pulmonary vein, various embodiments may be used to ablate other cardiac tissues in other locations on a heart. Devices generally include at least one tissue contacting member for contacting epicardial tissue and securing the ablation device to the epicardial tissue, and at least one ablation member for ablating the tissue. Various embodiments include features, such as suction apertures, which enable the device to attach to the epicardial surface with sufficient strength to allow the tissue to be stabilized via the device. For example, some embodiments may be used to stabilize a beating heart to enable a beating heart ablation procedure. Many of the devices may be introduced into a patient via minimally invasive introducer devices and the like. Although devices and methods of the invention may be used to ablate epicardial tissue to treat atrial fibrillation, they may also be used in veterinary or research contexts, to treat various heart conditions other than atrial fibrillation and/or to ablate cardiac tissue other than the epicardium.



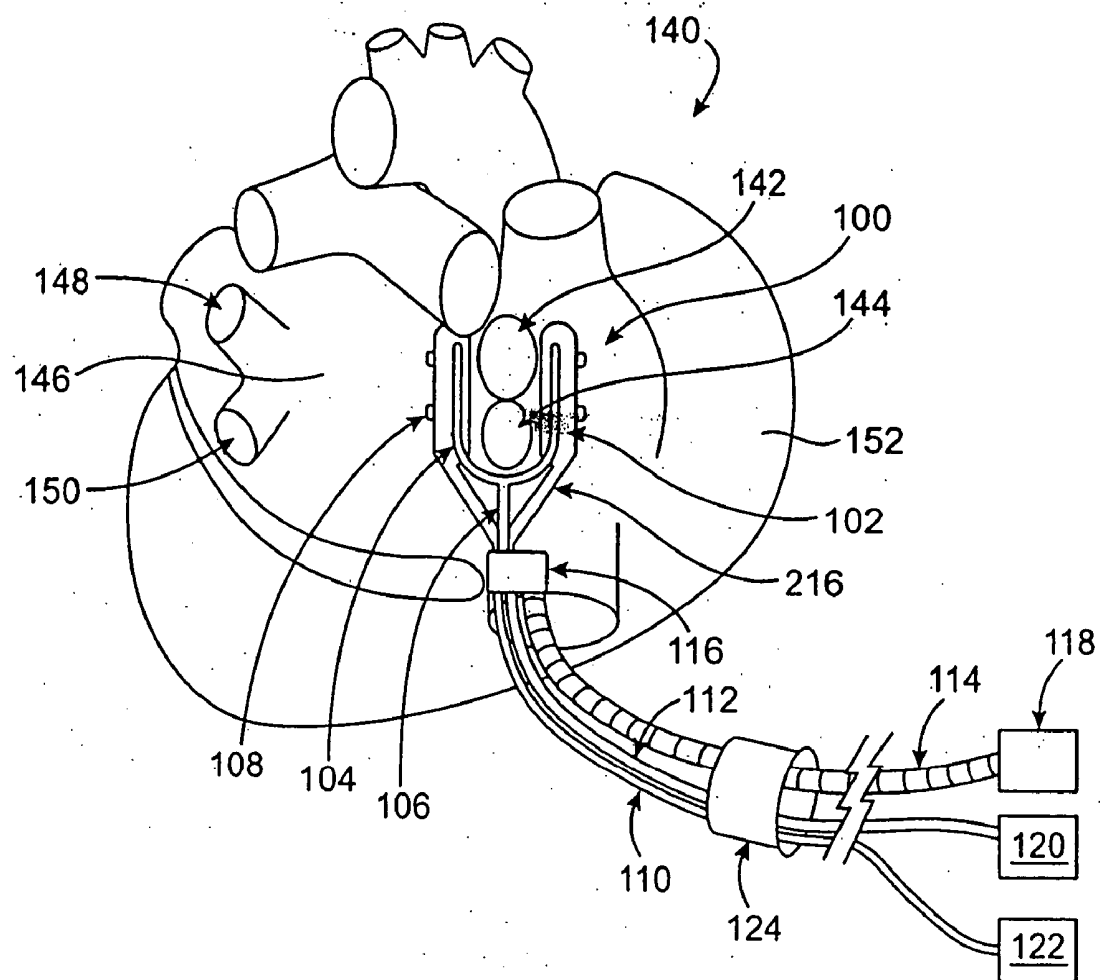
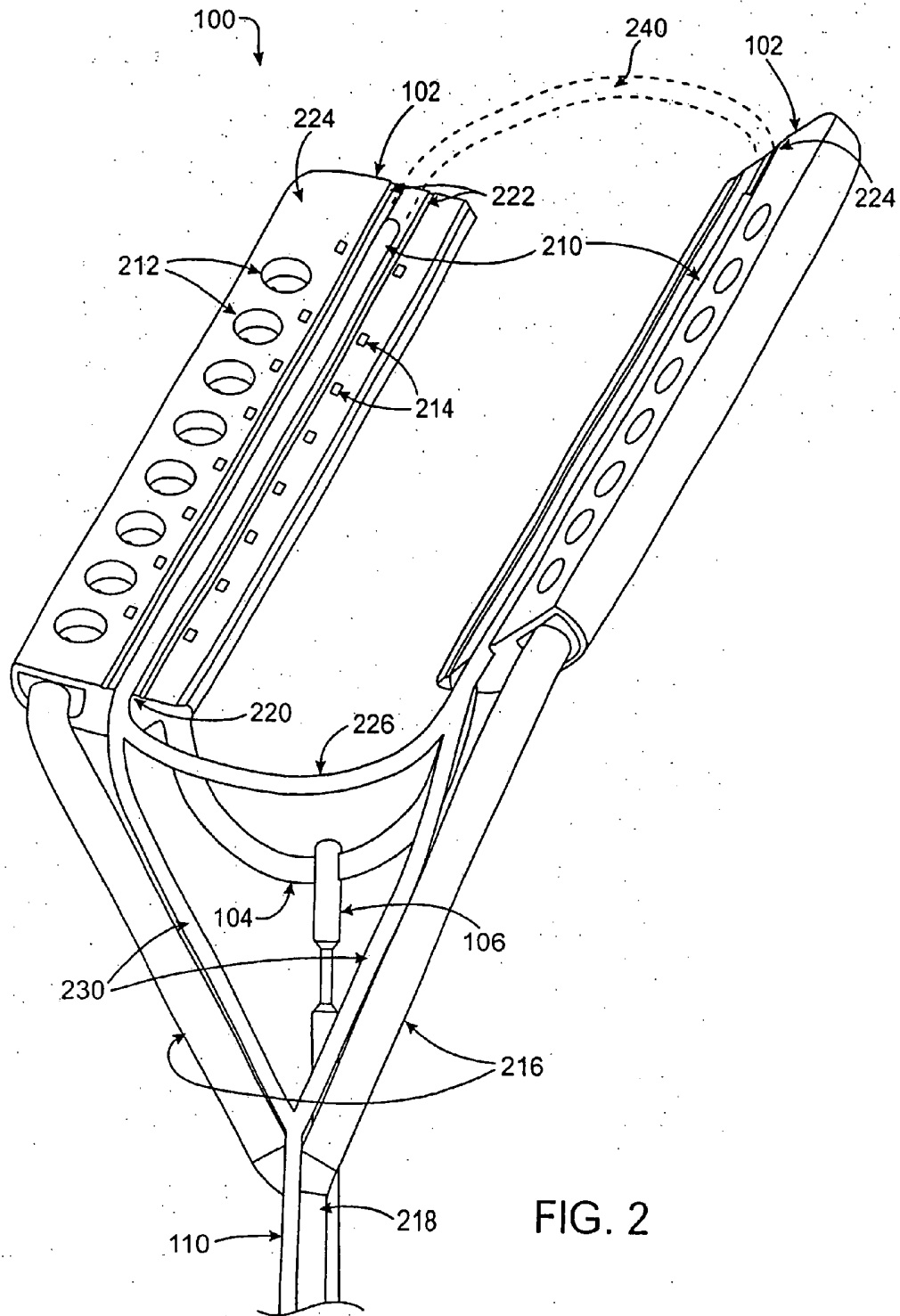
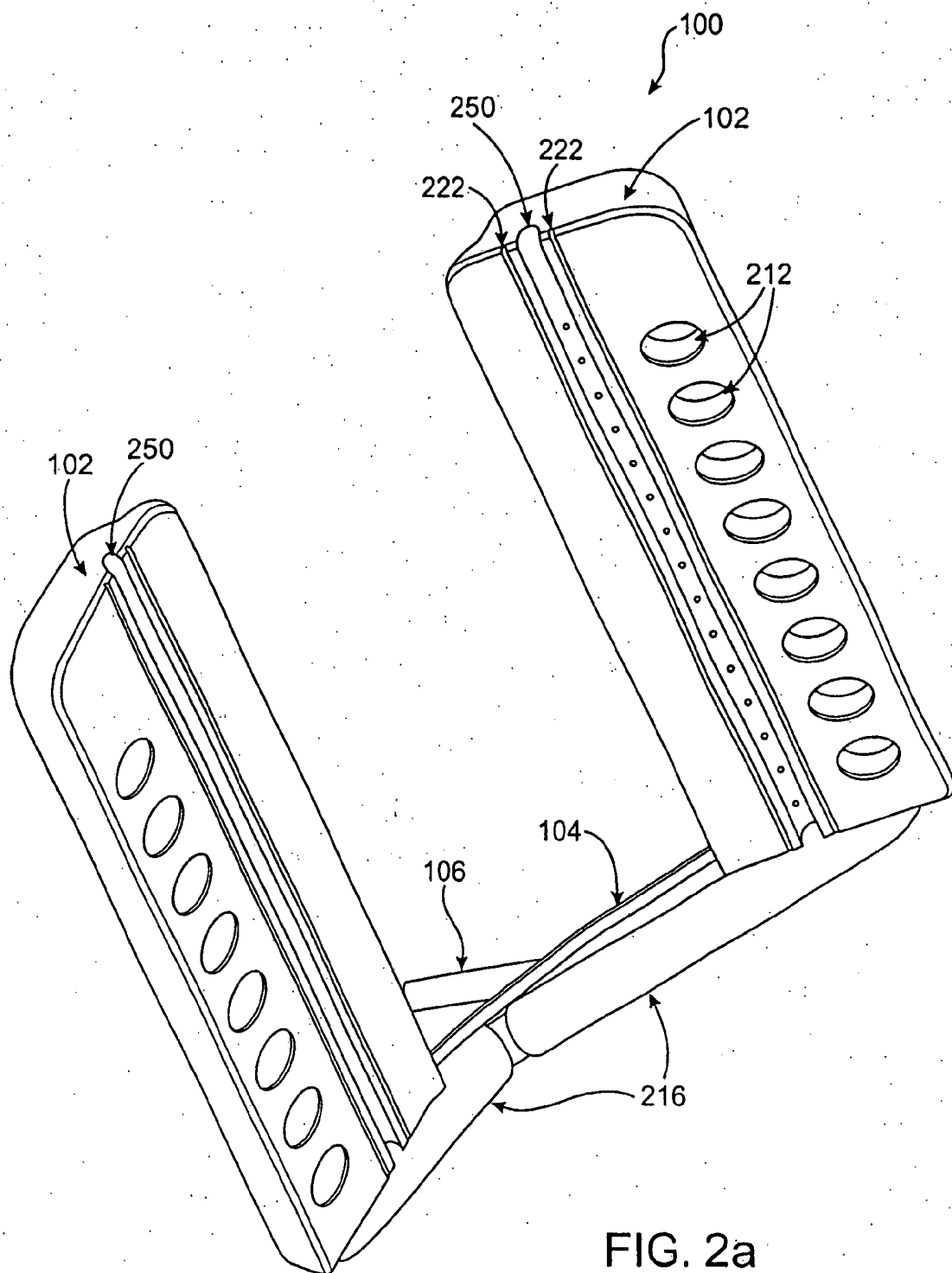


