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(71) Applicant *(for all designated States except US)*: **KCI LICENSING, INC.** [US/US]; P.O. Box 659508, San Antonio, TX 78265-9508 (US).

(71) Applicant and
(72) Inventor: **BUBB, Stephen, K.** [US/US]; 1257 Huntington Road, Kansas City, MO 64113 (US).

(72) Inventor; and
(75) Inventor/Applicant *(for US only)*: **ZAMIEROWSKI, David, S.** [US/US]; 13203 Lamar Avenue, Overland Park, KS 66209 (US).

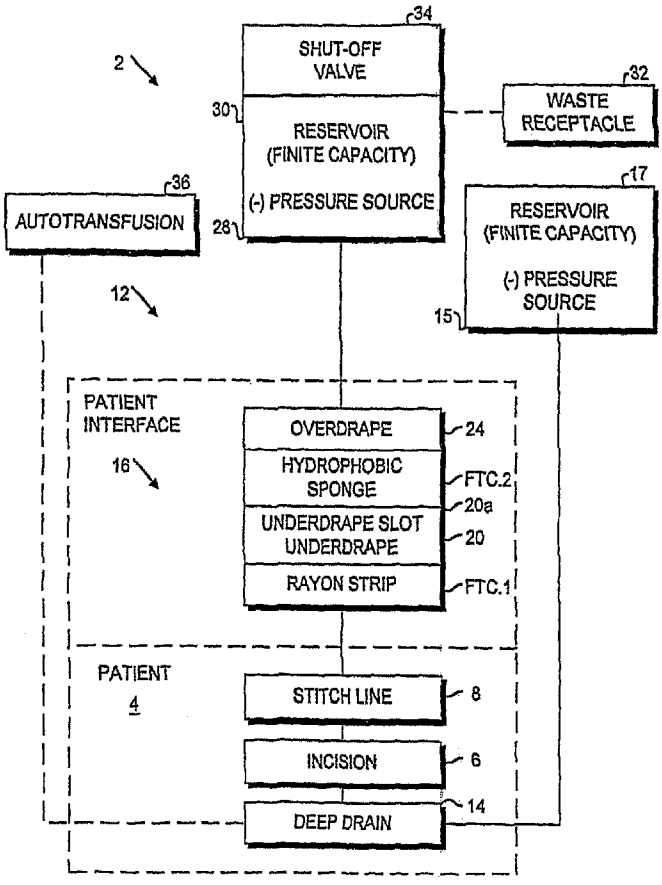
(74) Agents: **BRIDI, Nadeem, G.** et al.; Kinetic Concepts, Inc., P.O. Box 659508, San Antonio, TX 78265-9508 (US).

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(54) Title: EXTERNALLY-APPLIED PATIENT INTERFACE SYSTEM AND METHOD



(57) Abstract: A tissue closure treatment system and method are provided with an external patient interface. A first fluid transfer component FTCl comprises a strip of porous material, such as rayon, with liquid wicking properties. FTCl can be placed directly on a suture line for transferring fluid exuded therethrough. An underdrape is placed over FTCl and includes a slot exposing a portion of same. FTC.2 comprises a suitable hydrophobic foam material, such as polyurethane ether, and is placed over the underdrape slot in communication with FTCl. Negative pressure is applied to FTC2 through a connecting fluid transfer component FTC.3. A negative pressure source can comprises a manual device or a power-operated suction device. The tissue closure method includes a manual operating mode using a manual suction device with an automatic shut off for discontinuing suction when a predetermined volume of fluid has been drained. An automatic operating mode utilizes a microprocessor, which can be preprogrammed to respond to various patient and operating conditions. The method proceeds through several phases with different components in place and different patient interface functions occurring in each.

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