CLAIMS

1. A patient turning apparatus (100) comprising:

a reconfigurable support platform (110) comprising:

a plurality of laterally extending support slats (130) configured for pivotal movement about a longitudinally extending central region (111) of the platform;

at least one support slat (130) being configured to follow a pivotal movement of a longitudinally adjacent support slat about the central region (111), through at least a portion of a pivotal range of movement of the longitudinally adjacent support slat;

the apparatus further comprising means (160) operable to control pivotal movement of at least one support slat of the platform about the central region;

in which the means operable to control pivotal movement (160) of at least one support slat of the platform comprises an inflatable bladder (161).

2. Apparatus according to Claim 1, in which each support slat (130) is configured to follow a pivotal movement of a longitudinally adjacent support slat about the central region (111), through at least a portion of a pivotal range of movement of the longitudinally adjacent support slat (130).

3. Apparatus according to Claim 1, in which the support slats (130) are interconnected (124) to permit the support slats to pivot in response to a pivoting of a longitudinally adjacent support slat beyond a threshold pivotal range.

4. Apparatus according to Claim 1, in which the plurality of laterally extending support slats (130) comprise a first plurality of laterally extending support slats which extend to a first side of the central region and a second plurality of laterally extending support slats which extend to a second side of the central region.

5. Apparatus according to Claim 4, in which the first and second plurality of support slats extend in substantially the same plane when configured in an un-pivoted configuration.

6. Apparatus according to Claim 1, in which the support platform further comprises a support sheet (120).

7. Apparatus according to Claim 6, in which the support sheet (120) comprises a plurality of laterally extending pockets (121,122) formed therein for separately receiving a support slat, and in which the pockets (121,122) extend from a longitudinally extending central portion (123) of the support sheet (120) and comprise a respective opening (121a,122a) formed proximate a lateral edge of the support sheet.

8. Apparatus according to Claim 7, in which the support sheet (120) comprises a first plurality of laterally extending pockets (121a) which extend to a first side of the central portion of the support sheet and a second plurality of laterally extending pockets (112a) which extend to a second side of the central portion of support sheet.

9. Apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising a reconfigurable base (140) which is disposed in use at an underside of the platform (110).

10. Apparatus according to Claim 9, in which the base (140) comprises a plurality of laterally extending base slats (152), and in which the base slats (152) extend across a width of the base (140), to either side of a central region of the base.

11. Apparatus according to Claim 10, in which the base comprises a base sheet formed of a plastic or fabric material, in which the base sheet (150) comprises a plurality of laterally extending pockets (153) formed therein for separately receiving a base slat (152), and in which the pockets (153) extend along a width of the base sheet (150), to either side of a central portion of the base sheet, and comprise an opening formed at one end thereof, through which a slat (152) can be inserted into the pocket.

12. Apparatus according to Claim 10, in which the plurality of base slats (152) are configured for pivotal movement about a longitudinally extending central region (141) of base (140).

13. Apparatus according to Claim 12, in which the plurality of base slats (152) comprise a first plurality of laterally extending base slats which extend to a first side of the central region and a second plurality of laterally extending base slats which extend to a second side of the central region.

14. Apparatus according to Claim 1, in which the inflatable bladder (161) is disposed between the platform (110) and the base (140) to permit the support slats (130) to pivot with respect to the base.

15. Apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising a pump which is fluidly coupled to the inflatable bladder (161) via a duct and a control unit (170) for controlling operation of the pump to control a selected inflation and deflation of the inflatable bladder (161).

16. Apparatus according to Claim 1, in which the support platform comprises a plurality of interconnected support elements, each element being detachably coupled at a proximal end thereof, to a longitudinally extending central region (311) of a reconfigurable base, disposed in use at an underside of the platform (310).

17. Apparatus according to Claim 16, in which the support elements are orientated to extend laterally across the support platform, and comprise a first plurality of support elements which extend to a first side of a longitudinally extending central portion of the platform and a second plurality of support elements which extend to a second side of the central portion of the platform.

18. Apparatus according to Claim 16, in which the means operable to control pivotal movement (360) of at least one support slat of the platform comprises an inflatable bladder (361).

19. Apparatus according to Claim 18, in which the support elements are interconnected to permit the support slats (330) to pivot in response to a pivoting of a longitudinally adjacent support slat beyond a threshold pivotal range.

20. Apparatus according to Claim 19, further comprising a control unit (370b) and a pump (370a), the control unit being arranged to control operation of the pump to control a selected inflation and deflation of the inflatable bladder (361).

21. A patient turning apparatus (300) comprising:

a reconfigurable support platform (310) comprising:

a first plurality of laterally extending support slats (331) which extend to a first side of a central region (311) of the platform and a second plurality of laterally extending support slats (332) which extend to a second side of the central region (311) of the platform, both the first plurality and second plurality of laterally extending support slats being configured for pivotal movement about the longitudinally extending central region (311) of the platform;

at least one support slat (330) being configured to follow a pivotal movement of a longitudinally adjacent support slat about the central region (311), through at least a portion of a pivotal range of movement of the longitudinally adjacent support slat;

a pivot controlling means (160) operable to control pivotal movement of at least one support slat (330) of the platform (310) about the central region;

in which the pivot controlling means (160) comprises an inflatable bladder (161); and

a reconfigurable base (340) detachably coupled to and disposed in use at an underside of the reconfigurable support platform (310).

22. A method (400) of turning a patient using a patient turning apparatus according to any preceding claim, the method comprising the steps:

pivoting a first plurality of laterally extending support slats through a first pivotal range (401);

subsequently pivoting a second plurality of laterally extending support slats through a second pivotal range (402), the second pivotal range being less than that of the first pivotal range; and

subsequently pivoting the first plurality of laterally extending support slats beyond the first pivotal range, while the second plurality of support slats remain pivoted through the second pivotal range.