FIG. 1





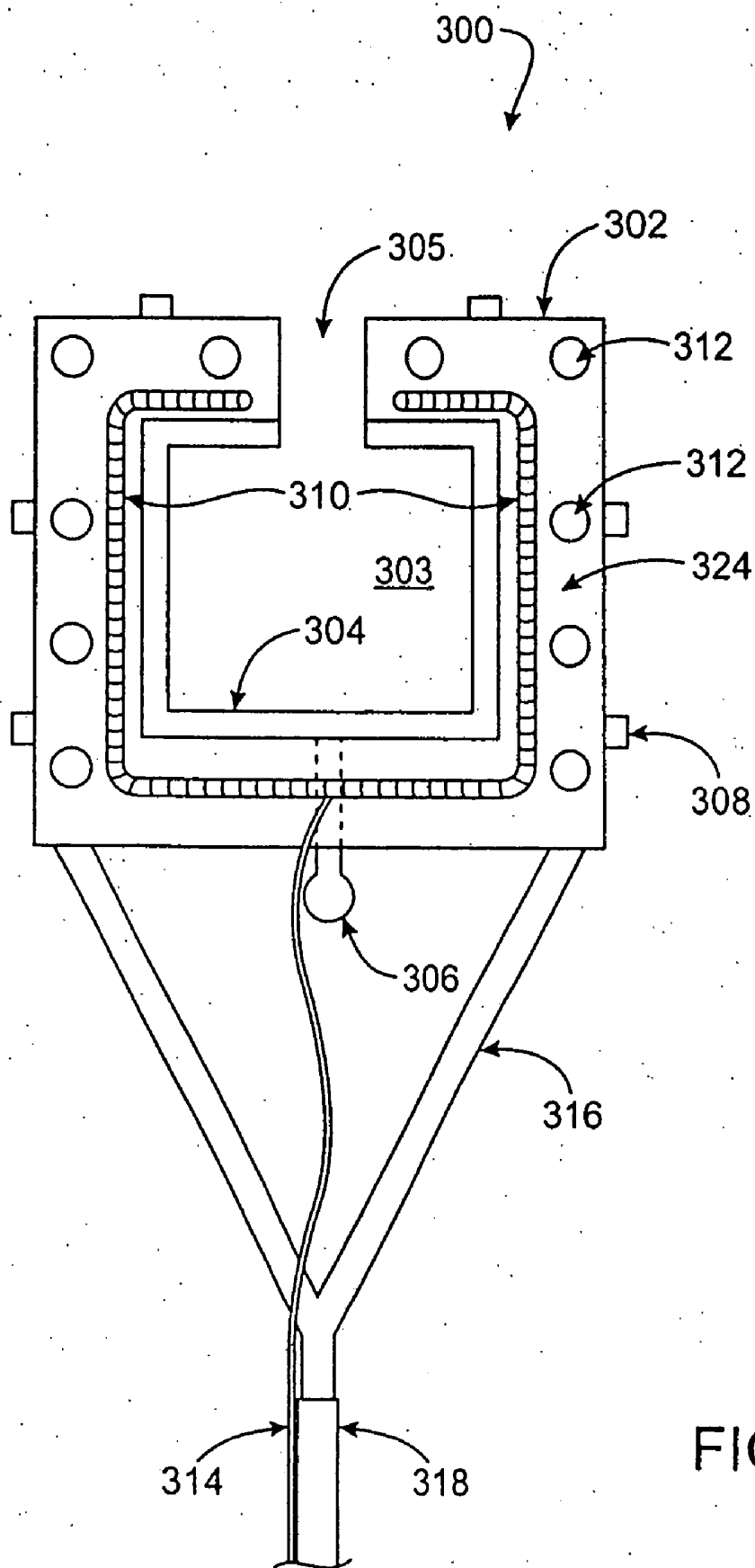


FIG. 3

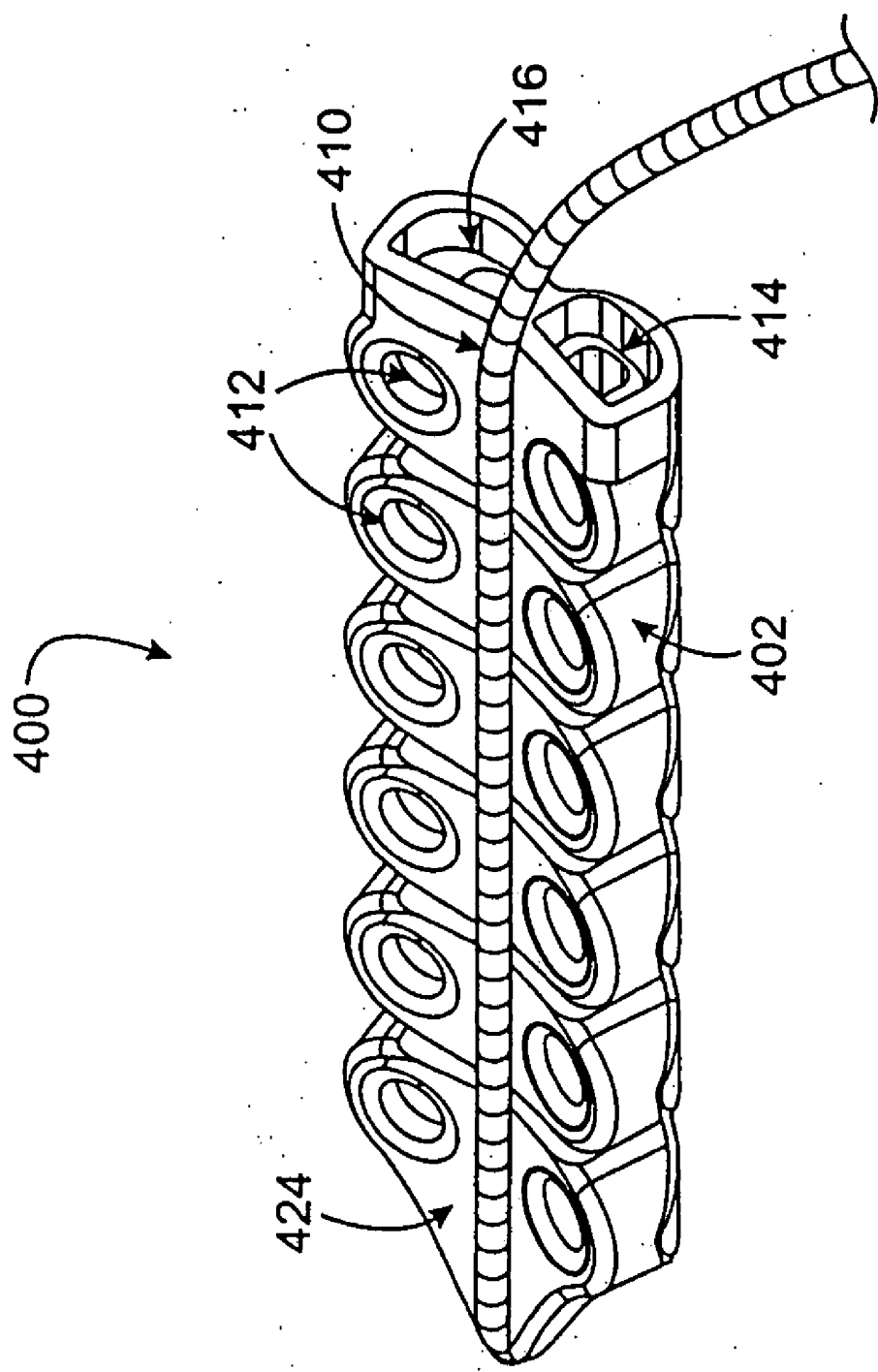


FIG. 4

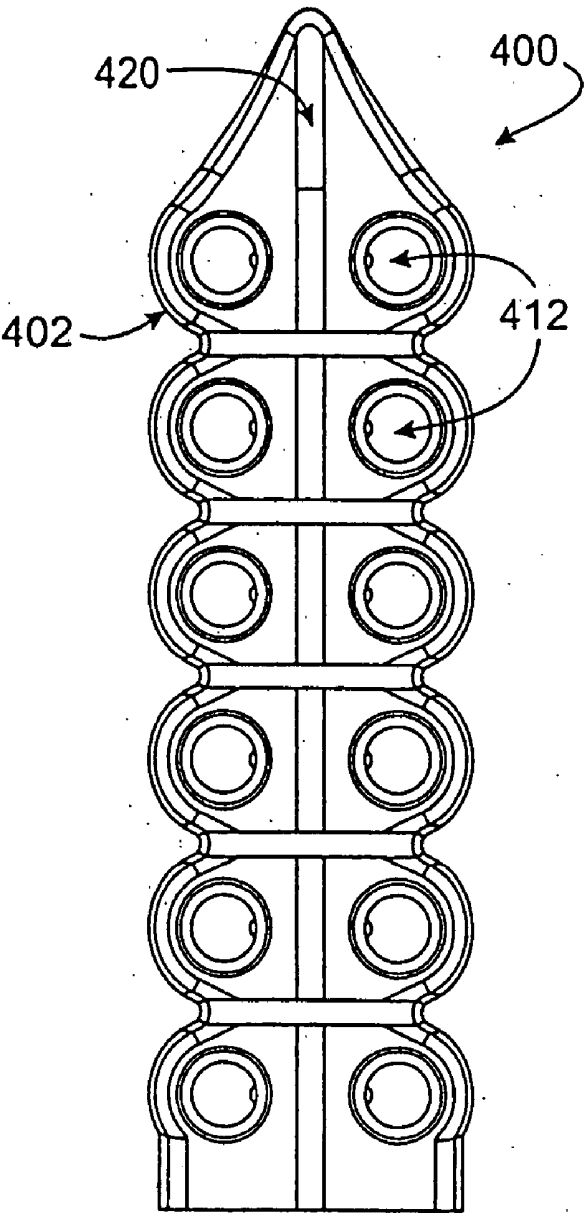


FIG. 4a

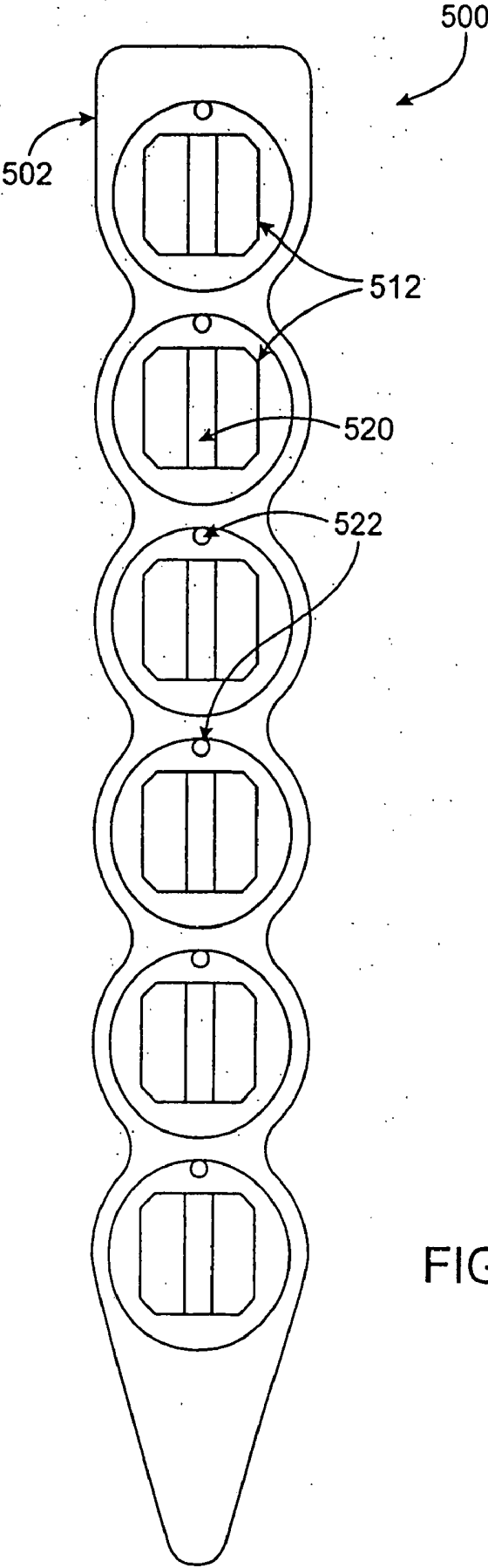


FIG. 5

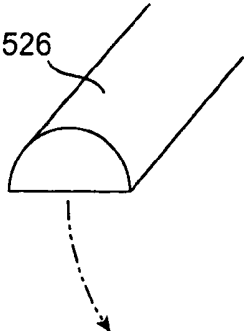
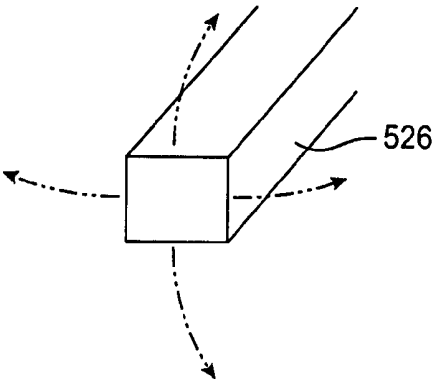
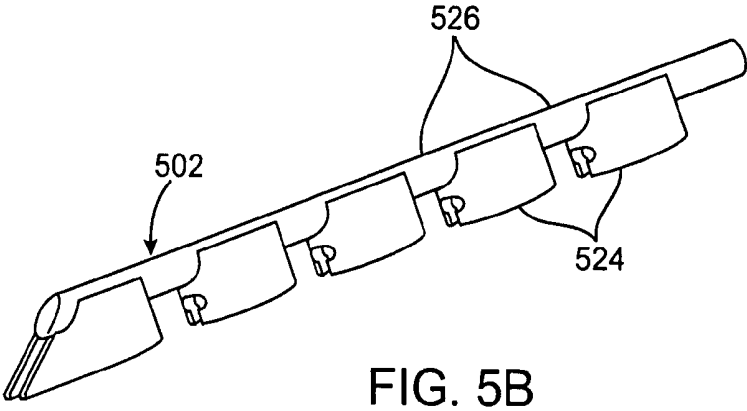
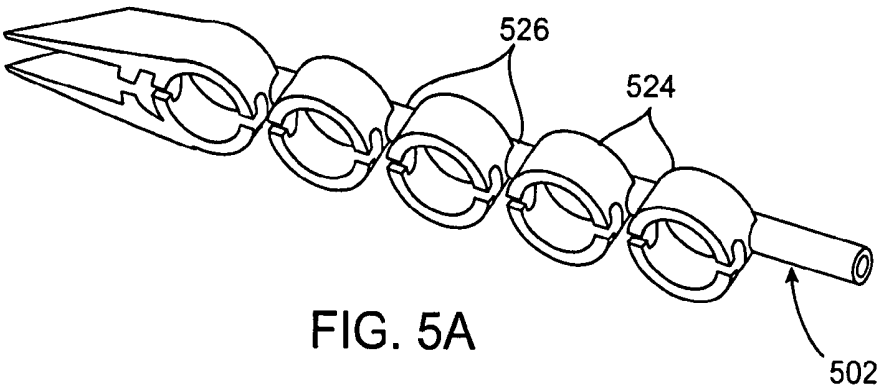


FIG. 5C

FIG. 5D

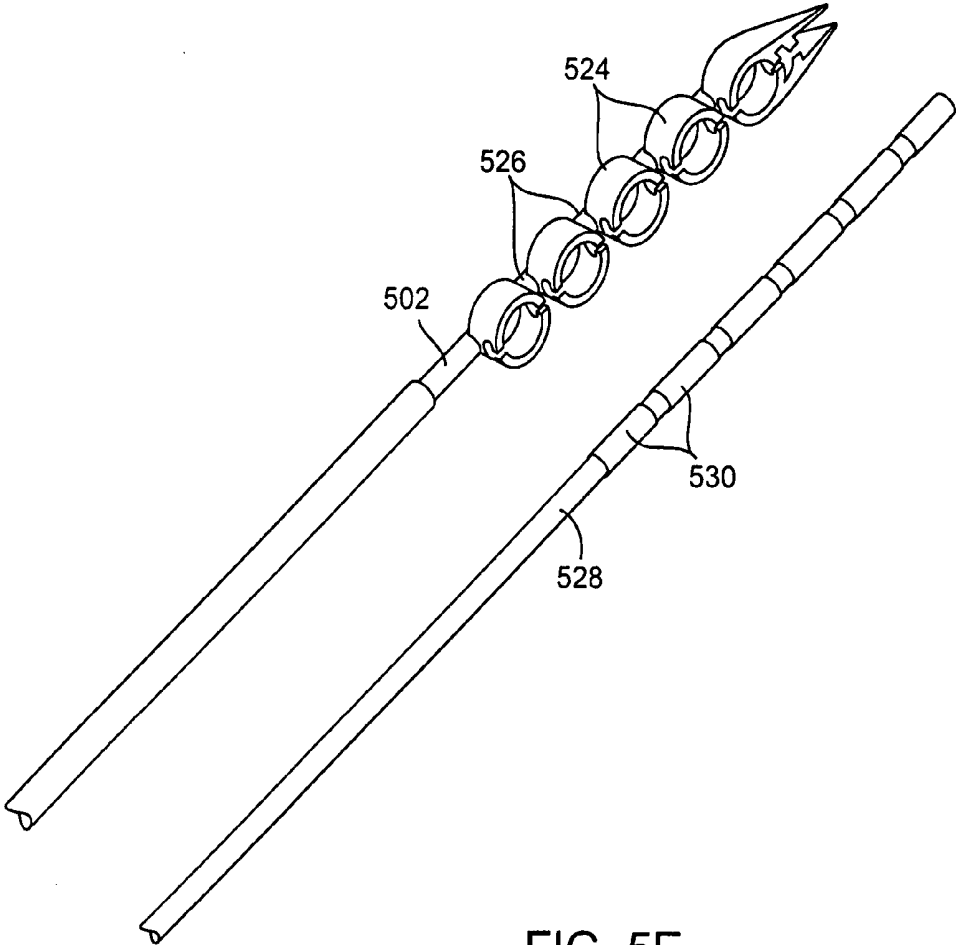
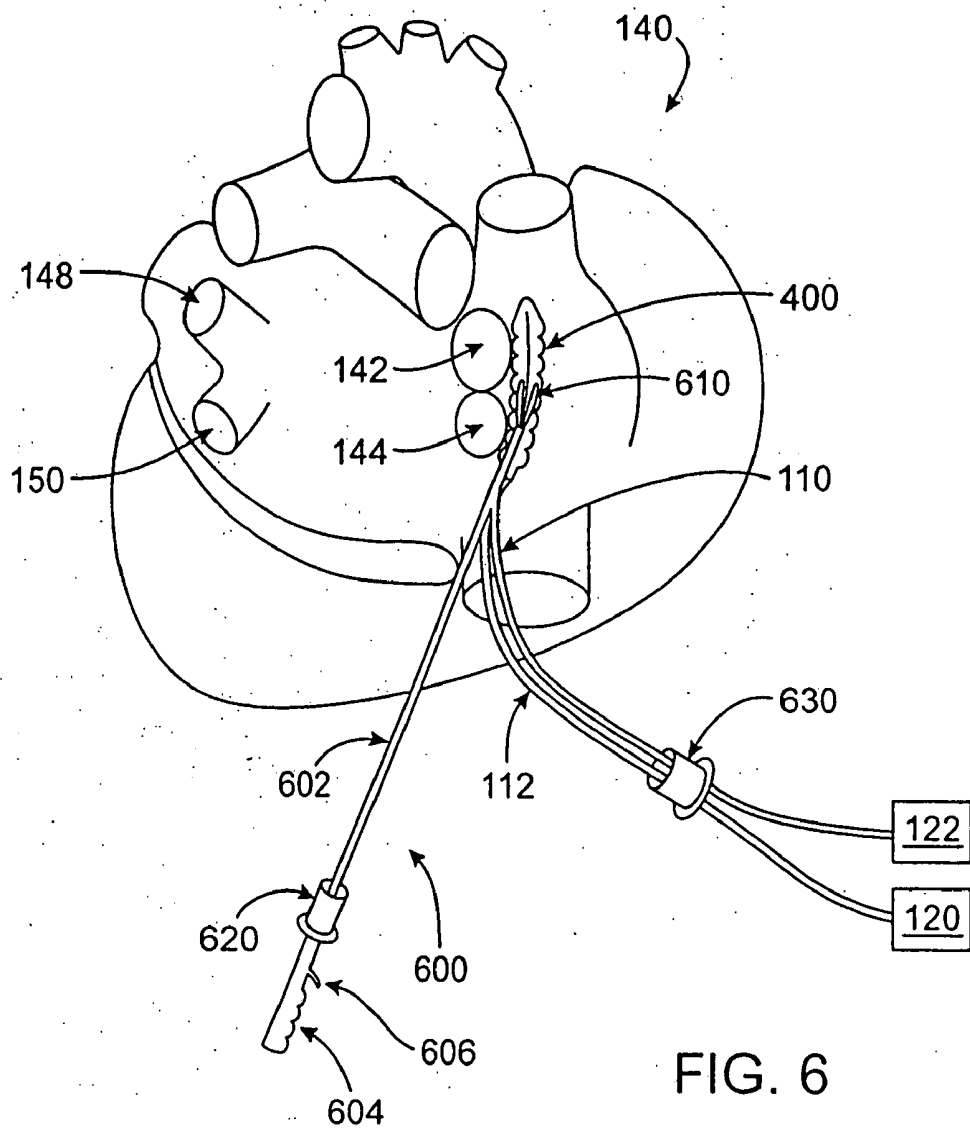
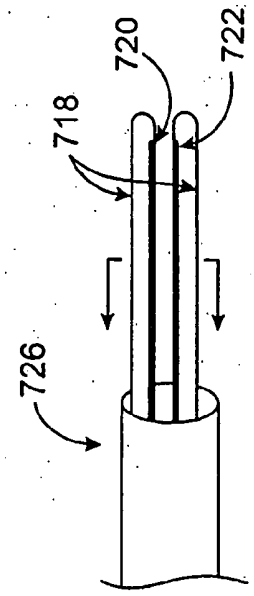
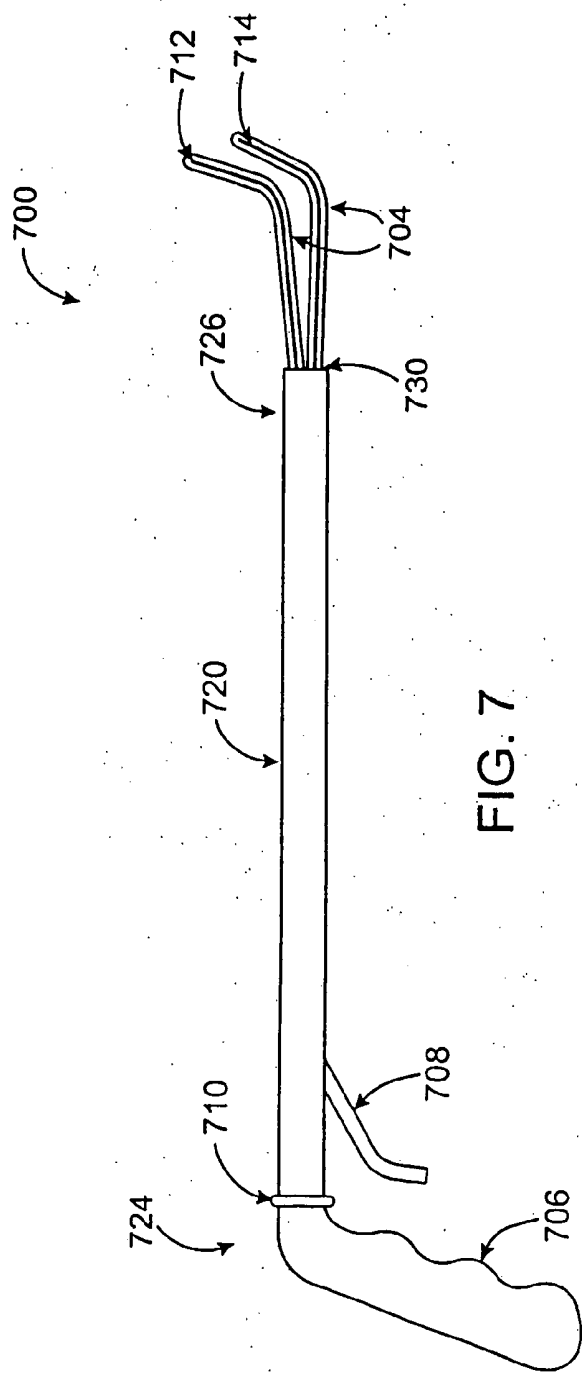
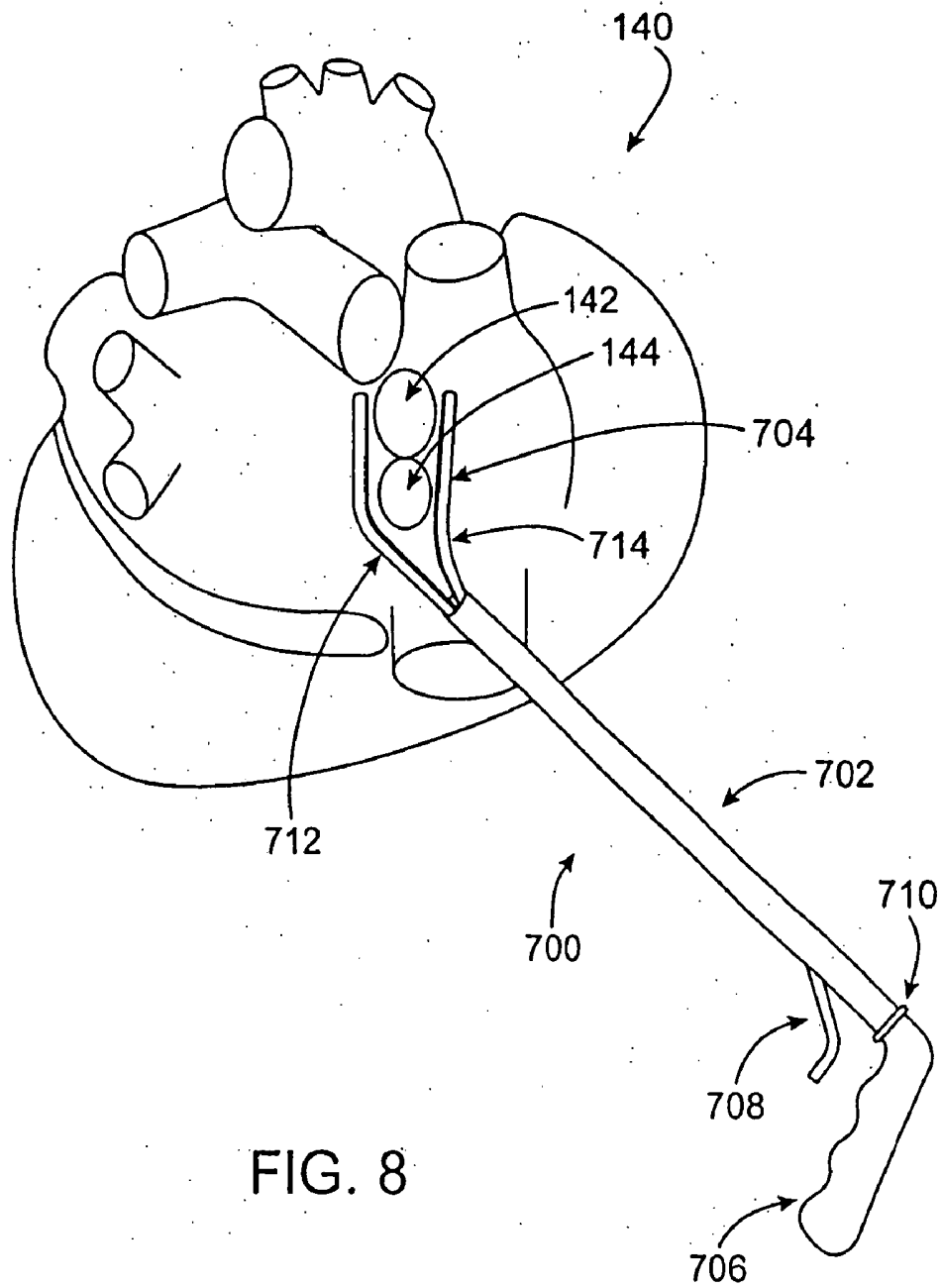


