CLAIMS

1. An apparatus for handling biological material, comprising:

a component retaining element configured to retain a component for handling biological material;

wherein said component retaining element is moveable to bring said component retaining element into registration with at least one port of a substantially planar interface that is spaced apart from said component retaining element to allow, when in use, a fluid communication pathway between a component retained by said component retaining element and a container associated with said substantially planar interface through said at least one port; and

an aseptic barrier removal system configured to operably engage a portion of a removable aseptic barrier disposed over said at least one port of said substantially planar interface and to remove said removable aseptic barrier from said at least one port, in use.

2. An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a substantially planar interface including at least one port therein.

3. An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said substantially planar interface is rotatable about an axis of rotation substantially perpendicular to the plane of said substantially planar interface.

4. An apparatus according to claim 2 or claim 3, wherein said component retaining element is longitudinally moveable along an axis substantially perpendicular to the plane of said substantially planar interface.

5. An apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said component retaining element is longitudinally moveable along a central longitudinal axis of the component retaining element or a portion thereof to urge, when in use, a component retained by said component retaining element into engagement with said at least one port.

6. An apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein said component retaining element comprises an arm terminating in a component retaining head.

7. An apparatus according to any preceding claim, further comprising an enclosure, said component retaining element being formed as part of said enclosure, and wherein said enclosure is configured to operably receive said substantially planar interface.

8. An apparatus according to claim 2 or any of claims 3 to 7 when dependent on claim 2, wherein said substantially planar interface comprises a plurality of ports, wherein each port is arranged radially outwardly of a central longitudinal axis of said substantially planar interface.

9. An apparatus according to claim 2 or any of claims 3 to 8 when dependent on claim 2, wherein said at least one port of said planar interface is a resealable port, wherein said resealable port comprises a septum seal.

10. An apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said substantially planar interface and said septum seal are co-moulded.

11. An apparatus according to claim 2 or any of claims 3 to 10 when dependent on claim 2, wherein said substantially planar interface further comprises a removable aseptic barrier disposed over said at least one port, wherein said removable aseptic barrier comprises a fastener portion operably coupled to an aseptic skin, said aseptic skin being removably disposed over said at least one port.

12. An apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said fastener portion is slidably received within a slot formed in said substantially planar interface, said fastener portion being moveable within said slot between a first configuration, in which the aseptic skin is disposed over said at least one port, and a second configuration, in which the aseptic skin is removed from said at least one port.

13. An apparatus according to claim 2 or any of claims 3 to 12 when dependent on claim 2, wherein said substantially planar interface comprises a coupling element configured to operably couple to a corresponding coupling element of a container.

14. An apparatus according to claim 2 or any of claims 3 to 13 when dependent on claim 2, wherein said substantially planar interface comprises one or more drive elements arranged to cooperate with a drive mechanism.

15. An apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein said component retaining element comprises an actuator configured to actuate, when in use, at least a portion of a component retained by said component retaining element.

16. An apparatus according to claim 2 or any of claims 3 to 15 when dependent on claim 2, further comprising:

a container fluidly coupled to said at least one port of said substantially planar interface;

an expandable receptacle operably coupled to said substantially planar interface and configured to fluidly communicate with said container through said substantially planar interface, wherein said expandable receptacle comprises a flexible bag, or a receptacle comprising an expandable side wall; and

a component for handling biological material retained by said component retaining element, wherein said component comprises a receptacle, a connector, or a receptacle fluidly connected to a connector.

17. A method of introducing material into, or removing material from, a component of an apparatus for handling biological material, comprising:

providing an apparatus according to claim 2 or any of claims 3 to 16 when dependent on claim 2;

retaining a component, suitable for handling biological material and including at least one port, to said component retaining element;

moving said component retaining element to bring said at least one port of said component into registration with said at least one port of said substantially planar interface;

engaging the aseptic barrier removal system with a portion of a removable aseptic barrier disposed over said at least one port of said substantially planar interface and removing said removable aseptic barrier from said at least one port;

providing a fluid communication pathway through said at least one port of said substantially planar interface and said at least one port of said component;

introducing material into, or removing material from, said component through said fluid communication pathway.