

METHODS, SYSTEMS AND APPARATUS FOR MANIPULATING PARTICLES

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention is related to methods, systems, and apparatus that are used for transferring and manipulating particles, as well as components that are useful in systems and apparatus for transferring and manipulating particles, such as continuous flow centrifuges.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Conventional continuous flow centrifuges raise several concerns with regard to leaking and/or contamination. For example, in conventional continuous flow centrifuges, when a length of tubing is fixedly attached to the rotation axis of a device which contains the fluid material to be centrifuged, the entire length of tubing must be rotated by use of rotating seals or other means to avoid twisting the tubing. However, these seals too frequently become the source of leaks and/or contamination.

[0003] Umbilical-like arrangements for use with continuous flow centrifuges have been disclosed in, for example, U.S. Patent Nos. 4,216,770, 4,419,089, 4,389,206, and 5,665,048. However, these solutions do not adequately address the high stresses and strains imparted on the tubes due to the g-forces created by rotating the centrifuge at high speeds and/or due to the continuous fluid flow necessary to substantially immobilize particles. Moreover, rotating the centrifuge at high speeds creates increased "partial" twisting action of the umbilical system and the tubes contained therein, and the arrangements disclosed to date do not allow the umbilical system and the tubes contained therein to be rotated at a high rate of speed for an acceptable amount of time before failing. In other words, it is believed that the aforementioned solutions simply do not allow the systems to be "scaled up" to an appreciable degree and do not allow the system to be rotated at high rates of speed without rapid and catastrophic failure of the tubing system.

[0004] For small-scale operations, the elimination of rotary seals or the like may address some contamination concerns with regard to conventional continuous flow centrifuges. However, other contamination concerns remain. For example, the fluid flow paths may become contaminated over time (*e.g.*, after more than one use), unless the utmost care is taken in cleaning and/or sterilization. A disposable fluid flow path (or multiple disposable fluid flow paths) could eliminate the need for expensive and time-consuming cleaning, and could help ensure contamination-free operations. The disposable fluid flow

paths would preferably be easily replaceable, and would be adaptable to a system that would allow the system as a whole to be "scaled-up," as discussed above.

SUMMARY

[0005] According to some embodiments of the present invention, an apparatus for manipulating particles includes: a rotor rotatable at a speed about an axis, the rotor having an outer periphery and front and rear opposite sides; at least one chamber mounted on the rotor, each chamber having an inlet and an outlet; an umbilical assembly rotatable about the axis; and a drive mechanism configured to rotate the umbilical assembly at about one-half the speed of the rotor. The umbilical assembly includes: a curvilinear guide tube connecting to a drum at the rear side of the rotor; a flexible conduit residing in the guide tube; first and second elongate passageways for each chamber extending through the conduit, wherein the first passageway is in fluid communication with the inlet of a respective chamber and the second passageway is in fluid communication with the outlet of the respective chamber. The passageways are held in a spaced-apart relationship relative to one another.

[0006] In some embodiments, the first and second passageways for each chamber comprise corresponding first and second flexible tubes that extend through at least a major portion of a length of the conduit. Potting material within the conduit is configured to hold the tubes in the spaced-apart relationship relative to the one another and hold the tubes in a spaced-apart relationship relative to the conduit. The potting material may be further configured to restrict movement of the tubes relative to the conduit and/or restrict movement of the tubes relative to one another.

[0007] In some embodiments, the umbilical assembly further includes a flexible member extending through at least a major portion of a length of the conduit, wherein the flexible member extends substantially along a centerline of the conduit, and wherein the flexible tubes surround the flexible member. The potting material may be further configured to restrict movement of the tubes relative to the flexible member.

[0008] Each chamber may be a flexible translucent or transparent fluid chamber, and the apparatus may further include at least one chamber holder pivotably mounted to the front side of the rotor, wherein each chamber holder is configured to releasably enclose a respective chamber. Each chamber holder may include a window to allow visual access to the enclosed chamber.

[0009] Each chamber may include a substantially conical body portion and a flange extending about at least a portion of a perimeter of the conical body portion. The flange

includes an inlet fluid path and an outlet fluid path, wherein the first flexible tube connects with the flange inlet fluid path of a respective chamber and the second flexible tube connects with the flange outlet fluid path of the respective chamber. The flange inlet and outlet paths may be substantially parallel along a segment extending from a point at which the first and second tubes connect with the flange inlet and outlet paths.