FIG. 5E







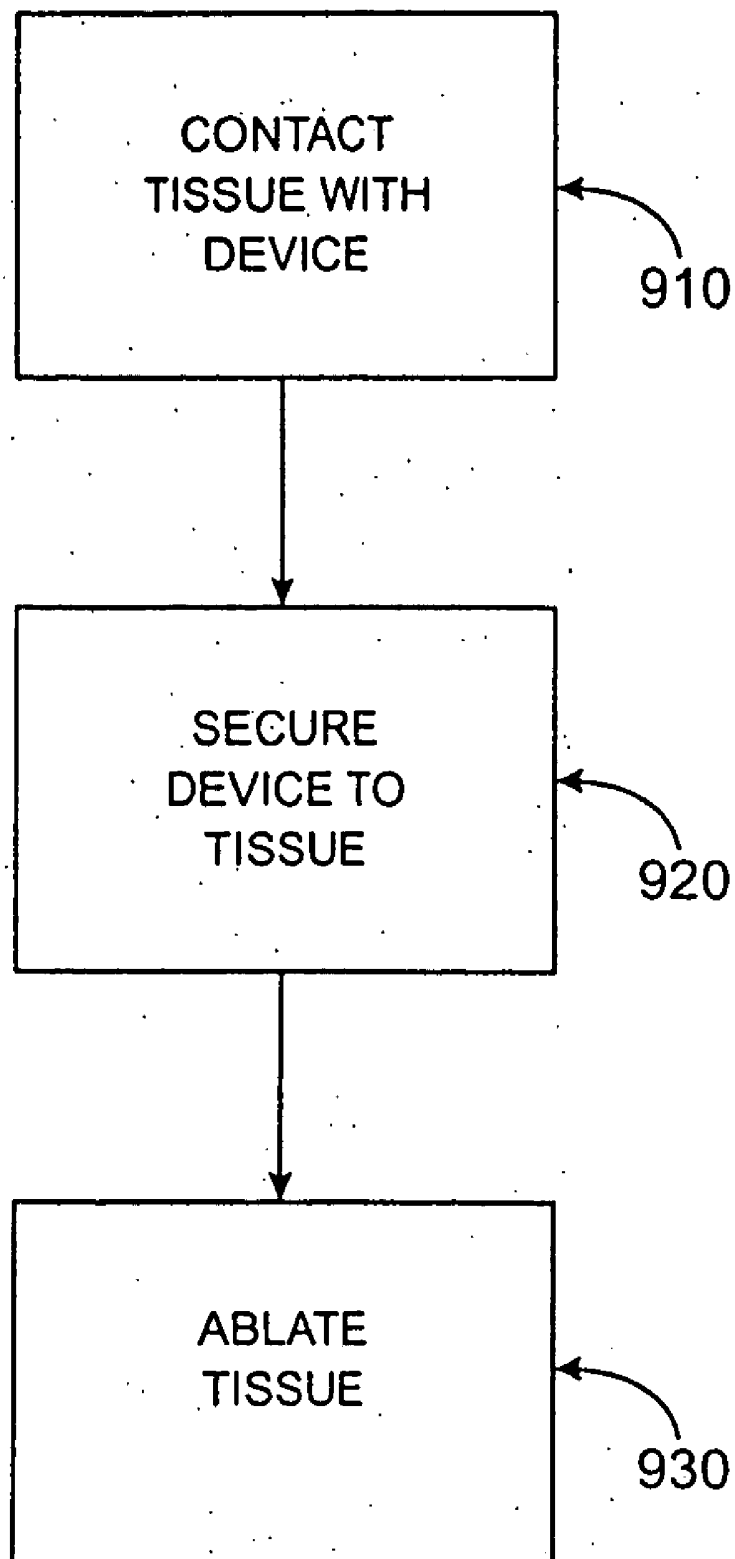


FIG. 9

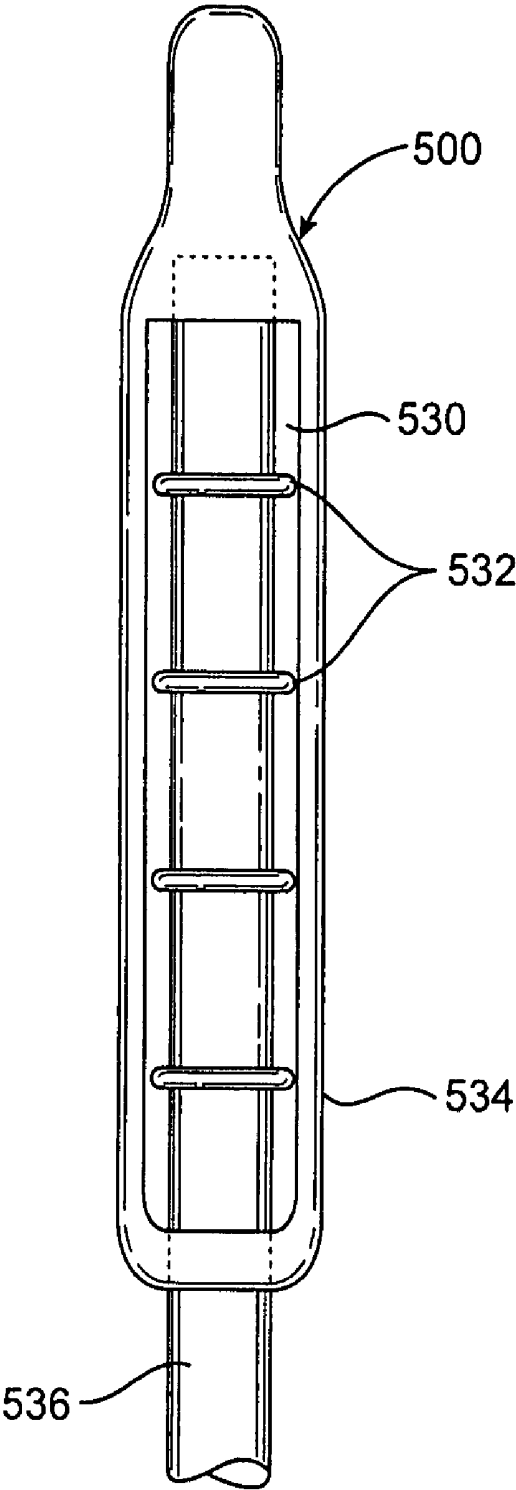


FIG. 10

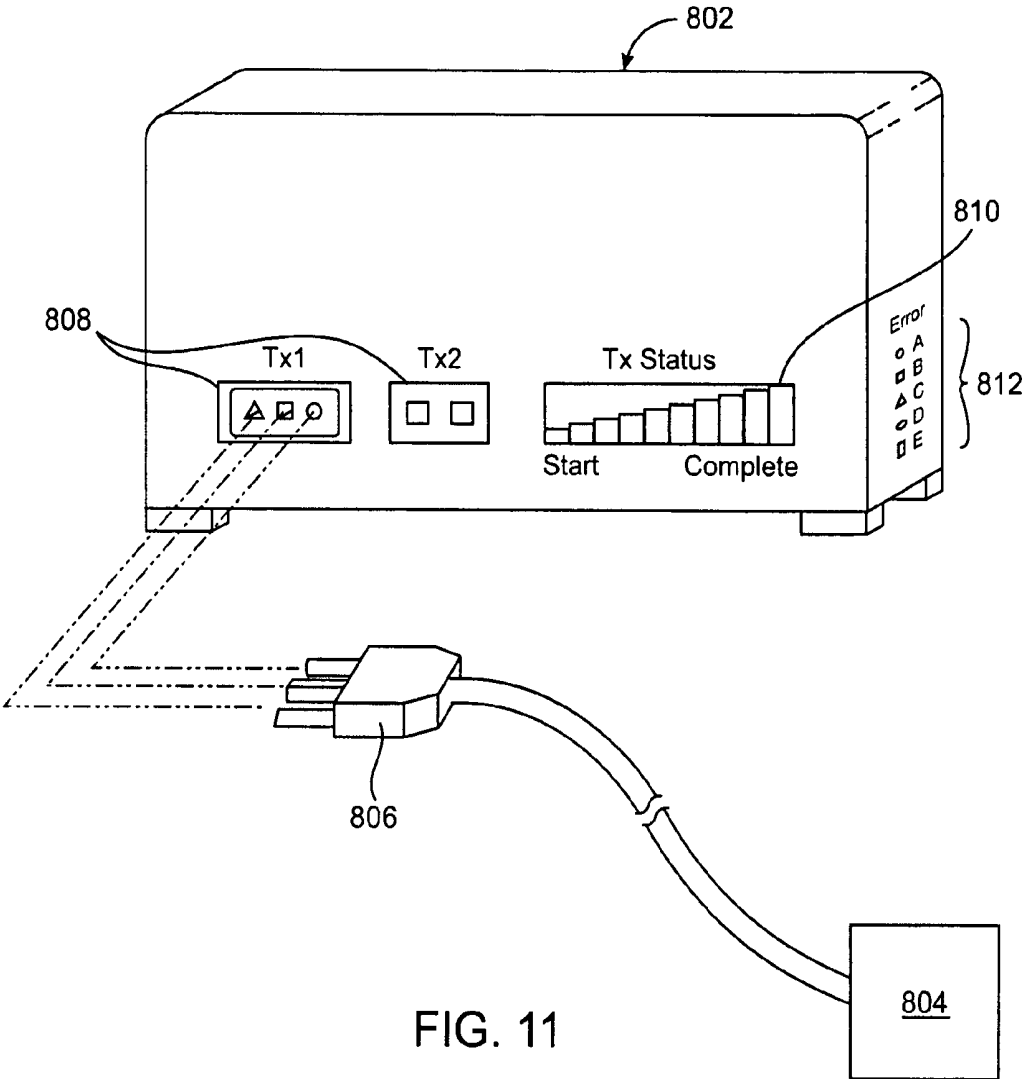


FIG. 11

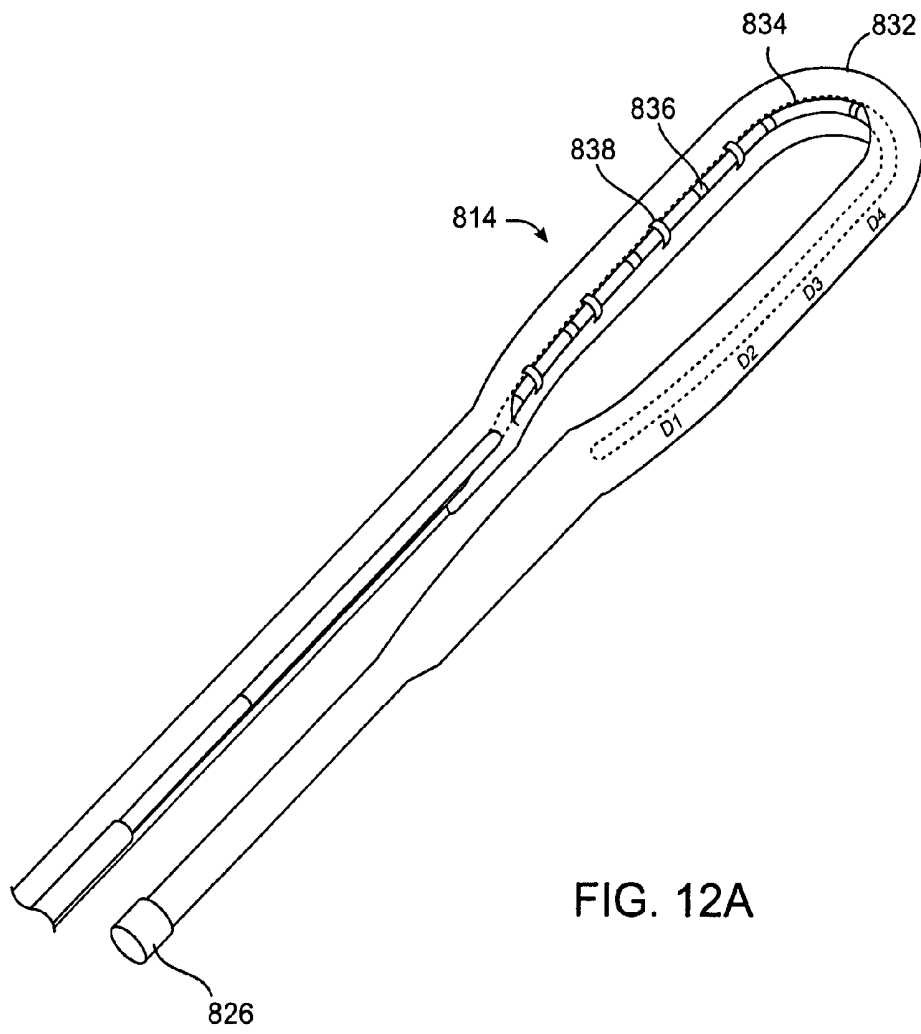
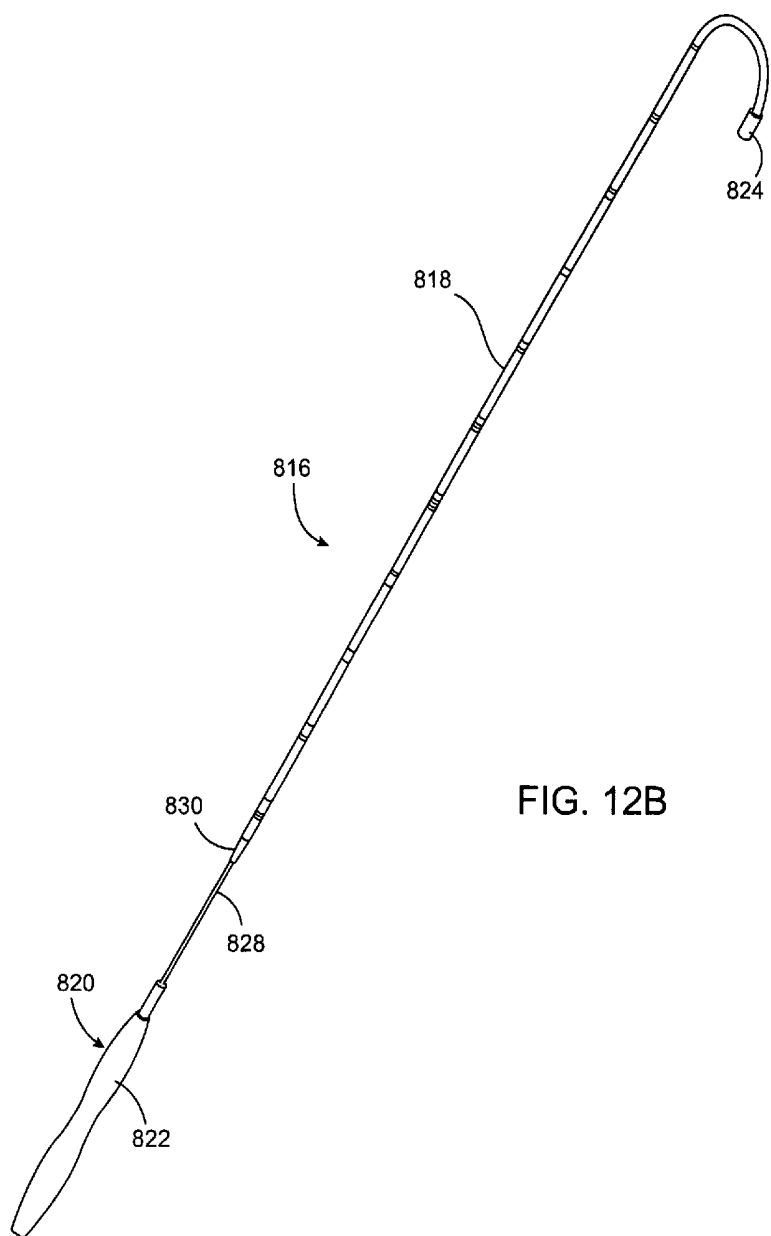


FIG. 12A



CARDIAC ABLATION DEVICES AND METHODS

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application is a continuation-in-part application which claims priority of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/410,618, which was filed on May 27, 2004, which is a continuation in part of and claims priority of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/272,446, which was filed Oct. 15, 2002, which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/337,070, filed Dec. 4, 2001, entitled "Methods and Devices for the Least Invasive Cardiac Surgery of Atrial Fibrillation." The present application also claims the priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/519,726, filed Nov. 12, 2003, entitled "Ablation Device." The entire contents of these applications are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to medical devices and methods. More specifically, the invention relates to devices and methods for ablating epicardial tissue to treat cardiac arrhythmias such as atrial fibrillation.

[0003] Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a heart beat rhythm disorder (or "cardiac arrhythmia") in which the upper chambers of the heart known as the atria quiver rapidly instead of beating in a steady rhythm. This rapid quivering reduces the heart's ability to properly function as a pump. AF is characterized by circular waves of electrical impulses that travel across the atria in a continuous cycle. It is the most common clinical heart arrhythmia, affecting more than two million people in the United States and some six million people worldwide.

[0004] Atrial fibrillation typically increases the risk of acquiring a number of potentially deadly complications, including thrombo-embolic stroke, dilated cardiomyopathy and congestive heart failure. Quality of life is also impaired by common AF symptoms such as palpitations, chest pain, dyspnea, fatigue and dizziness. People with AF have, on average, a five-fold increase in morbidity and a two-fold increase in mortality compared to people with normal sinus rhythm. One of every six strokes in the U.S. (some 120,000 per year) occurs in patients with AF, and the condition is responsible for one-third of all hospitalizations related to cardiac rhythm disturbances (over 360,000 per year), resulting in billions of dollars in annual healthcare expenditures.

[0005] AF is the most common arrhythmia seen by physicians, and the prevalence of AF is growing rapidly as the population ages. The likelihood of developing AF increases dramatically as people age; the disorder is found in about 1% of the adult population as a whole, and in about 6% of those over age 60. By age 80, about 9% of people (one in 11) will have AF. According to a recent statistical analysis, the prevalence of AF in the U.S. will more than double by the year 2050, as the proportion of elderly increases. A recent study called The Anticoagulation and Risk Factors in Atrial Fibrillation (ATRIA) study, published in the Spring of 2001 in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), found that 2.3 million U.S. adults currently have AF and this number is likely to increase over the next 50 years to more than 5.6 million, more than half of whom will be age 80 or over.

[0006] As the prevalence of AF increases, so will the number of people who develop debilitating or life-threatening complications, such as stroke. According to Framingham Heart Study data, the stroke rate in AF patients increases from about 3% of those aged 50-59 to more than 7% of those aged 80 and over. AF is responsible up to 35% of the strokes that occur in people older than age 85.

[0007] Efforts to prevent stroke in AF patients have so far focused primarily on the use of anticoagulant and antiplatelet drugs, such as warfarin and aspirin. Long-term warfarin therapy is recommended for all AF patients with one or more stroke risk factors, including all patients over age 75. Studies have shown, however, that warfarin tends to be under-prescribed for AF. Despite the fact that warfarin reduces stroke risk by 60% or more, only 40% of patients age 65-74 and 20% of patients over age 80 take the medication, and probably fewer than half are on the correct dosage. Patient compliance with warfarin is problematic, and the drug requires vigilant blood monitoring to reduce the risk of bleeding complications.

[0008] Electrophysiologists classify AF by the "three Ps": paroxysmal, persistent, or permanent. Paroxysmal AF—characterized by sporadic, usually self-limiting episodes lasting less than 48 hours—is the most amenable to treatment, while persistent or permanent AF is much more resistant to known therapies. Researchers now know that AF is a self-perpetuating disease and that abnormal atrial rhythms tend to initiate or trigger more abnormal rhythms. Thus, the more episodes a patient experiences and the longer the episodes last, the less chance of converting the heart to a persistent normal rhythm, regardless of the treatment method.

[0009] AF is characterized by circular waves of electrical impulses that travel across the atria in a continuous cycle, causing the upper chambers of the heart to quiver rapidly. At least six different locations in the atria have been identified where these waves can circulate, a finding that paved the way for maze-type ablation therapies. More recently, researchers have identified the pulmonary veins as perhaps the most common area where AF-triggering foci reside. Technologies designed to isolate the pulmonary veins or ablate specific pulmonary foci appear to be very promising and are the focus of much of the current research in catheter-based ablation techniques.

[0010] Although cardiac ablation devices and methods are currently available, many advances may still be made to provide improved devices and methods for ablating epicardial tissue to treat AF and other arrhythmias. For example, currently available devices can be difficult to position and secure on epicardial tissue to perform an ablation. Devices such as bipolar ablation clamps and others can ablate tissue only in very limited patterns, such as one or two straight lines. Ablation devices often have no means for shielding ablative energy, to avoid unwanted burning of tissues in the vicinity of the heart, such as the esophagus. Relatively few devices can be secured to epicardial tissue with sufficient force to allow for stabilization of the heart. And many ablation devices may not be introduced by minimally invasive means, thus requiring an open surgical procedure. Typically, therefore, current cardiac ablation procedures for AF treatment still require stopping the heart and using a cardiopulmonary bypass apparatus.

[0011] Therefore, a need exists for improved devices and methods for ablating epicardial tissue to treat AF and other cardiac arrhythmias. Preferably, such devices and methods would provide ablation adjacent to and/or encircling one or more pulmonary veins, to disrupt conduction pathways and thus partially or completely treat AF. Also preferably, such devices and methods would allow for minimally invasive ablation procedures, in some cases on a beating heart. Such devices might also provide additional advantages, such as advantageous ablation patterns, shielding of ablative energy and/or the like. At least some of these objectives will be met by the present invention.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] Devices and methods of the present invention provide for ablation of cardiac tissue for treating cardiac arrhythmias such as atrial fibrillation. Although the devices and methods are often used to ablate epicardial tissue in the vicinity of at least one pulmonary vein, various embodiments may be used to ablate other cardiac tissues in other locations on a heart. Generally, devices of the invention include a tissue contacting member for contacting a portion of the epicardial tissue of a heart and securing the ablation device to the epicardial tissue, and an ablation member for ablating at least a portion of the tissue. In various embodiments, the devices have features which enable the device to attach to the epicardial surface with sufficient strength to allow the tissue to be stabilized via the device. For example, some embodiments may be used to stabilize a beating heart to enable a beating heart ablation procedure. Many of the devices may be introduced into a patient via minimally invasive incisions, introducer devices and the like. Although much of the following description focuses on using devices and methods of the invention to treat atrial fibrillation (AF) by ablating epicardial tissue on a human heart, the devices and methods may be used in veterinary or research contexts, to treat various heart conditions other than atrial fibrillation and/or to ablate cardiac tissue other than the epicardium.

[0013] In one aspect, a system for treating heart tissue to treat a cardiac arrhythmia comprises: at least one energy transmission member for applying energy to the heart tissue in a pattern to treat the cardiac arrhythmia; at least one tissue securing member coupled with the at least one energy transmission member for enhancing contact of the energy transmission member with the heart tissue; and at least one guiding member coupled with at least one of the energy transmission member and the tissue securing member for guiding the energy transmission member and the tissue securing member to a location for treating the heart tissue.

[0014] Optionally, such a system may further include at least one visualization member for enhancing visualization of the heart tissue and the treatment location. In some embodiments, for example, the visualization member may include an optic imaging device, a thermal imaging device, an ultrasound device, an electrical imaging device, a Doppler imaging device or the like, though any suitable device may be used. In some embodiments, an optic imaging device comprises a fiber optic device positionable to view a posterior portion of the heart tissue. In other embodiments, a thermal imaging device measures at least one heat transfer coefficient of the heart tissue to determine at least one of a type and a thickness of the heart tissue. In still other embodiments, an electrical imaging device measures elec-

trical resistance and/or impedance of the heart tissue to determine a type and/or a thickness of the heart tissue.

[0015] In some embodiments, the at least one visualization member is removably coupled with at least one of the at least one energy transmission member, the at least one tissue securing member and the at least one guiding member. Also in some embodiments, the at least one visualization member may comprise at least one optic member for acquiring optic signals of an area to be visualized, and wherein the visualization member includes at least one inflatable member coupled with the visualization member at or near the optic member. For example, the inflatable member may provide a space in a body cavity and/or between at least two body tissues to enhance operation of the optic member. In some embodiments, the inflatable member includes an inflation port in fluid communication with an inflation lumen coupled with the visualization member for allowing introduction of a liquid or a gas to inflate the inflatable member. In some embodiments, the inflatable member reduces motion of the heart tissue when applied to the heart tissue.

[0016] Some embodiments of the invention also include at least one positioning device for contacting the heart tissue and positioning the heart tissue for treatment. For example, the positioning device may comprise a suction positioning device. In some embodiments, the positioning device reduces motion of a beating heart to further position the heart tissue for treatment.

[0017] The energy applied to the heart tissue may be any suitable energy, such as but not limited to radio frequency energy, ultrasound energy, microwave energy, cryogenic energy, thermoelectric energy and laser energy. In some embodiments, optionally, the energy transmission member contacts an epicardial surface of the heart tissue to transmit the energy, and wherein the energy is transmitted from the epicardial surface through the heart tissue to an endocardial surface. Sometimes, the energy is further transmitted through at least one of fat and connective tissue covering at least part of the epicardial surface. Some embodiments also include at least one grounding device for dispersing the energy from a patient undergoing an energy transmission heart procedure. Some embodiments may also include at least one needle coupled with the energy transmission member for insertion into the heart tissue to enhance the application of energy to the heart tissue. In some of these embodiments, the energy is transmitted from a tip of each needle. Optionally, the needle may be retractable. In some embodiments, for example, the retractable needle is exposed and retracted via a pneumatic member coupled with the energy transmission member. In some embodiments, the retractable needle is exposed and retracted automatically when the energy transmission member contacts the heart tissue. Also in some embodiments, the depth of penetration of the retractable needle into the heart tissue is adjustable.

[0018] Some embodiments may also include at least one closed circuit feedback loop for measuring and regulating operation of the energy transmission member. In some embodiments, either the energy transmission member or the tissue securing member further comprises at least one fluid aperture for applying fluid to the heart tissue to enhance the application of energy to the heart tissue.

[0019] In some embodiments, the energy transmission member is coupled with at least one guiding member such

that a change in shape of the guiding member causes a corresponding change in shape of the energy transmission member. For example, the guiding member may comprise a deformable linear member its shape being adjustable by a user, and wherein the energy transmission member comprises a deformable linear member coaxially coupled with the guiding member so as to move with the guiding member. In some embodiments, the guiding member is adjustable to at least partially encircle at least one pulmonary vein.

[0020] In some embodiments, the tissue securing member includes at least one connector for removably coupling with the at least one energy transmission member. Sometimes, the tissue securing member is conformable to a surface topography of the heart tissue. In various embodiments, a first longitudinal axis of the tissue securing member and a second longitudinal axis of the removably coupled energy transmission member may be collinear, parallel to one another or offset from one another. In some embodiments, the energy transmission member comprises a linear member, and the connector comprises a plurality of connectors disposed along a length of the tissue securing member for removably coupling the linear member with the tissue securing member. The tissue securing member may allow compressive force to be applied between the at least one energy transmission member and the heart tissue.

[0021] In some embodiments, the tissue securing member comprises at least one vacuum applying member. The vacuum applying member may comprise, for example: at least one vacuum lumen; at least one vacuum port in fluid communication with the lumen for coupling the lumen with a vacuum source; and at least one aperture in fluid communication with the lumen for applying vacuum force to the heart tissue. In some embodiments, the vacuum lumen comprises multiple, separate lumens, and each separate lumen is in fluid communication with a separate vacuum port. Such embodiments may optionally further include means for selectively applying vacuum to one or more of the separate lumens without applying vacuum to one or more other separate lumens.

[0022] In other embodiments, the tissue securing member comprises at least one expansible balloon member. The expansible balloon member may include at least one fluid introduction port for allowing introduction of a liquid or a gas to expand the balloon member. Some embodiments include multiple, separate balloon members, wherein each separate balloon member is in fluid communication with a separate fluid introduction port. Such embodiments may also include means for selectively introducing fluid into one or more of the separate balloons without introducing fluid into one or more other separate balloons. Optionally, in some embodiments, the tissue securing member prevents a portion of the heart tissue from being treated by the at least one energy transmission member. For example, the tissue securing member may comprise at least one insulation material for preventing the portion of the heart tissue from being treated. In one embodiment, the insulation material further prevents the at least one energy transmission member from contacting or harming other, non-cardiac tissue of the patient and from contacting or harming a user of the energy transmission member.

[0023] In some embodiments, the guiding member comprises at least one of an elongate shaft, a steerable guidewire

and an introducer sheath. For example, the steerable guidewire may comprise a pushable guidewire having at least one relatively stiff portion and one relatively flexible portion for positioning the energy transmission member in a location for treatment. For example, the steerable guidewire may comprise a pullable guidewire to which tension is applied to steer the guidewire to position the energy transmission member in a location for treatment.

[0024] In another aspect, a system for treating heart tissue to treat a cardiac arrhythmia comprises: at least one therapeutic agent transmission member for applying at least one therapeutic agent to the heart tissue in a pattern to treat the cardiac arrhythmia; at least one tissue securing member coupled with the at least one energy transmission member for enhancing contact of the energy transmission member with the heart tissue; and at least one guiding member coupled with at least one of the energy transmission member and the tissue securing member for guiding the energy transmission member and the tissue securing member to a location for treating the heart tissue. In some embodiments, for example, the therapeutic agent transmission member comprises at least one lumen and at least one aperture in the lumen for allowing passage of the at least one therapeutic agent out of the lumen to contact the heart tissue.

[0025] Optionally, such a system may further include at least one needle coupled with the therapeutic agent transmission member for insertion into the heart tissue to enhance application of the at least one therapeutic agent to the heart tissue. The therapeutic agent transmission member itself may comprise at least one needle and at least one aperture adjacent a tip of each needle for allowing passage of the at least one therapeutic agent out of the needle to contact the heart tissue. Optionally, the needle may be retractable. For example, the retractable needle may be exposed and retracted via a pneumatic member coupled with the therapeutic agent transmission member. In some embodiments, the retractable needle is exposed and retracted automatically when the therapeutic agent transmission member contacts the heart tissue. Also in some embodiments, a depth of penetration of the retractable needle into the heart tissue is adjustable.

[0026] In another aspect of the invention, a method for treating heart tissue of a patient to treat a cardiac arrhythmia involves: advancing at least one treatment member coupled with at least one tissue securing member through an incision on the patient; visualizing a treatment area in the patient with at least one visualization member; contacting the heart tissue of the patient with the treatment member and the tissue securing member; applying a force, through the tissue securing member, to enhance contact of the treatment member with the heart tissue; and treating the heart tissue, using the at least one treatment member. In some embodiments, the treatment member and/or the tissue securing member are advanced through a port applied to the patient, the port having a diameter no greater than 5 cm.

[0027] In some embodiments, the advancing step includes guiding the treatment member and/or the tissue securing member using at least one guiding member. Guiding may involve, for example, using a pushable guidewire having at least one relatively stiff portion and one relatively flexible portion for positioning the treatment member in a location for treatment. Alternatively, guiding may involve using a

pullable guidewire to which tension is applied to steer the guidewire to position the treatment member in a location for treatment.

[0028] Some embodiments of the method further include using at least one positioning device to position the heart tissue for treatment. This may involve, for example, applying suction to the heart tissue. In some embodiments, using the positioning device reduces motion of the heart tissue. In other embodiments, contacting the heart tissue comprises applying a suction force with the tissue securing member to increase a contact surface area of the tissue securing member with the heart tissue. Applying the suction force may further comprise providing consistent contact force between the heart tissue and the tissue securing member. Optionally, applying the suction force may comprise securing the tissue securing member and the treatment member to the heart tissue, the tissue securing member and the treatment member having the same cross-sectional shape.

[0029] In some embodiments, treating the heart tissue comprises applying energy to the heart tissue in a pattern to reduce or eliminate the cardiac arrhythmia. The applied energy may be in any suitable form, such as radio frequency energy, ultrasound energy, microwave energy, cryogenic energy, thermoelectric energy or laser energy. In some embodiments, the energy is applied to an epicardial surface of the heart, wherein the energy is transmitted from the epicardial surface through the heart tissue to an endocardial surface. Optionally, the energy may be further transmitted through fat and/or connective tissue covering at least part of the epicardial surface. Some methods may further include dispersing the energy from the patient through at least one grounding device coupled with the patient.

[0030] Some embodiments further involve inserting at least one needle into the heart tissue to enhance the application of energy to the heart tissue. For example, the energy may be transmitted from a tip of each needle. Some methods include extending the at least one needle from a retracted position before applying the energy and retracting the at least one needle to the retracted position when the energy has been applied. Such methods may also include selecting a depth of penetration of the at least one retractable needle into the heart tissue. Other embodiments may involve measuring the application of energy to the heart tissue using at least one closed circuit feedback loop and regulating the application of energy to the heart tissue based on the measurement. Still other embodiments may include applying fluid to the heart tissue to enhance the application of energy to the heart tissue.

[0031] In alternative embodiments, treating the heart tissue comprises applying at least one therapeutic agent to the heart tissue in a pattern to reduce or eliminate the cardiac arrhythmia. For example, applying the at least one therapeutic agent may involve infusing the agent through at least one aperture in the at least one treatment member. In some embodiments, the therapeutic agent is infused through at least one aperture in at least one needle coupled with the treatment member. In some embodiments, applying the at least one therapeutic agent comprises inserting at least one needle into the heart tissue to a desired depth, injecting the at least one agent into the heart tissue, and removing the at least one needle from the heart tissue. Such a method may further include extending the at least one needle from a

retracted position for insertion into the heart tissue and retracting the at least one needle to the retracted position after injection.

[0032] Yet another embodiment may include adjusting a shape of a guiding member coupled with the at least one treatment member to alter the shape of the treatment member. In some embodiments, adjusting the shape of the guiding member allows the treatment member to conform to a surface of the heart tissue. Also in some embodiments, adjusting the shape of the guiding member allows the treatment member to at least partially encircle at least one pulmonary vein. Some embodiments may also include removably coupling the tissue securing member with the at least one treatment member. Some embodiments may further include conforming the tissue securing member to a surface topography of the heart tissue.

[0033] In some embodiments, applying force comprises applying compressive force between the at least one treatment member and the heart tissue. Applying the compressive force, in turn, may comprise applying vacuum force via at least one vacuum member of the tissue securing member. Such methods may further involve applying the vacuum force through at least a portion of the vacuum member while not applying the vacuum force through at least another portion of the vacuum member. In some embodiments, applying the compressive force comprises applying force via at least one expandable balloon member. A method may further comprise preventing, using the tissue securing member, a portion of the heart tissue from being treated by the at least one treatment member. For example, the tissue securing member may comprise at least one insulation material for preventing the portion of the heart tissue from being treated.

[0034] In some embodiments, visualizing comprises using at least one visualization member selected from the group consisting of an optic imaging device, a thermal imaging device, an ultrasound device, an electrical imaging device and a Doppler imaging device. Some embodiments also include expanding an expandable balloon coupled with the visualization member near an optic element to enhance visualization. Sometimes, expanding the balloon provides a space in a body cavity and/or between at least two body tissues to enhance operation of the optic member. Optionally, expanding the balloon may reduce motion of the heart tissue when applied to the heart tissue.

[0035] The invention also includes ablation systems which include an ablation energy source for providing energy to the ablation device. The ablation energy source of the invention is particularly suited for use with ablation apparatus as described herein using RF energy, but is not limited to such use, and other kinds of ablation energy sources and ablation devices may be useable in the invention. A typical RF ablation system comprises a RF generator which feeds current to an ablation device, including those described in this application, containing a conductive electrode for contacting targeted tissue. The electrical circuit is completed by a return path to the RF generator, provided through the patient and a large conductive plate, which is typically in contact with the patient's back.

[0036] In some embodiments, the ablation system is configured to recognize the kind of ablation device connected by including keyed plugs, which describes specialized

socket shapes configured to accept only plugs which are manufactured with the matching shape. The energy source includes predetermined settings appropriate for the kind of device that is accepted by that socket. In another embodiment, the ablation system of the invention includes apparatus for recognizing the kind of device that has been coupled to the energy source and for automatically adjusting various settings to accommodate the detected device.

[0037] In further embodiments the ablation device may be inserted minimally invasively under stress, and is configured to conform to the topography or anatomy of the tissue to be treated when relaxed. This feature may enhance the adherence of the ablation device to the tissue because the suction is not working against resistance of the ablation device to conforming to the desired shape.

[0038] In other embodiments, the ablation device may include indicators for identifying which ablation element is to be activated. For example, the ablation device may include different colored lines to assist the user in distinguishing the orientation and alignment of the ablation device.

[0039] In some embodiments, the ablation device may be configured to allow the ablation member to extend beyond the edge of the tissue contacting member to allow for ablation to occur outside of the region covered by the tissue contacting member.

[0040] In another embodiments, the artery securing arms may instead be configured to grasp a second ablation member, thereby allowing ablation to occur outside of the region covered by the tissue contacting member.

[0041] In some embodiments the length of the suction pods may be varied such that suction pods of more than one length are used on the same tissue contact member. Furthermore, the suction pods may be spaced apart or placed in groupings separated by selected lengths. Some or all of the length of the ablation device used to emit ablation energy may not include any suction pods. In some embodiments an insulated member may cover the majority of the geometry of the ablation device such that only areas contacting target tissue can emit energy that will penetrate the tissue. This feature may protect surrounding tissues from unintentional ablation. Positioning the ablation member within an insulating tissue contacting member provides a safety margin protecting adjacent tissue that is not intended to be ablated. The insulated member may include lumens for delivering saline to lower impedance or increase conductivity or other substance to improve performance and efficiency of energy emission.

[0042] The suction force may be used to create a fluid gradient through the thickness of the tissue. A dynamic fluid gradient may enhance energy conduction.

[0043] In some apparatus and methods of the invention, once the tissue contact member is positioned and suctioned onto the heart, the probe may also be slid within the probe channel in the tissue contact member so that the energy emitting section of the ablation member may be positioned as a separate step from the step of positioning the tissue contacting member. It is also possible to position the tissue contacting member separately from the ablation member, then in a later step, slide the ablation member into the tissue contact member. In some embodiments, an ablation member

with a short energy emitting section may be moved along a channel in the tissue contact member so that the device can create long lesions, perhaps longer than the ablation section of the ablation member, with minimal manipulations of the device within the track.

[0044] Using a single placement of the tissue contacting member may enhance continuity of ablation lesions. Not having to move the ablation device between discrete ablation cycles, and instead only moving the ablation member within the tissue contacting member, insures that adjacent ablation segments are contiguous with no ablation gaps. Avoiding the creation of gaps can be critical to insure electrical isolation of desired tissue areas, and may also decrease procedure time by not requiring the surgeon to verify overlap of adjacent ablation lesions

[0045] In some embodiments the preferred features of the material used to manufacture the tissue contacting member include one or more of the following: the material provides electrical or thermal insulation, the material is flexible to facilitate remote advancement via tortuous pathways, the material has shape memory allowing large elastic deformation of the tissue contacting member but also allowing the tissue contacting member to return to a preformed shape in a relaxed configuration, the material may be translucent or transparent to help the user see the position of the ablation probe, and the material may be lubricious to facilitate insertion and placement.

[0046] The method may further include the steps of using visual and audible cues to verify the ablation device is adhered to tissue. For example the user can hear a suction sound or 'whistle' when the suction has been activated and the ablation device is not correctly adhered. Also, the user can hear vacuum pump elevate as vacuum increases. In some embodiments, the user can visually observe the tissue contacting member collapse when the ablation device is correctly adhered and suction is activated.

[0047] In some embodiments, the preferred vacuum pressure is -200 mmHG to -760 mmHG.

[0048] In still further embodiments, the ablation device may include more electrodes that are available on the energy source. In this embodiment, the ablation device includes a plurality of electrodes, and wherein the energy source includes less electrodes than the ablation device. Further, the ablation device includes at least two plugs, with each plug providing power to a subset of the plurality of electrodes on the ablation device. The method comprises the steps of connecting the first plug of the ablation device to the energy source, applying ablation energy to the tissue, unplugging the first plug from the energy source, plugging the second plug of the ablation device in to the energy source, and applying ablation energy to the tissue.

[0049] This allows ablation device construction to facilitate longer ablations by utilizing multiple connections to energy source. For example, if an energy source includes seven electrodes couple to a single plug to power seven ablation segments on the ablation device, the ablation device could include fourteen or twenty-one separate ablation segments. Each set of seven ablation segments would couple to a separate plug. In use, the first plug is inserted into the energy source and the first set of seven ablation segments is activated. Upon completion of treatment, possibly without

moving the ablation device, a second region may be ablated by removing the first plug and inserting the second plug to activate the next seven ablation segments on the ablation device. This embodiment can result in a smaller less expensive energy source that is still capable of powering a long ablation device.

[0050] In yet another aspect, a method for treating heart tissue of a patient to treat a cardiac arrhythmia comprises: advancing at least one treatment member and at least one tissue securing member through an incision on the patient; removably coupling the at least one treatment member with the at least one tissue securing member; visualizing a treatment area in the patient with at least one visualization member; contacting the heart tissue of the patient with the treatment member and the tissue securing member; applying a force, through the tissue securing member, to enhance contact of the treatment member with the heart tissue; and treating the heart tissue, using the at least one treatment member. In some embodiments, the treatment member is advanced through the tissue securing member. Optionally, in some embodiments, the treatment member and the tissue securing member are advanced through a minimally invasive port applied to the patient. Another method of the invention includes the following steps. An introducer is advanced through a first incision into the transverse sinus cavity with obturator fully inserted. At desired area near the pulmonary veins, obturator is withdrawn and the which allows the introducer to assume its pre-formed J shape reaching round the pulmonary veins, possibly also guided by contact with the pericardium. The introducer is preferably long enough to be inserted from thoracotomy into transverse sinus cavity around the pulmonary veins and out through the oblique sinus and out through the same or a different thoracotomy. Another instrument is advanced through the same or different thoracotomy to grasp the distal end of the introducer. The introducer is pulled around the pulmonary veins until the distal end is outside the body of the patient. At this point, both the proximal and distal ends of the introducer are preferably outside the body of the patient. Once the ablation device is in position, suction is applied to adhere the ablation device to the tissue surrounding the pulmonary veins. Ablation energy is applied. Once treatment is complete, the ablation device can be removed.

[0051] Various embodiments of the devices and methods described briefly above are further described in the appended drawings and the following detailed description. The description of specific embodiments is provided for exemplary purposes and should not be interpreted to narrow the scope of the invention as defined in the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0052] FIG. 1 is a perspective view illustration of a human heart and an ablation device in position for performing an ablation procedure, according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0053] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of an ablation device, according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0054] FIG. 2a is a perspective view of the ablation device shown in FIG. 2, with the ablation member removed.

[0055] FIG. 3 is a bottom-surface view of an ablation device, according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0056] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a flexible, elongate ablation device with two rows of suction apertures, according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0057] FIG. 4a is a bottom-surface view of the ablation device as shown in FIG. 4, with the ablation member removed.

[0058] FIG. 5 is a bottom-side view of a flexible, elongate ablation device with one row of suction apertures, according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0059] FIGS. 5a, 5b, and 5e are perspective views of another embodiment of a flexible, elongate ablation device with one row of suction apertures, separated by flexible joining members.

[0060] FIGS. 5c and 5d show several alternate cross sections of the flexible joining members of FIGS. 5a and 5b.

[0061] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a human heart and an ablation device in position for performing an ablation procedure, according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0062] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of an elongate shaft ablation device, according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0063] FIG. 7a is a perspective view of the distal end of a shaft as in FIG. 6, with straight jaws, according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0064] FIG. 8 is a perspective view of a human heart and an elongate shaft ablation device in position for ablating cardiac tissue, according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0065] FIG. 9 is a block diagram of a method for ablating tissue according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0066] FIG. 10 is an embodiment of the invention including an elongated tissue contact member, built in accord with the invention.

[0067] FIG. 11 is an example embodiment of a power source built in accord with the invention.

[0068] FIGS. 12a and 12b is an example ablation device in accord with the invention, and an introducer for use with the ablation device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0069] The present invention relates generally to medical devices and methods and more specifically to devices and methods for ablating cardiac tissue for treating cardiac arrhythmias such as atrial fibrillation. Ablation of cardiac tissue in various patterns has been shown to disrupt conduction pathways in the heart to ameliorate or eliminate AF or other arrhythmias. The devices and methods will often be used to ablate epicardial tissue in the vicinity of at least one pulmonary vein, but various embodiments may be used to ablate other cardiac tissues in other locations on a heart.

[0070] Generally, ablation devices of the invention include at least one tissue contacting member for contacting a portion of the epicardial tissue of a heart, securing means for securing the ablation device to the tissue and at least one ablation member coupled with the contacting member for ablating at least a portion of the tissue. In various embodi-

ments, the devices have features which enable the device to attach to the epicardial surface with sufficient strength to allow the tissue to be stabilized via the device. For example, some embodiments may use suction force to secure the device to epicardial tissue and stabilize a beating heart to enable a beating heart ablation procedure. In some embodiments, the preferred vacuum pressure is -200 mmHG to -760 mmHG. The suction force may be used to create a fluid gradient through the thickness of the tissue. A dynamic fluid gradient may enhance energy conduction. Other embodiments may include other optional features, such as sensors for sensing whether tissue has been ablated, a support member with an arm for connecting the device to a positioning device, cooling apparatus for cooling epicardial tissue, visualization devices and/or the like. Some embodiments of the device are introducible into a patient via minimally invasive means, such as a minimally invasive incision, sheath, trocar or the like. Ablation devices of the invention configured for use in minimally invasive procedures will, in some embodiments, be longer than two feet while the majority of the probe rests outside of the patient while the active ablation portion of the device is inserted via minimally invasive incision. Some embodiments will further comprise apparatus for reducing kinking of the ablation probe.

[0071] In alternate embodiments the length of the suction pods may be varied such that suction pods of more than one length are used on the same tissue contacting member. Furthermore, the suction pods may be spaced apart or placed in groupings separated by lengths of the probe or ablation device. Some or all of the length of the ablation device used to emit ablation energy may not include any suction pods. In such embodiments an insulated member may cover the majority of the geometry of the ablation device such that only areas contacting target tissue can emit energy that will penetrate the tissue. This feature may protect surrounding tissues from unintentional ablation. Positioning the ablation member within an insulating tissue contacting member provides a safety margin protecting adjacent tissue that is not intended to be ablated. The insulated member may include lumens for delivering saline to lower impedance or increase conductivity or other substance to improve performance and efficiency of energy emission. In other embodiments, the ablation device may include indicators for identifying which ablation element is to be activated. For example, the ablation device may include different colored lines to assist the user in distinguishing the orientation and alignment of the ablation device.

[0072] The invention also includes ablation systems which include an ablation energy source for providing energy to the ablation device. The ablation energy source of the invention is particularly suited for use with ablation apparatus as described herein using RF energy, but is not limited to such use, and other kinds of ablation energy sources and ablation devices may be useable in the invention. A typical RF ablation system comprises a RF generator which feeds current to an ablation device, including those described in this application, containing a conductive electrode for contacting targeted tissue. The electrical circuit is completed by a return path to the RF generator, provided through the patient and a large conductive plate, which is typically in contact with the patient's back.

[0073] In some embodiments, the ablation system is configured to recognize the kind of ablation device connected by including keyed plugs, which describes specialized socket shapes configured to accept only plugs which are manufactured with the matching shape. The energy source includes predetermined settings appropriate for the kind of device that is accepted by that socket.

[0074] In another embodiment, the ablation system of the invention includes apparatus for recognizing the kind of device that has been coupled to the energy source and for automatically adjusting various settings to accommodate the detected device.

[0075] Methods of the invention generally include contacting a device with epicardial tissue, using a tissue contacting member on the device to secure the device to the tissue, and ablating the tissue with an ablation member on the device. In some embodiments, the method further includes additional steps such as positioning the device on the epicardial tissue, stabilizing cardiac tissue, cooling cardiac tissue, positioning the device using a positioning device, visualizing epicardial tissue with an imaging device and/or the like. Again, although much of the following description focuses on embodiments used to treat AF by ablating epicardial tissue near one or more pulmonary veins on a human heart, the devices and methods may be used in veterinary or research contexts, to treat various heart conditions other than AF, to ablate cardiac tissue other than the epicardium and/or in any other suitable manner or context.

[0076] Referring now to FIG. 1, an ablation device 100 is shown in position for ablating epicardial tissue on a human heart 140. A top view of ablation device 100 is shown, the visible components of device 100 including a tissue contacting member 102 coupled with a suction connector 216 and a support member 104 having a support arm 106. Tissue contacting member 102 also includes multiple artery securing arms 108 for securing one or more coronary arteries. Suction connector 216 is coupled with a suction cannula 112, which in turn is coupled with a suction source 120. Support arm 106 is coupled via a clamp 116 to a positioner 114, which in turn is coupled to a stabilizing device 118 for stabilizing positioner 114. Finally, an ablation member (not visible) of ablation device 100 is coupled, via a wire 110, to an energy source 122. In various embodiments, ablation device 100 may be introduced into a patient through a minimally invasive introducer device, such as a sheath 124, trocar or the like, as is represented in FIG. 1 by a simplified representation of sheath 124.

[0077] In an alternate embodiment, the artery securing arms 108 may instead be configured to grasp a second ablation member, thereby allowing ablation to occur outside of the region covered by the tissue contacting member. In this embodiment the features 108 are instead auxiliary securing arms. Although example auxiliary securing arms are shown only in FIG. 1, this feature could be used on other ablation device embodiments.

[0078] In FIG. 1, ablation device 100 is shown in a position partially encircling the right superior pulmonary vein 142 and the right inferior pulmonary vein 144. As will be described in further detail below, such a position is only one possible configuration for treating heart 140. In other embodiments, for example, both of the right pulmonary veins 142, 144 may be completely encircled, only one may

be partially or completely encircled, the left superior **148** and/or left inferior **150** pulmonary veins may be partially or completely encircled and/or various patterns may be ablated on the left atrium **146**, the right atrium **152** and/or the right and left ventricles (not labeled). Any ablation pattern suitable for heart treatment may be accomplished by one or more embodiments of the present invention. Thus, the following descriptions of various embodiments should not be interpreted to narrow the scope of the invention as set forth in the claims.

[0079] Generally, ablation device **100** includes at least one tissue contacting member **102** coupled with at least one ablation member (not shown in **FIG. 1**). One embodiment of a device which may be used as tissue contacting member **102** is described in U.S. Patent Application Ser. No. 60/182,048, filed on Feb. 11, 2000, the entire contents of which is hereby incorporated by reference. Ablation device **100** shown in **FIG. 1** actually includes two tissue contacting members **102**, one on either side of the right pulmonary veins **142**, **144**. Tissue contacting members **102** may be coupled together via support member **104** and suction connector **216**. In other embodiments, some of which will be described below, tissue contacting member **102** may include only one member, more than two members, a coupling member disposed between multiple arms and/or the like. Alternatively, tissue contacting member **102** may be conical, linear, shaped as a flat pad or a flat elongate member or may have any other suitable configuration. Additionally, tissue contacting members **102** may have any suitable size and dimensions. For example, in **FIG. 1**, tissue contacting members **102** and device **100** in general have a shape and dimensions to contact and ablate epicardial tissue on heart **140** in a pattern partial encircling the right pulmonary veins **142**, **144**. Many other configurations and sizes are possible, as described further below.

[0080] Tissue contacting members **102** may be manufactured from any suitable material, such as a polymer, plastic, ceramic, a combination of materials or the like. In one embodiment, for example, tissue contacting members **102** are manufactured from a liquid molded rubber. In some embodiments, the material used to make tissue contacting members **102** is chosen to allow the members **102** to be at least partially deformable or malleable. Deformable tissue contacting members **102** may allow ablation device **100** to be inserted into a patient and/or advanced to a surgical site within the patient via a minimally invasive incision or a minimally invasive introducer device, such as sheath **124**. Deformable tissue contacting members **102** may also allow device **100** to conform to a surface of heart **140**, to enhance ablation of epicardial or other cardiac tissue. In some embodiments, tissue contacting members **102** include one or more artery securing arms **108**, for securing, exposing and/or occluding one or more coronary arteries via silastic tubing attached between the artery and securing arm **108**. Securing arms **108** are generally made of the same material(s) as tissue contacting members **102** but may also suitably comprise other materials.

[0081] In some embodiments the ablation device may be inserted minimally invasively under stress, and is configured to conform to the topography or anatomy of the tissue to be treated when relaxed. This feature may enhance the adherence of the ablation device to the tissue because the suction

is not working against resistance of the ablation device to conforming to the desired shape.

[0082] Thus, some embodiments the preferred features of the material used to manufacture tissue contacting member **102** may further include one or more of the following characteristics: the material provides electrical or thermal insulation, the material is flexible to facilitate remote advancement via torturous pathways, the material has shape memory allowing large elastic deformation of the tissue contacting member but also allowing the tissue contacting member to return to a pre-formed shape in a relaxed configuration, the material may be translucent or transparent to help the user see the position of the ablation probe, the material may be lubricious to facilitate insertion and placement, and the material allows thin walled construction of the tissue contacting member so that collapse of the tissue contacting member can be seen to confirm the operation of the vacuum when activated.

[0083] In some embodiments, tissue contacting members **102** are coupled with support member **104**. Support member **104** may be made of any suitable biocompatible material, such as titanium, stainless steel, nickel titanium alloy (Nitinol) or the like. Support member **104** may be coupled with tissue contacting members **102** by any suitable means, such as but not limited to one or more adhesive substances, placement of a portion of support member **104** within a sleeve on tissue contacting members **102** or a combination of both. Like tissue contacting members **102**, support member **104** may also be malleable or deformable to allow for insertion of ablation device **100** through a minimally invasive sheath **124** and/or for enhancing conformability of device **100** to a surface of heart **140**. Support member **104** typically includes at least one support arm **106** or similar protrusion or multiple protrusions for removably coupling ablation device **100** with positioner **114** or one or more other positioning devices. Positioner **114**, for example, may comprise a flexible, positioning arm, with attachment means such as clamp **116** for attaching to support arm **106** and stabilizing device **118** for stabilizing positioner **114**. For example, a flexible, articulating positioner **114** may be of the type which rigidities when tensile force is applied, such as via a tensioning wire. Any other suitable positioner **114** may alternatively be used. In other embodiments, device **100** may not include support member **104**. Such devices **100** may incorporate a connection arm onto a tissue contacting member **102**, may be positioned on heart **140** using a positioning device inserted through a separate incision, or may be positioned or manipulated by a physician or other user via any other suitable means.

[0084] Tissue contacting members **102** may also be coupled with one or more suction cannulas **112** to provide suction for enhancing contact of ablation device **100** with epicardial tissue. In various embodiments, tissue contacting members **102** may be directly coupled to one or more cannulas **112** or may be connected via one or more suction connectors **216**. In **FIG. 1**, a V-shaped suction connector is used to couple the two tissue contacting members **102** with a common cannula **112**. Cannula **112**, in turn, is connected to suction source **120**, which may be a conventional wall suction or stand-alone suction source. Generally, cannula **112** may be any suitable conventional cannula **112**, which are well known to those skilled in the art. Suction connector **216** is typically comprised of the same material(s) as tissue

contacting members **102**, but may also be made of a material or materials used to make cannula **112**. Suction connector **216** may further include a nozzle **218** (FIG. 2) for connecting to cannula **112**.

[0085] Ablation device **100** also includes at least one ablation member **210** (FIG. 2). Ablation member **210** typically receives energy from a separate energy source **122**, although ablation members **210** with internal energy sources are also contemplated. Where a separate energy source **122** is used, ablation member **210** may be coupled with source **122** by any suitable means. In one embodiment, for example, ablation member **210** may be coupled to energy source **122** with wire **110**. Wire **110** may be any suitable connector, such as fiber optic cable, electric cable, coaxial cable, ultrasound transmission device or the like. As is described further below, any suitable energy may be provided by energy source **122** for ablation and any means for transmitting energy to ablation member **210** is contemplated within the scope of the invention. In some embodiments, for example, energy may be transmitted remotely, so that no wires or other similar connecting devices are required. In other embodiments, radio frequency energy may be provided by an RF energy source and transmitted to ablation member **210** via conventional electrical wire(s) **110**.

[0086] Generally, ablation member **210** may be configured to transmit energy of any suitable quantity or force. For example, in some embodiments sufficient energy will be transmitted through ablation member **210** to ablate only epicardial tissue on a heart. In other embodiments, sufficient energy may be transmitted to cause one or more layers beneath the epicardial tissue to be ablated. In some embodiments, for example, one or more transmural lesions (across the entire wall of the heart) may be ablated. Typically, an amount of energy transmitted through ablation member **210** will be adjustable to create an desired ablation depth.

[0087] As mentioned briefly above, a minimally invasive introducer sheath **124**, trocar or other minimally invasive device may be used for introducing one or more of the components shown in FIG. 1 into a patient. In some embodiments, a sheath need not be used and instead only a minimally invasive incision is used. In other embodiments, multiple minimally invasive incisions and/or sheaths **124** may be used for introducing various devices into a patient. For example, one sheath **124** may be used for introducing ablation device **100** and another sheath **124** may be used for introducing positioner **114**. Although devices and methods of the present invention are often suitable for minimally invasive procedures, they may also typically be used in open surgical procedures, either with or without cardiopulmonary bypass, in various embodiments.

[0088] Referring now to FIG. 2, an embodiment of ablation device **100** is shown in further detail. Device **100** is shown from a bottom/angled view to show a tissue contacting surfaces **224** of tissue contacting members **102**, ablation member **210**, suction apertures **212** and sensors **214**. Like tissue contacting members **102**, tissue contacting surfaces **224** may be given any configuration and sizes to contact cardiac tissue in an area around the tissue to be ablated. For example, in an embodiment as in FIG. 2 a tissue contacting surface **224** on one tissue contacting member **102** may have a length of approximately 1.25 in. and a width of approximately 0.5 in., with a space between the two tissue contact-

ing surfaces measuring approximately 0.4 in. Such exemplary dimensions are in no way limiting, and all combinations of dimensions for one or more tissue contacting members **102** are contemplated. In some embodiments, as in FIG. 2, surfaces **224** may be flat and smooth. In other embodiments, surfaces **224** are textured, curvilinear or otherwise shaped to enhance contact of tissue contacting members **102** with heart **140**. Some embodiments may further include one or more surface features **222**. Such features **222** may enhance friction between tissue contacting surfaces **224** and epicardial tissue and/or may provide an area for placement of additional features, such as irrigation apertures for cooling tissue or the like.

[0089] Ablation member **210** may include one or more ablation members for transmitting one or more of a variety of ablation agents to epicardium or other cardiac tissue. In some embodiments, as commonly shown in the drawing figures, ablation member **210** may comprise a single, continuous, RF ablation coil or wire for transmitting RF energy to cardiac tissue. In other embodiments, ablation member **210** may be multiple radio frequency devices or one or more cryogenic devices, ultrasound devices, laser devices, thermo-electric chip devices, chemical agent delivery devices, biological agent delivery devices, light-activated agent devices, thermal devices, microwave devices, or ablating drug delivery devices. Other suitable ablation devices are also contemplated within the scope of the invention. Additionally, radio frequency ablation members **210** may be bipolar or unipolar in various embodiments. In conjunction with any of these various embodiments, energy source **122** may provide any of the above-listed types of ablative energy or substance, any combination thereof or any other suitable ablative energy or substance.

[0090] Ablation member **210** may be given any configuration or size for ablating cardiac tissue. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 2, for example, ablation member **210** has two linear portions disposed along most of the lengths of contacting surfaces **224** of tissue contacting members **102**, and the linear portions are continuous with a curved portion **226** so that ablation member **210** is generally U-shaped. Alternatively or additionally, ablation member **210** may continue proximally from tissue contacting members **102** in one or more arms **230** which eventually connect to wire **110** or other connective device. In some embodiments, curved portion **226** may be eliminated so that ablation member **210** comprises two linear ablation members connected to wire **110** via arms **230**. In yet other embodiments, arms **230** may be eliminated and ablation member **210** may be coupled directly to wire **110** without interposing arms.

[0091] Generally, ablation members **210** and tissue contacting member **102** may have any shapes, sizes, configurations or combinations of shapes and sizes to produce a desired ablation pattern on epicardial or other tissue of a heart. In some examples, ablation members **210** and tissue contacting members **102** are configured to partially or completely encircle or surround one pulmonary vein. In other embodiments, they may be configured to partially or completely surround two pulmonary veins on the same side of the heart, such as the left superior and left inferior pulmonary veins. In still other embodiments, the right and left inferior pulmonary veins or the right and left superior pulmonary veins may be partially or wholly encircled. And in still other embodiments, all four pulmonary veins may be

partially or completely encircled by ablation members **210** and tissue contacting member **102**. Some of these embodiments are described in further detail below, but it should be understood that any possible configuration is contemplated within the scope of the present invention.

[0092] In some embodiments, all or a portion of ablation member **210** or tissue contacting member **102** may be steerable. Steerability means that an ablation member **210** or tissue contacting member **102** may be adjusted to fit around or next to one or more pulmonary veins or to otherwise assume a desired configuration. For example, some embodiments may include a pull wire coupled with ablation member **210** and/or tissue contacting member **102**. The pull wire, when pulled, deflects ablation member **210** and/or tissue contacting member **102** to one side or around a curved structure. Other embodiments may include pushable wires, combinations of flexible and stiff portion and/or the like to provide steerability.

[0093] In some embodiments, for example, it is desirable to ablate epicardial tissue in a circumferential pattern around one or more pulmonary arteries. Various configurations of tissue contacting members **102** and ablation members **210** are contemplated for achieving such ablation patterns. For example, a retractable RF coil **240** or other retractable ablation device may be incorporated into or used in conjunction with ablation member **210** as shown in FIG. 2. Retractable coil **240** could be housed within tissue contacting member **102**, for example, and could be released when desired to surround or encircle one or two pulmonary veins. As already described, the RF ablation member **210** and/or the RF retractable coil **240** pictured in FIG. 2 may be replaced, in other embodiments, with devices using radio frequency energy, ultrasound energy, microwave energy, cryogenic energy, thermoelectric energy or laser energy for ablating tissue. For example, ablation member **210** in some embodiments comprises multiple thermoelectric chips disposed in a pattern on tissue contacting members **102**.

[0094] Although ablation device **100** and ablation member **210** are often shown as being generally U-shaped, many other configurations are possible. As described further below, an ablation device **100** may be conical in shape, with ablation member **210** being disposed in a circle at the base of the cone which contacts cardiac tissue. In other embodiments, device **100** may be configured as a flat patch and one or more linear or curvilinear ablation members **210** may be incorporated into the patch. For example, ablation device **100** may include a combination of multiple ablation members **210** to ablate a pattern on heart **140** such as: a first linear ablation member for contacting heart tissue between a left pulmonary vein and a right pulmonary vein; a second linear ablation member for contacting heart tissue at a location approximating a line extending to the atrioventricular groove; and a third linear ablation member for contacting heart tissue on a left atrial appendage. In such an embodiment, one or more of ablation members **210** may overlap one another. In some embodiments involving multiple ablation members **210**, each member may be controllable on a separate radio frequency channel or other energy transmission channel.

[0095] Tissue contacting members **102** optionally include one or more attachment means for enhancing contact of ablation device **100** with epicardial or other cardiac tissue.

In some embodiments, one or more suction apertures **212** are used. Each suction aperture **212** generally includes a depressed surface and a small suction hole. The suction hole is connected to a lumen (not shown) within tissue contacting member **102**, and the lumen is then couplable with a suction cannula **122** or connector **216** for connecting to cannula **122**. Suction apertures **212** may be given any suitable configuration, size or pattern. For example, suction holes may be disposed on tissue contacting member **102** in a largely linear pattern, as in FIG. 2. In other embodiments, suction apertures may be arranged in two parallel lines such that ablation member **210** is disposed between the two parallel lines of suction apertures **212**. In still another embodiment, ablation device **100** may include one tissue contacting member **102** having a conical shape, with the base of the cone contacting epicardial tissue and the entire conical tissue contacting member **102** acting as one suction aperture.

[0096] In some embodiments, suction force may be applied via suction apertures **210** with sufficient strength to allow for stabilization and/or positioning of heart **140**. For example, a physician may place ablation device **100** on a beating heart **140**, apply suction, and hold heart **140** in a relatively stable or reduced-motion position while performing an ablation procedure. The physician may also (or alternatively) turn or otherwise move heart **140**, using ablation device **100**, such as when a different angle of heart **140** would be advantageous for viewing or treating a portion of heart **140**. In these or other embodiments, suction force applied through suction apertures **212** may be of sufficient strength to dissect through one or more layers of adipose tissue covering epicardial tissue. Such dissection by suction apertures **212** may allow for improved contact of the epicardial tissue by device and, thus, improved ablation. In alternative embodiments, suction apertures **212** may be replaced or supplemented by other means for securing ablation device **100** to epicardial tissue. For example, an adhesive may be applied to tissue contacting surfaces **224**. Such adhesives or other securing means may also be sufficiently strong, in some embodiments, to allow for positioning and/or stabilization of heart **140**.

[0097] Referring to FIG. 2, tissue contacting members **102** may also include one or more sensors **214** for judging the thickness of the tissue or to determine the amount of therapy or energy that must be delivered to the tissue, for sensing whether the ablation device **100** is properly positioned in contact with the tissue to be ablated, and to monitor the progress of the ablation to recognize when the tissue along a selected length of the ablation device **100** has received sufficient treatment and communicates with a means for directing the ablation device **100** to discontinue or reduce treatment at that site; in some embodiments, while continuing to apply ablation energy at other locations along the length of the ablation device **100**. For these and other purposes, the sensors **214** may include one or more thermal sensors, electrical sensors, thermoelectric sensors, microchips, thermistors, thermocouples, Doppler sensors, microwave sensors, and ultrasonic sensors.

[0098] As shown in FIG. 2, some embodiments include two or more paired sensors **214**, with one sensor of each pair on one side of ablation member **210** and the other sensor on the opposite side. In some embodiments, one sensor **214** transmits a signal through epicardial tissue to its paired sensor **214**. If epicardial tissue between the two paired

sensors **214** has been ablated, then energy will transmit poorly through that ablated tissue. Thus, the receiving sensor **214** will receive reduced or no energy transmitted from the transmitting sensor **214**. If tissue between two paired sensors has not been ablated, the signal should travel through the tissue with only slight reduction in strength. By using such paired sensors **214** and comparing signals received in different pairs, areas of ablation can be compared, to determine if all desired areas for ablation have been sufficiently ablated. Other configurations one or more sensors **214** may also be used.

[0099] Referring now to **FIG. 2a**, another view of ablation device **100** as in **FIG. 2** is shown, with ablation member **210** removed for clarity. In some embodiments, tissue contacting members **102** include a linear trough **250** in which ablation member **210** is placed, either removably or permanently. Positioning ablation member **210** in trough **250** may provide improved contact between ablation member **210** and epicardial tissue while also providing ablation device **100** with durability. Surface features **222** are again shown in **FIG. 2a**. These features may simply enhance contact of tissue contacting members **102** with epicardial tissue or may also contain additional features, such as sensors, irrigation apertures for allowing passage of irrigation fluid for cooling ablated tissue, small suction apertures and/or the like.

[0100] Optionally, various embodiments of ablation device **100** may further include at least one cooling member for cooling a portion of ablated epicardial tissue, epicardial tissue surrounding an ablated area, other nearby tissues and/or a portion of device **100**. Cooling members are not shown in the drawing figures, for purposes of clarity. Generally, a cooling member may comprise any suitable device for cooling a tissue. In some embodiments, cooling member includes at least one inlet port, for allowing introduction of a cooling substance into the member, a hollow internal cooling member, and at least one outlet port for allowing egress of the cooling substance. The cooling substance itself may be carbon dioxide, any other suitable gas, saline or any other suitable liquid. In some embodiments, the hollow cooling member comprises a tubular member disposed within tissue contacting member **102** in general proximity with ablation member **210**. In other embodiments, cooling member may comprise a chamber for containing cooling substance or a series of irrigation holes for allowing cooling substance to flow out of tissue contacting member **102** to contact ablated or other epicardial tissue. Many other suitable cooling apparatus are contemplated for use within the scope of the present invention.

[0101] With reference now to **FIG. 3**, another embodiment of ablation device **300** is shown from a bottom-side view. Ablation device **300** includes a tissue contacting member **302**, coupled with an ablation member **310** and a support member **304**. As with some above-described embodiments, tissue contacting member includes a tissue contacting surface **324**, tissue attaching means including multiple suction apertures **312** and multiple artery securing arms **308**. Tissue contacting member **302** is removably couplable with a suction cannula **318** via a V-shaped suction connector **316**. Ablation member **310** is coupled with energy transmitting wire **314** for coupling with an energy source (not shown). Support member **304** includes a support arm **306** (shown partially in dotted lines, since it extends on the

opposite side of tissue contacting member **302**) for coupling device **300** with a positioning device.

[0102] In ablation device **300**, tissue contacting member **302**, ablation member **310** and support member **304** are all generally shaped as a square with a central area **303** and a top area **305** left open. Such a configuration may be used, for example, to contact and ablate epicardial tissue almost completely encircling one or more pulmonary veins. Leaving top area **305** open may allow device **300** to be positioned around such veins or other vessels while still providing almost circumferential ablation. In other embodiments, either central area **303**, top area **305** or both may be closed to provide for different contact and/or ablation patterns on epicardial tissue. In still other embodiments, one or more hinges may be positioned on ablation device **300** to allow top area **305** to be closed after positioning device **300** around one or two pulmonary veins. Again, any configuration, shape, size, dimensions or the like are contemplated within the scope of the invention.

[0103] Referring now to **FIG. 4**, another embodiment of ablation device **400** comprises a largely flexible device which includes a tissue contacting member **402** and an ablation member **410**. Tissue contacting member **402** may be made of any suitable, flexible material, such as a silicone, polyurethane, polycarbonate, another suitable polymer or combination of polymers or the like. Tissue contacting member **402** generally includes a tissue contacting surface **424** having multiple suction apertures **412**. Tissue contacting surface **424** may be slightly concave (as shown), flat or may have any other suitable shape. Suction apertures **412** are disposed in two parallel lines, one line on either side of ablation member **410** and communicate with suction lumens **414** and **416**. Suction lumens **414**, **416** may be coupled with one or more suction cannulas or similar devices for providing suction force through suction apertures **412**. Other embodiments may include one common suction lumen for connection to a suction cannula.

[0104] As with various embodiments described above, any suitable ablation means may be used as ablation member **410** in device **400**. In the embodiment shown, ablation member **410** comprises a linear radio frequency coil. Ablation member **410** may extend beyond the length of tissue contacting member **402**, either in a proximal or distal direction and may be coupled with a source of energy via a wire (not shown) or other connection device. In various embodiments, one or more of the features described above, such as support members, retractable ablation elements, sensors, cooling members, positioning arms and/or the like may be incorporated into or used with ablation device **400**. Alternatively, ablation device **400** may simply include tissue contacting member **402** and linear ablation member **410**. Such an embodiment may be advantageous for introduction through a narrow, minimally invasive introducer sheath, due to the device's flexibility and relatively small size. In one embodiment, for example, device **400** may measure approximately 3.25 in. in length and approximately 0.9 in. wide and may further be deformable to a narrower configuration for insertion through a sheath. Furthermore, device **400** may be sufficiently flexible to conform to curved surfaces of heart **140**, allowing for enhanced contact with and ablation of epicardial tissue. Finally, it may sometimes be advantageous to ablate epicardial tissue in a linear pattern or in multiple

line. Ablation device **400** may be movable, to allow ablation in a first line, a second line, a third line and/or the like.

[0105] Referring now to **FIG. 4a**, a bottom-side view of ablation device **400** is shown with ablation member removed. It can be seen that tissue contacting member **402** may include a trough **420** in which ablation member **410** may be positioned. In some embodiments, ablation member **410** may be a removable piece which may be removably attached to tissue contacting member **402**, at least partially disposed within trough **420**, so that one ablation member **410** may be used with multiple tissue contacting members **402**, one after another, for example if tissue contacting members **402** are single-use, disposable devices.

[0106] In some apparatus and methods of the invention, once the tissue contact member is positioned and suctioned on to the heart, the ablation device **400** may also be slid within the trough **420** in the tissue contact member **402** so that the energy emitting section of the ablation member **410** may be positioned as a separate step from the step of positioning the tissue contacting member **402**. It is also possible to position the tissue contacting member **402** separately from the ablation member **410**, then in a later step, slide the ablation member **410** into the tissue contact member **401**. In some embodiments, an ablation member **410** with a short energy emitting section may be moved along a trough **420** in the tissue contact member **401** so that the ablation device **400** can create long lesions, perhaps longer than the ablation section of the ablation member **410**, with minimal manipulations of the device within the track.

[0107] Using a single placement of the tissue contacting member may enhance continuity of ablation lesions. Not having to move the ablation device between discrete ablation cycles, and instead only moving the ablation member within the tissue contacting member, insures that adjacent ablation segments are contiguous with no ablation gaps. Avoiding the creation of gaps can be critical to insure electrical isolation of desired tissue areas, and may also decrease procedure time by not requiring the surgeon to verify overlap of adjacent ablation lesions

[0108] **FIG. 5** shows yet another embodiment of ablation device **500**, including a tissue contacting member without an ablation member being shown. Device **500** is similar to ablation device **400**, but tissue contacting member **502** has one row of suction apertures **512** rather than two and ablation member, placed in ablation trough **520**, overlays suction apertures **512**. Suction holes **522** shown in suction apertures **512** demonstrate that the apertures sometimes include both a depressed or concave surface and one or more holes communicating with a suction lumen. The embodiment of ablation device **500** in **FIG. 5** may be advantageous for forming one or more linear ablations on heart **140** when there is minimal space in which to manipulate device **500** and/or when a narrow, minimally invasive incision or sheath is desired for insertion of device **500**. Device **500** may be manufactured from any suitable material or combination of materials, such as those described above, may use any suitable form of ablation member and may include various additional features as desired.

[0109] **FIG. 5a** is a bottom perspective view of an alternate another embodiment suction pods **524** spaced some distance apart and joined by a flexible joining members **526**, which may also be used to provide a channel for a vacuum

lumen. The distance between the suction pods **524** and the flexibility of the joining members **526** between the suction pods **524** has been found to increase the ability of the tissue contacting member **502** to bend in sharp turns. In **FIGS. 5a** and **5b**, the joining members **526** are cylindrical in cross section, which may improve the overall flexibility of the ablation device **500** in all directions. The flexibility can be varied as desired by changing the thickness, shape, and size of the joining members **526** between the suction pods **524**, and by varying the flexibility of the material used to fabricate the joining members **526**. For example, **FIGS. 5c** and **5d** show example alternate joining member **526** cross sections. The square cross section of **FIG. 5c** may allow bending in X and Y axes, but may resist axial rotation. The example cross section shown in **FIG. 5d** may allow bending in a downward vertical direction, but may resist bending in lateral directions. **FIG. 5e** shows an ablation member **528** including ablation segments **530** configured for insertion into tissue contacting member **502**.

[0110] Referring now to **FIG. 6**, ablation device as described with reference to **FIGS. 4** and **4a** is shown in position for performing epicardial ablation on a human heart **140**. Generally, ablation device **400** may be placed in any desired position on heart **140** for ablating epicardial tissue. Thus, in various embodiments device may be placed adjacent one or both of the right pulmonary veins **142**, **144**, adjacent one or both of the left pulmonary veins **148**, **150**, or in any other suitable location. Furthermore, ablation device **400** may be used to ablate tissue in a linear pattern at one location and then may be moved to ablated tissue in a linear pattern in another location. As discussed above with reference to various embodiments, ablation device **400** may be introduced into a patient via a minimally invasive device, such as a sheath **630** or trocar, and may be coupled with a source of suction **120** via a suction cannula **112** and with a source of ablative energy **122** via a wire **110** or other connective device.

[0111] Ablative device **400**, as well as other embodiments of ablative devices described above, may be positioned on heart **140** via a positioning device **602** which is introduced via a second minimally invasive incision or second sheath **620**. Second sheath **620** may be placed at any suitable location on the patient to allow access to ablation device with the positioning device **602**. Positioning device **602** may then be introduced through sheath and advanced to the position of ablation device **400**. Positioning device **602** may then be used to secure device **400**, such as by opposable jaws **610** or any other suitable means, and position device **400** in a desired location on heart **140**. In some embodiments, positioning device may further be used to reposition device **400** to perform ablation in multiple locations on heart **140**. The proximal end of positioning device **602** may include a handle **604** for holding and manipulating device **602** and one or more actuators **606**, such as a trigger for opening and closing opposable jaws **610** or other distally positioned end effectors of device **602**. Examples of positioning device **602** may include, but are not limited to, conventional minimally invasive surgical devices such as laproscopic surgical devices and the like.

[0112] Referring now to **FIG. 7**, another embodiment of ablation device **700** suitably includes at least one elongate shaft **702** having a proximal end **724** and a distal end **726**, a jaw member **704** coupled with shaft **702** near distal end

726, at least one ablation member 712, 714 coupled with jaw member 704, and a handle 706 and at least one actuator 708, 710 near the proximal end 724 for manipulating device 700, opening and closing the jaw member, activating ablation member 712, 714 and the like. Device 700 is generally configured to be introduced through a minimally invasive sheath, trocar or incision, though it may also be used in open surgical procedures. Shaft 702 may be made of any suitable material, such as metal, ceramic, polymers or any combination thereof, and may be rigid along its entire length or rigid in parts and flexible in one or more parts. In various embodiments, the shaft may be malleable, may articulate about at least one joint and/or may be steerable for positioning the device. In some embodiments, the ablation member is coupled with a portion of the shaft.

[0113] Jaw member 704 may be disposed on or near distal end 726 of shaft 702 and is generally configured to open and close to grasp epicardial or other tissue between the opposing jaws. For example, jaw member 704 may be coupled with shaft 702 at a hinge point 730 to allow for such opening and closing motion. An ablation member is coupled with at least part of jaw member 704. As with the above-described embodiments, the ablation member may use any suitable energy source for ablating tissue. In some embodiments, multiple ablation members 712, 714 may be used. For example, one electrode 712 of a bipolar ablation member may be coupled with one opposing jaw and another electrode 714 may be coupled with the other opposing jaw. Alternatively, ablation members 712, 714 may include one unipolar ablation device or any of the ablation devices described with reference to various embodiments above. The jaw member and/or the ablation member may be shaped to contact and ablate the epicardial tissue in a pattern such as, but not limited to, a U-shaped pattern, an L-shaped pattern, a circular pattern or a linear pattern. Actuators 708, 710 may have one or more various functions, such as opening and closing jaw member 704, activating ablation members 712, 714, changing an angle of orientation of jaw member 704, straightening or bending jaw member 704 and/or the like. One actuator 710, for example, may comprise a trigger-like actuator while another actuator 708 may comprise a turnable dial.

[0114] Generally, jaw member 704 may have any suitable configuration for contacting a surface of a heart, for grasping epicardial or other tissue to be ablated and/or for placing ablation members 712, 714 in contact with tissue to be ablated. As such, jaw members 714 may be straight, curved, bent or otherwise configured for contacting, grasping and/or ablating tissue. In some embodiments, jaw member 704 may be adjustable via an actuator 708, 710, so as to allow their shapes to be bent, straightened or the like during a procedure. With reference to FIG. 7a, one embodiment of a straight jaw member 718 may allow jaw member 718 to be retracted within shaft (arrows). Retraction may help protect a patient as well as jaw member during insertion and advancement of the device within the patient. Again, ablation members 720, 722 on such straight jaw members 718 may be bipolar RF members, unipolar RF members or any other suitable ablation devices.

[0115] Optionally, the device may further include an insulation member at least partially surrounding the device to protect body structures in the vicinity of the epicardial tissue to be ablated from damage due to heat or electrical current.

Also optionally, the ablation member may be adjustable to deliver two or more varying amounts of ablative energy to two or more locations on the epicardial tissue. Various embodiments may further include at least one sensor for sensing a quantity of ablation provided by the ablation member to the tissue.

[0116] FIG. 8 shows ablation device 700, as just described, in a position for performing an ablation procedure on epicardial tissue of heart 140. Device as shown will ablate in a pattern approximating two lines adjacent the right pulmonary veins 142, 144. It should be understood, from the foregoing descriptions of various embodiments, that jaw member 704 and ablation members 712, 714 could alternatively be configured in any other suitable shape, size or configuration to ablate in other patterns on heart 140. Additionally, device 700 may be moved to a variety of positions to ablate multiple patterns in multiple locations on the epicardial tissue.

[0117] With reference now to FIG. 9, a method for ablating cardiac tissue, such as epicardial tissue, suitably includes contacting cardiac tissue with an ablation device 910, securing the device to the tissue 920 and ablating at least a portion of the contacted, secured tissue 930. Various embodiments of the invention will utilize additional steps or sub-steps of these three basic steps, but it should be emphasized that any additional steps or variations are optional. For example, in some embodiments, contacting the cardiac tissue 910 is preceded by advancing the device into the patient through a minimally invasive introducer device. Contacting the device with the tissue 910 may include positioning the device using a positioning arm or other positioning device. In some embodiments, securing the device to the tissue 920 may also comprise invaginating a portion of epicardial tissue partially within one or more suction apertures and/or may include using one or more suction apertures to dissect through fatty tissue disposed over epicardium. Securing the device 920 may also involve securing with enough force to allow stabilization and/or positioning of the heart itself. And ablation of epicardial tissue 930 may involve ablation in any location or pattern as described above with reference to the inventive devices. Therefore, the descriptions of various methods provided herein are offered for exemplary purposes only and should not be interpreted to limit the scope of the invention as described in the claims.

[0118] Other aspects of a method for ablating epicardial tissue may include imaging the epicardial tissue and an area surrounding the tissue to be ablated, using a visualization device. Such a device may be coupled with the ablation device or may be a separate imaging device. In some embodiments, an insufflation device may be inserted between the epicardium and the pericardium and insufflation fluid or gas may be introduced to form a space between the epicardium and pericardium. The space may be used to enhance visualization, allow for freer manipulation of devices near the site for ablation and the like. Another aspect may include sensing ablation of epicardial tissue with one or more sensors, as described above. In some embodiments, tissue may optionally be cooled via a cooling member and/or irrigation of fluid into contact with the tissue. Finally, the actual ablation of epicardial tissue may be accomplished with any suitable ablation member and form of energy, including RF, thermoelectric, cryogenic, microwave, laser,

ultrasound or the like. In one embodiment, ablation is achieved and/or enhanced by delivery of one or more drugs to the tissue.

[0119] The method may further include the steps of using visual and audible cues to verify the ablation device is adhered to tissue. For example the user can hear a suction sound or 'whistle' when the suction has been activated and the ablation device is not correctly adhered. Also, the user can hear vacuum pump elevate as vacuum increases. In some embodiments, the user can visually observe the tissue contacting member collapse when the ablation device is correctly adhered and suction is activated.

[0120] In general, any number of suction pods may be used in the invention, and the number used may depend on the procedure that is to be performed. For example, FIG. 10 shows an embodiment of the ablation device 500 including a tissue contact member 534 with only a single elongated suction pod 530. In this embodiment, the suction pod 530 extends a selected length of the ablation member 536 and includes graspers 532 to hold the ablation member 536 within the suction pod 530. Any desired mechanism for holding the ablation member 536 may be used. For example, the graspers 532 may be narrow channel sections in which the ablation member 536 may be snapped into place, or the graspers 532 may be loops through which the ablation member 536 is slid into place.

[0121] In further embodiments, the ablation device may be configured to allow the ablation member to extend beyond the edge of the tissue contacting member to allow for ablation to occur outside of the region covered by the tissue contacting member.

[0122] Referring to FIG. 11, an ablation system 800 built in accord with the invention is shown including an ablation energy source 802 for providing power to the ablation device 804. The ablation energy source 802 shown is an RF energy source particularly suited for use with ablation apparatus as described herein, but is not limited to such use. Other kinds of ablation energy sources and ablation devices may be useable in the invention.

[0123] In some embodiments, the ablation system 802 is configured to recognize the kind of ablation device connected by including keyed plugs. Thus, in this embodiment, the energy source 802 includes sockets 808 configured with specialized shapes to accept only plugs which are manufactured with the matching shape. The Energy source 802 is configured with predetermined settings appropriate for the kind of device that is accepted by that socket shape. More than one socket 808 and associated pre-determined setting may be included. Ablation devices 804 to be used with the energy source will be provided with a plug shape (for example plug 806 on ablation device 804) to be received in one of the sockets 808 that will provide the appropriate energy requirements.

[0124] In another embodiment, the ablation system of the invention includes apparatus for recognizing the kind of device that has been coupled to the energy source and for automatically adjusting various settings to accommodate the detected device. Examples include but are not limited to known logic chip device recognition systems and RFID systems. This embodiment can be used in combination with keyed plugs as described above.

[0125] In another embodiment, the ablation system will provide information useful to the treating physician and/or other medical personnel, about the progress of treatment and the status of the equipment. For example, the system may include a feedback loop to self monitor the energy delivery of the system and automatically turn off the delivery of energy once the treatment is complete. The feedback mechanism may include electrical sensors, thermoelectric sensors, microchips, thermistors, thermocouples, Doppler sensors, microwave sensors, and ultrasonic sensors, or thermal energy emitting and receiving devices. In some embodiments, the treatment progress is monitored and indicated with a visual display such as example visual displays 810 and 812. In these embodiments the sensors may be in communication with processors or other control devices included in the energy source, which can analyze and display the data received from the sensors.

[0126] In still further embodiments, the ablation device may include more electrodes that are available on the energy source. This allows ablation device construction to facilitate longer ablations by utilizing multiple connections to energy source. For example, In one embodiment, the ablation device includes a plurality of electrodes, and the energy source includes less electrodes than the ablation device. In this case, the ablation device preferably includes at least two plugs, with each plug providing power to a subset of the plurality of electrodes on the ablation device. By connecting the first plug of the ablation device to the energy source, applying ablation energy to the tissue, unplugging the first plug from the energy source, plugging the second plug of the ablation device in to the energy source, and applying ablation energy to the tissue, all of the ablation elements can be activated. More specifically, if an energy source includes seven electrodes couple to a single plug to power seven ablation segments on the ablation device, the ablation device may include fourteen separate ablation segments. Each set of seven ablation segments would couple to a separate plug. In use, the first plug is inserted into the energy source and the first set of seven ablation segments is activated. Upon completion of treatment, possibly without moving the ablation device, a second region may be ablated by removing the first plug and inserting the second plug to activate the next seven ablation segments on the ablation device. This embodiment can result in a smaller less expensive energy source that is still capable of powering a long ablation device.

[0127] In one embodiment, a method first includes advancing an ablation device through a minimally invasive introducer device into a patient and to a location for ablating epicardial tissue. The device is then contacted with the epicardial tissue and positioned on the tissue with a positioning arm or other device inserted through the same or a separate minimally invasive introducer or incision. Positioning device, in some embodiments, may be a flexible, rigidifying positioner which allows for positioning and then stabilizing with the same device. The ablation device may be placed in any suitable location for ablating epicardial tissue. In one embodiment, for example, ablation device will contact tissue at least partially encircling two pulmonary veins, such as the right superior and right inferior pulmonary veins. The ablation device may contact epicardial tissue directly adjacent the bases of the veins but may be configured to maintain a safe distance between the ablation member on the device and the actual veins.

[0128] Once the epicardial tissue is contacted, the device may be secured to the tissue by securing means, such as suction or adhesive. In fact, the device may be secured to the tissue sufficiently in some embodiments to allow the heart to be stabilized and/or positioned using the device and a positioner. For example, a beating heart may be stabilized to reduce or eliminate motion during an ablation procedure or may be pulled, turned or otherwise moved into an advantageous position for ablating, visualizing or treating the heart. Suction force may also be supplied in sufficient strength to dissect through a layer of adipose tissue overlying the epicardial tissue, which may provide improved contact of an ablation member with the epicardial tissue. Once the tissue is secured, at least a portion of the tissue may be ablated by delivering energy to an ablation member (or members) on the device. As already described in detail, such energy may include any suitable energy and may additionally or alternatively include one or more ablative drugs. After ablation, tissue may be cooled via cooling means and/or ablation of tissue may be sensed with one or more sensors. When an ablative procedure is complete, the device may be removed and placed in another location on the heart for an additional procedure or may be removed from the patient altogether.

[0129] Another apparatus and method of the invention includes the following. Referring to **FIGS. 12a** and **12b**. In some embodiments, the ablation device **814** may be deployed using an introducer **816** (best seen in **FIG. 12b**). The introducer **816** in this embodiment comprises a tube **818** that is pre-bent into a J shape. An obturator **820** with a handle **822** and a shaft **828** which is inserted in to the tube **818** with the shaft **828** extending substantially through the length of the tube **818**. When the obturator **820** is removed, the tube **818** returns to its pre-bent J shape.

[0130] A distal end **824** of introducer **816** has a designate region for grasping. A selected instrument may be introduced through a the same or a second incision to grasp the distal end **824** of the introducer **816** to pull the distal end **824** of the introducer **816** outside the body of the patient. The distal end **826** of the ablation device **814** of **FIG. 12a** is attached to the proximal end **830** of the introducer **816**. The introducer **816** is then withdrawn until the ablation device **814** is properly positioned.

[0131] In the example embodiment of the ablation device **814** seen in **FIG. 12a**, the ablation device **814** includes a tissue contacting member **832** including a single suction pod **834**. An ablation member **836** extends through the length of the tissue contacting member **832** and includes graspers **838** to hold the ablation member **836** within the suction pod **832**. Once the treatment is complete, the ablation device **814** may be decoupled from the energy source and pulled out.

[0132] An example method for using the invention described above includes the following steps. An introducer is advanced through a first incision into the transverse sinus cavity with obturator fully inserted. At desired area near the pulmonary veins, obturator is withdrawn and the which allows the introducer to assume its pre-formed J shape reaching round the pulmonary veins, possibly also guided by contact with the pericardium. The introducer is preferably long enough to be inserted from thoracotomy into transverse sinus cavity around the pulmonary veins and out through the oblique sinus and out through the same or a different thoractomy. Another instrument is advanced through the

same or different thoracotomy to grasp the distal end of the introducer. The introducer is pulled around the pulmonary veins until the distal end is outside the body of the patient. At this point, both the proximal and distal ends of the introducer are preferably outside the body of the patient.

[0133] The proximal end of introducer is attached, possibly with luer fitting, to the distal end of an ablation device. Indication markers and lines on introducer and on the ablation device can be used to assist the user in properly positioning the ablation device. In a preferred embodiment, circumferential indication markers on the introducer are used as depth measurements, and an indication stripe on the surface of the introducer are aligned with similar markings on the ablation device to insure that the ablation device will be facing properly when inserted.

[0134] In this method, the introducer preferably has torsional rigidity to facilitate steerability. Further, the introducer is preferably a highly visible color for endoscopic visualization and distinguishing from natural anatomical colors.

[0135] Once the ablation device is in position, suction is applied to adhere the ablation device to the tissue surrounding the pulmonary veins. Ablation energy is applied. Once treatment is complete, the ablation device can be removed.

[0136] Another method of the invention includes a method of performing a 'hybrid' medical procedure comprising creating a continuous lesion encircling or partially encircling the pulmonary veins to electrically isolate the pulmonary veins during a surgical procedure and creating additional ablation lesions in the left and/or right atrium, vena cava, endocardium to the mitral valve annulus, or along the left atrial appendage to create a Maze-like lesion set for treatment of atrial fibrillation

[0137] While the present invention has been shown and described with reference to various embodiment thereof, the above and other changes in form and detail may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. The method for ablating heart tissue on a heart of a patient to treat a cardiac arrhythmia, the method comprising:

contacting heart tissue with an ablation device having at least one tissue contacting member and at least one ablation member;

positioning the tissue contacting device on the heart tissue in a position proximate at least one location selected for ablation;

applying sufficient suction force through the tissue contacting member to secure the contacting member to the tissue;

positioning the ablation member within the tissue contacting device to position said ablation member adjacent to an epicardial region selected for ablating heart tissue; and

applying ablation energy to at least a portion of the heart tissue with the at least one ablation member.

2. A method as in claim 1, further moving the ablation member within the tissue contacting device adjacent a second location selected for ablation.

3. A method as in claim 2, further applying ablation energy to heart tissue at the second selected location.

4. A method as in claim 1, wherein positioning the ablation device comprises contacting heart tissue at least partially encircling at least one pulmonary vein.

5. A method as in claim 1, further comprising ablating at least one layer of tissue on the heart underlying the heart tissue.

6. A method as in claim 5, wherein ablating the at least one layer comprises ablating a transmural lesion on the heart.

7. A method as in claim 1, further comprising advancing the ablation device through a minimally invasive introducer device to a location for contacting the heart tissue.

8. A method as in claim 1, wherein positioning the ablation device comprises: positioning the ablation device using at least one flexible positioning arm; and applying tensile force to the arm to stiffen the arm.

9. A method as in claim 1, further comprising visualizing the heart tissue with an imaging device coupled with the ablation device.

10. A method as in claim 1, further comprising: positioning an insufflation device between the heart tissue and a layer of pericardial tissue; and introducing an insufflation medium into the insufflation device to create a space between the heart tissue and the pericardial tissue.

11. A method as in claim 10, wherein the insufflation medium is selected from the group consisting of carbon dioxide, air, helium and a liquid.

12. A method as in claim 10, further comprising positioning an imaging device within the space to view the heart tissue.

13. A method as in claim 1, wherein applying ablation energy comprises applying energy through at least one ablation member selected from the group consisting of a radio frequency device, a cryogenic device, an ultrasound device, a laser device, a thermo-electric chip device, a chemical agent delivery device, a biological agent delivery device, a light-activated agent device, a thermal device, a microwave device, and an ablating drug delivery device.

14. A method as in claim 13, wherein applying ablation energy comprises applying energy through at least two bipolar radio frequency electrodes.

15. A method as in claim 13, wherein applying ablation energy comprises applying energy through at least one unipolar radio frequency electrode.

16. A method as in claim 1, further contacting heart tissue with a second tissue contacting member.

17. The method as in claim 16, further positioning the second tissue contacting member on the heart tissue in a position proximate a second location selected for ablation and applying sufficient suction force to secure the second tissue contacting member to the heart tissue.

18. A method as in claim 17, further removing the ablation member from the first tissue contacting member and positioning the ablation member in the second tissue contacting member.

19. A method as in claim 18, further positioning the ablation member within the second tissue contacting device to position said ablation member adjacent to a selected epicardial region.

20. A method as in claim 19, further applying ablation energy to at least a portion of the heart tissue with the ablation member.

21. A method as in claim 1, wherein applying sufficient suction force secures the ablation device to the heart tissue in a location so as to maintain a margin of safety away from the at least one pulmonary vein.

22. A method as in claim 1, wherein applying sufficient suction force comprises applying suction force in an amount to cause the tissue contacting member to dissect through at least one layer of fat disposed between the tissue contacting member and the epicardium.

23. A method as in claim 1, further comprising adhering the ablation device to the epicardial surface using an adhesive material.

24. A method as in claim 1, further comprising stabilizing the heart using the ablation device.

25. A method as in claim 24, wherein stabilizing the heart comprises securing the ablation device to the heart tissue with sufficient force to maintain the tissue in a position to perform an ablation procedure while the heart is beating.

26. A method as in claim 1, further comprising sensing an extent of ablation of the heart tissue, using at least one sensor coupled with the tissue contacting member so as to contact the heart tissue.

27. A method as in claim 26, wherein sensing comprises: transmitting a radio frequency signal across an area of ablated tissue with at least one transmitting sensor; and receiving the radio frequency signal with at least one receiving sensor.

28. A method as in claim 26, wherein sensing comprises transmitting and receiving signals between pairs of transmitting and receiving sensors disposed along at least a portion of the tissue contacting member.

29. A method as in claim 1, further comprising sensing desired contact of the tissue contact member with the tissue.

30. A method as in claim 1, further comprising using drug delivery means coupled with the tissue contacting member to deliver at least one drug to the heart tissue to enhance treatment of the cardiac arrhythmia.

31. A method as in claim 7, wherein said advancing step includes guiding the ablation device using at least one guiding member.

32. A method as in claim 31, wherein guiding comprises using a pushable guidewire having at least one relatively stiff portion and one relatively flexible portion for positioning the treatment member in a location for treatment.

33. A method as in claim 32, wherein guiding comprises using a pullable guidewire to which tension is applied to steer the guidewire to position the treatment member in a location for treatment.

34. A method as in claim 1, further comprising inserting at least one needle into the heart tissue to enhance the application of energy to the heart tissue.

35. A method as in claim 34, wherein the energy is transmitted from a tip of each of the at least one needle.

36. A method as in claim 34, further comprising extending the at least one needle from a retracted position before applying the energy and retracting the at least one needle to the retracted position when the energy has been applied.

37. A method as in claim 36, further comprising selecting a depth of penetration of the at least one retractable needle into the heart tissue.

38. A method as in claim 1, further comprising: measuring the application of energy to the heart tissue using at least one closed circuit feedback loop; and regulating the application of energy to the heart tissue based on the measurement.

39. A method as in claim 1, further comprising applying fluid to the heart tissue to enhance the application of energy to the heart tissue.

40. A method as in claim 1, wherein treating the heart tissue comprises applying at least one therapeutic agent to the heart tissue in a pattern to reduce or eliminate the cardiac arrhythmia.

41. A method as in claim 40, applying the at least one therapeutic agent comprises infusing the agent through at least one aperture in at least one needle on the ablation device.

42. A method as in claim 41, wherein applying the at least one therapeutic agent comprises: inserting at least one needle into the heart tissue to a desired depth; injecting the at least one agent into the heart tissue; and removing the at least one needle from the heart tissue.

43. A method as in claim 42, further comprising: extending the at least one needle from a retracted position for insertion into the heart tissue; and retracting the at least one needle to the retracted position after injection.

44. A method as in claim 1, further comprising applying the suction through at least a portion of the tissue contact member while not applying the suction through at least another portion of the tissue contact member.

45. A method as in claim 1, wherein the tissue securing member comprises at least one insulation material for preventing a portion of the heart tissue from being treated.

46. A method as in claim 9, visualizing comprises using at least one visualization member selected from the group consisting of an optical imaging device, a thermal imaging device, an ultrasound device, an electrical imaging device and a Doppler imaging device.

47. A method as in claim 46, further comprising expanding an expandable balloon coupled with the visualization member near an optical element to enhance visualization.

48. A method as in claim 47, wherein expanding the balloon provides a space in a body cavity to enhance operation of the optical member.

49. A method as in claim 48, wherein expanding the balloon provides a space between at least two body tissues to enhance operation of the optical member.

50. A method as in claim 49, wherein expanding the balloon reduces motion of the heart tissue when applied to the heart tissue.

51. A method as in claim 1, wherein the suction force applied creates a fluid gradient in the epicardial issue which improves ablation energy transmission to the tissue.

52. A method as in claim 1, wherein the tissue contacting member is configured to visibly collapse when suction creates a desired vacuum level, whereby the user can confirm that the desired amount of suction has been achieved.

53. A method as in claim 1, further comprising the step confirming that the suction has secured the contacting member to the tissue by observing a change in the sound generated by a vacuum pump coupled to pneumatically with the tissue contacting member.

54. A method as in claim 1, further comprising the step confirming that the suction has secured the tissue contacting member to the tissue by observing the absence of suction sounds emanating from the tissue contacting member.

55. The method as in claim 1, further comprising applying suction creating a vacuum between -200 mmHG and -760 mmHG.

56. The method as in claim 1, wherein the ablation device includes a plurality of electrodes, and wherein the energy source includes less electrodes than the ablation device.

57. The method as in claim 67 wherein the ablation device includes at least two plugs, with each plug providing power to a subset of the plurality of electrodes on the ablation device.

58. The method as in claim 68 further comprising the steps connecting the first plug of the ablation device to the energy source, applying ablation energy to the tissue, unplugging the first plug from the energy source, plugging the second plug of the ablation device in to the energy source, and applying ablation energy to the tissue.

59. A method for ablating heart tissue on a heart of a patient to treat a cardiac arrhythmia, the method comprising:

positioning at least one tissue contacting member on the heart tissue in a position proximate at least one location selected for ablation to treat the arrhythmia;

applying sufficient suction force through the at least one tissue contacting member to secure the contacting member to the tissue;

positioning an ablation member within the tissue contacting device to position said ablation member adjacent to an epicardial region selected for ablation;

applying ablation energy to at least a portion of the heart tissue with the at least one ablation member to disrupt one or more conduction pathways in the heart.

60. A method as in claim 59 further moving the ablation member within the tissue contacting device adjacent a second location selected for ablation.

61. A method as in claim 59, further positioning a second tissue contacting member on the heart tissue in a position proximate a second location selected for ablation and applying sufficient suction force to secure the second tissue contacting member to the heart tissue.

62. A method as in claim 61, further removing the ablation member from the first tissue contacting member and positioning the ablation member in the second tissue contacting member.

63. A method as in claim 62, further applying ablation energy to at least a portion of the heart tissue the second selected location.

64. A method as in claim 61, further positioning the ablation member within the second tissue contacting device to position said ablation member adjacent to a selected heart tissue and applying ablation energy.

65. The method for ablating heart tissue on a heart of a patient to treat a cardiac arrhythmia, the method comprising:

providing an introducer having a distal end and a proximal end and also comprising a tube with a pre-bent shape and comprising an obturator positioned within the introducer;

advancing the introducer through a first incision into the transverse sinus cavity of a patient;

removing the obturator from the introducer, allowing the introducer to confirm to the pre-bent shape partially encircling the pulmonary veins;

coupling an ablation device at a distal end of the ablation device to the proximal end of the introducer;

inserting an instrument to grasp the distal end of the introducer and to move the distal end of the introducer until the ablation device is in position at least partially encircling the pulmonary veins;

contacting heart tissue with at least one tissue contacting member of the ablation device;

applying sufficient suction force through the tissue contacting member to secure the contacting member to the tissue;

applying ablation energy to at least a portion of the heart tissue in contact with the ablation member.

66. The method as in claim 65, further comprising the step of removing the ablation device and the introducer.

67. The method as in claim 65, wherein the step of moving the introducer comprises pulling the distal end of the introducer outside the body of the patient.

68. The method as in claim 65, wherein the instrument is introduced through the same incision as the introducer.

69. The method as in claim **500**, wherein the instrument is introduced through a second incision.

70. The method as in claim 65, wherein the introducer comprises indicator markings.

71. The method as in claim 65, wherein the ablation device comprises indicator markings.

72. The method as in claim 65, wherein the introducer is configured to provide torsional rigidity to facilitate steerability.

73. The method as in claim 65, wherein the introducer is a visible color selected to visually distinguish the introducer from natural anatomical colors.

74. The method as in claim 65, further comprising the step of separately creating additional ablation lesions to create a Maze-like ablation lesions.

75. A method as in claim 65, further comprising visualizing the heart tissue with an imaging device coupled with the ablation device.

76. A method as in claim 75, further comprising: positioning an insufflation device between the heart tissue and a layer of pericardial tissue; and introducing an insufflation medium into the insufflation device to create a space between the heart tissue and the pericardial tissue.

77. A method as in claim 76, further comprising positioning an imaging device within the space to view the heart tissue.

78. A method as in claim 77, wherein applying ablation energy comprises applying energy through at least one ablation member selected from the group consisting of a radio frequency device, a cryogenic device, an ultrasound device, a laser device, a thermo-electric chip device, a chemical agent delivery device, a biological agent delivery device, a light-activated agent device, a thermal device, a microwave device, and an ablating drug delivery device.

79. A method as in claim 65, wherein applying sufficient suction force secures the ablation device to the heart tissue in a location so as to maintain a margin of safety away from the pulmonary veins.

80. A method as in claim 65, further comprising stabilizing the heart using the ablation device.

81. A method as in claim 80, wherein stabilizing the heart comprises securing the ablation device to the heart tissue with sufficient force to maintain the tissue in a position to perform an ablation procedure while the heart is beating.

82. A method as in claim 65, further comprising sensing an extent of ablation of the heart tissue, using at least one sensor coupled with the tissue contacting member so as to contact the heart tissue.

83. A method as in claim 65, further comprising sensing desired contact of the ablation device with the heart tissue.

84. A method as in claim 65, further comprising using drug delivery means coupled with the ablation device to deliver at least one drug to the heart tissue to enhance treatment of the cardiac arrhythmia.

85. A method as in claim 65, further comprising inserting at least one needle into the heart tissue to enhance the application of energy to the heart tissue.

86. A method as in claim 85, further comprising extending the at least one needle from a retracted position before applying the energy and retracting the at least one needle to the retracted position when the energy has been applied.

87. A method as in claim 65, further comprising: measuring the application of energy to the heart tissue using at least one closed circuit feedback loop; and regulating the application of energy to the heart tissue based on the measurement.

88. A method as in claim 65, further comprising applying fluid to the heart tissue to enhance the application of energy to the heart tissue.

89. A method as in claim 65, wherein the tissue securing member comprises at least one insulation material for preventing a portion of the heart tissue from being treated.

90. A method as in claim 65, wherein the suction force applied creates a fluid gradient in the epicardial issue which improves ablation energy transmission to the tissue.

91. A method as in claim 65, wherein the tissue contacting member is configured to visibly collapse when suction creates a desired vacuum level, whereby the user can confirm that the desired amount of suction has been achieved.

92. A method as in claim 65, further comprising the step confirming that the suction has secured the contacting member to the tissue by observing a change in the sound generated by a vacuum pump coupled to pneumatically coupled with the tissue contacting member.

93. A method as in claim 65, further comprising the step confirming that the suction has secured the contacting member to the tissue by observing the absence of suction sounds emanating from the tissue contacting member.

94. The method as in claim 65, further comprising applying suction creating a vacuum between -200 and -760 mmHG.

95. The method as in claim 65, wherein the ablation device includes a plurality of electrodes, and wherein the energy source includes less electrodes than the ablation device.

96. The method as in claim 95 wherein the ablation device includes at least two plugs, with each plug providing power to a subset of the plurality of electrodes on the ablation device.

97. The method as in claim 96 further comprising the steps connecting the first plug of the ablation device to the energy source, applying ablation energy to the tissue, unplugging the first plug from the energy source, plugging the second plug of the ablation device in to the energy source, and applying ablation energy to the tissue.

98. An ablation system for ablating heart tissue on a heart of a patient to treat a cardiac arrhythmia, the ablation system comprising:

at least one tissue contacting member having at least one tissue contacting surface for contacting the heart tissue;

at least one suction aperture disposed along at least part of the tissue contacting surface for applying a suction force to secure the ablation device to the heart tissue;

at least one ablation member removably coupled with the tissue contacting member for ablating the heart tissue to reduce or eliminate the cardiac arrhythmia; and

at least one energy source for providing energy to the ablation member.

99. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the at least one ablation device further comprises a keyed plug.

100. The ablation system of claim 99, wherein the energy source further comprises at least one socket configured to accept the keyed plug of the ablation member.

101. Ablation system of claim 99, wherein the energy source compresses at least 2 sockets configured to accept the keyed plug of the ablation member.

102. The ablation system of claim 100, wherein the energy source is pre-configured to provide energy required for operation of the ablation member plugged into the socket of the energy source.

103. The ablation system of claim 99, further comprising at least one sensor on the ablation device.

104. The ablation system of claim 103, wherein the energy source is pre-configured to provide conditions for operation of the sensor.

105. The ablation system of claim 104, further comprising at least one display for displaying signals received from the sensor.

106. The ablation system of claim 103, wherein the ablation system comprises at least two ablation devices, with a first ablation device and a second ablation having different keyed plugs.

107. The ablation system of claim 106, wherein the energy source further comprises at least two sockets, with a first socket configured the first ablation device and the second configured to accept the second ablation device.

108. The ablation system of claim 107, wherein the energy source is pre-configured to provide the desired energy to operate each connected ablation device, and to communicate with the at least one sensor on each connected ablation device.

109. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein said energy source further comprises apparatus for recognizing the ablation device coupled to the energy source.

110. The ablation system of claim 109, wherein the energy source automatically configures internal settings to provide desired energy to the ablation device.

111. The ablation system of claim 109, further comprising at least one sensor on the ablation device.

112. The ablation system of claim 111, wherein the energy source energy source automatically adjusts internal settings to provide desired energy to the ablation device, and automatically configures internal settings to operate the at least one sensor.

113. The ablation system of claim 112, further comprising at least one display for displaying signals received from the sensor.

114. The ablation system of claim 109, wherein the ablation system comprises at least two ablation devices.

115. The ablation system of claim 114, wherein the energy source automatically adjusts internal settings to provide the

desired energy to operate each connected ablation device, and to communicate with the at least one sensor on each connected ablation device.

116. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the suction force applied through the at least one suction aperture is sufficient to stabilize the heart while it is beating.

117. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the at least one tissue contacting member comprises a flexible elongate body comprising a plurality of suction pods connected by flexible joining members.

118. The ablation system of claim 117, wherein the suction plurality of pods are of unequal sizes.

119. The ablation system of claim 117, wherein the suction pods are spaced apart unequally.

120. The ablation system of claim 117, wherein at least some flexible joining members have a cross section selected to provide increased resistance to flexing in selected directions relative to the unflexed flexible bridges.

121. The ablation system of claim 118, wherein at least some flexible joining members have a square cross section which may provide increased resistance to torsional flexing.

122. The ablation system of claim 118, wherein at least some flexible joining members have a half circle cross section which may increase resistance to lateral and upward flexing.

123. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the tissue contact member comprises a single elongated suction pod.

124. The ablation system of claim 123, wherein the ablation member extends through at least a portion of the elongated suction pod.

125. The ablation system of claim 124, wherein the elongated suction pod includes graspers for holding the ablation member.

126. The ablation system of claim, **98** wherein the energy source is selected from the group consisting of radio frequency energy, ultrasound energy, microwave energy, cryogenic energy, thermoelectric energy and laser energy.

127. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the ablation member comprises at least one linear ablation member for ablating a linear pattern on heart tissue.

128. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the at least one linear ablation member comprises a plurality of ablation members, each controllable on a separate radio frequency channel.

129. The ablation system of claim 128, further comprising markings on the ablation device to identify the position of each ablation member.

130. The ablation system of claim 128 wherein at least one sensor is associated with each of the plurality of ablation members.

131. The ablation system of claim 130 wherein when a sensor senses that a desired amount of ablation has been applied by the sensor associated with an ablation member, the sensor can communicate with a control mechanism which may adjust the operation of the ablation member.

132. The ablation system of claim 131 wherein each operation of each of the plurality of ablation members may be independently controlled.

133. The ablation system of claim 128, wherein the ablation member comprises multiple thermoelectric chips disposed in a pattern on the tissue contacting member.

134. The ablation system of claim 111, wherein the at least one sensor senses an electrical depolarization in the heart tissue.

135. The ablation system of claim 111, wherein the at least one sensor is selected from the group consisting of a thermal sensor, an electrical sensor, a thermoelectric sensor, a microchip, a thermistor, a thermocouple and an ultrasonic sensor.

136. The ablation system of claim 111, wherein the at least one sensor comprises at least one pair of sensors, each pair of sensors positioned on opposite sides of the at least one ablation member.

137. The ablation system of claim 136, wherein each pair of sensors comprises: a first sensor for transmitting a signal across an area of tissue to be ablated; and a second sensor for receiving the signal from the first sensor.

138. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the ablation device is introducible into the patient through a minimally invasive introducer device.

139. The ablation system of claim 138, wherein the ablation device is configured to conform to a topography of the heart tissue.

140. The ablation system of claim 139, wherein the ablation device is collapsed for introduction into the patient, and reverts to a predetermined shape upon release inside the patient.

141. The ablation system of claim 98, further comprising at least one visualization member for enhancing visualization of the heart tissue and the treatment location.

142. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the at least one visualization member comprises at least one of an optic imaging device, a thermal imaging device, an ultrasound device, an electrical imaging device and a Doppler imaging device.

143. The ablation system of claim 98, further comprising at least one needle coupled with the energy transmission member for insertion into the heart tissue to enhance the application of energy to the heart tissue.

144. The ablation system of claim 143, wherein the at least one needle is retractable.

145. The ablation system of claim 144, wherein the at least one retractable needle is exposed and retracted via a pneumatic member coupled with the energy transmission member.

146. The ablation system of claim 145, wherein the at least one retractable needle is exposed and retracted automatically when the energy transmission member contacts the heart tissue.

147. A ablation system as in claim 146, wherein a depth of penetration of the at least one retractable needle into the heart tissue is adjustable.

148. The ablation system of claim 98, further comprising at least one needle on the ablation device coupled with the therapeutic agent transmission member for insertion into the heart tissue to enhance application of the at least one therapeutic agent to the heart tissue.

149. The ablation system of claim 98, further comprising at least one needle on the ablation device for delivering medium to enhance application of ablation energy.

150. The ablation system of claim 98, further comprising at least one needle coupled to a sensor on the ablation device.

151. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the ablation member may be moved within the tissue contacting member to provide ablation energy at more than one location under the tissue contacting member.

152. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the ablation member may be positioned at least partly outside the tissue contacting member to apply ablation energy outside of the tissue contacting member.

153. The ablation system of claim 98 further comprising features for grasping an ablation member on an outside surface of the tissue contacting member to apply ablation energy outside of the tissue contacting member.

154. The ablation system of claim 98, further comprising a fluid gradient in the heart tissue created by the suction, whereby the fluid gradient increases ablation energy transmission.

155. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the tissue contacting member comprises a material including one or more of the characteristics from the group consisting of: electrically insulating, thermally insulating, sufficient flexibility for remote advancement via torturous pathways, shape memory, translucent or transparent, and lubricious.

156. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the tissue contacting member is configured to visibly collapse when suction creates a desired vacuum level, whereby the user can confirm

157. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the ablation device includes a plurality of electrodes, and wherein the energy source includes less electrodes than the ablation device.

158. The ablation system of claim 98, wherein the ablation device includes at least two plugs, with each plug providing power to a subset of the plurality of electrodes on the ablation device.

* * * * *

专利名称(译)	心脏消融装置和方法		
公开(公告)号	US20050149152A1	公开(公告)日	2005-07-07
申请号	US10/988021	申请日	2004-11-12
[标]申请(专利权)人(译)	波特勒柔阿瑟 IBRAHIM TAMER		
申请(专利权)人(译)	波特勒柔ARTHUR A. IBRAHIM TAMER		
当前申请(专利权)人(译)	ATRICURE INC.		
[标]发明人	BERTOLERO ARTHUR A IBRAHIM TAMER		
发明人	BERTOLERO, ARTHUR A. IBRAHIM, TAMER		
IPC分类号	A61B18/00 A61B18/14 A61F7/00 A61N1/05		
CPC分类号	A61B1/12 A61B18/12 A61B18/14 A61B18/1402 A61B18/1442 A61B18/1477 A61B18/148 A61B18/1492 A61B18/18 A61B18/20 A61B2017/00243 A61B2017/22051 A61B2017/2945 A61B2018/00011 A61B2018/00023 A61B2018/00029 A61B2018/00083 A61B2018/0022 A61B2018/00291 A61B2018/00345 A61B2018/00351 A61B2018/00363 A61B2018/00375 A61B2018/00404 A61B2018/00577 A61B2018/00875 A61B2018/00982 A61B2018/0225 A61B2018/0262 A61B2018/126 A61B2018/1425 A61B2018/1432 A61B2019/5231 A61B2019/5276 A61N1/0587 A61B5/0536 A61B2090/373 A61B2090/378		
优先权	60/519726 2003-11-12 US 60/337070 2001-12-04 US		
其他公开文献	US7399300		
外部链接	Espacenet USPTO		

摘要(译)

装置和方法提供心脏组织的消融，用于治疗心律失常，例如心房颤动。尽管这些装置和方法通常用于消融至少一个肺静脉附近的心外膜组织，但是可以使用各种实施例来消融心脏上其他位置的其他心脏组织。装置通常包括至少一个组织接触构件，用于接触心外膜组织并将消融装置固定到心外膜组织，以及至少一个消融构件，用于消融组织。各种实施例包括诸如抽吸孔的特征，其使得装置能够以足够的强度附接到心外膜表面，以允许组织通过装置稳定。例如，一些实施例可用于稳定跳动的心脏以实现跳动的心脏消融手术。可以通过微创导引器装置等将许多装置引入患者体内。尽管本发明的装置和方法可用于消融心外膜组织以治疗心房颤动，但它们也可用于兽医或研究环境中，以治疗除心房颤动以外的各种心脏病和/或消除除心外膜之外的心脏组织。。