[0010] In some embodiments, the conduit and passageways are integrated as a flexible extrusion with an outer wall and internal elongate channels that define the spaced-apart passageways.

[0011] Each chamber may include a substantially conical body portion and a flange extending about at least a portion of a perimeter of the conical body portion. The flange includes an inlet fluid path and an outlet fluid path, wherein the first passageway is in fluid communication with the flange inlet fluid path of a respective chamber and the second passageway is in fluid communication with the flange outlet fluid path of the respective chamber. A first tube may connect the first passageway and the flange inlet fluid path and a second tube may connect the second passageway and the flange outlet fluid path, and the flange inlet and outlet paths may be substantially parallel along a segment extending from a point at which the first and second tubes connect with the flange inlet and outlet paths. A connector may be included at each of the first and second passageways, with one connector configured to connect the first tube with the first passageway and the other connector configured to connect the second tube with the second passageway.

[0012] The drive mechanism may include gears. The gears may be at least partially enclosed by the drum. The conduit may include proximal and distal opposite ends, wherein the conduit distal end connects to the rotor. In some embodiments, the conduit distal end has a substantially hexagonally shaped coupling.

[0013] In some embodiments, the umbilical assembly includes a plurality of spaced-apart flexible holders in the conduit to hold the passageways in the spaced-apart relationship.

[0014] In some embodiments, the at least one chamber comprises a plurality of chambers mounted on the rotor in a spaced-apart relationship.

[0015] According to other embodiments of the present invention, a disposable fluid path for use with a continuous flow centrifuge including a rotor having an outer periphery and front and rear opposite sides includes: at least one chamber mounted on the rotor, each chamber having an inlet and an outlet; a flexible conduit curving around the outer periphery of the rotor and connecting to the rotor; first and second flexible tubes for each chamber extending through the conduit, wherein the first tube is in fluid communication with the inlet

of a respective chamber and the second tube is in fluid communication with the outlet of the respective chamber; and potting material within the conduit, wherein the potting material is configured to hold the tubes in a spaced-apart relationship. The potting material may be further configured to restrict movement of the tubes relative to the conduit and/or relative to one another.

[0016] In some embodiments, the disposable fluid path further includes a flexible member extending through the conduit, wherein the flexible member extends substantially along a centerline of the conduit, and wherein the flexible tubes surround the flexible member. The potting material may be further configured to restrict movement of the tubes relative to the flexible member.

[0017] According to other embodiments of the present invention, an umbilical assembly for use with a continuous flow centrifuge having a rotor and at least one chamber having an inlet and an outlet attached to the rotor includes: a curvilinear guide tube connecting to a drum at the rear side of the rotor; a flexible conduit residing in the tube; first and second flexible tubes for each chamber extending through at least a major portion of a length of the conduit, wherein the first tube is in fluid communication with the inlet of a respective chamber and the second tube is in fluid communication with the outlet of the respective chamber; and potting material within the conduit, wherein the potting material is configured to hold the tubes in a spaced-apart relationship. The potting material may be further configured to restrict movement of the tubes relative to the conduit and/or relative to one another.

[0018] In some embodiments, the umbilical assembly further includes a flexible member extending through the conduit, wherein the flexible member extends substantially along a centerline of the conduit, and wherein the flexible tubes surround the flexible member. The potting material may be further configured to restrict movement of the tubes relative to the flexible member.

[0019] According to other embodiments of the present invention, an umbilical assembly for use with a continuous flow centrifuge having a rotor and at least one chamber attached to the rotor includes a flexible extrusion comprising first and second spaced-apart passageways therein for each chamber, wherein the first passageway is in fluid communication with an inlet of a respective chamber and the second passageway is in fluid communication with an outlet of the respective chamber.

[0020] According to other embodiments of the present invention, a disposable fluid path for use with a continuous flow centrifuge having a rotor includes a first disposable

section and a second disposable section. The first disposable section includes: at least one chamber configured to be held on the rotor, wherein each chamber has an inlet and an outlet; and first and second tubes for each chamber, wherein the first tube is configured to be in fluid communication with the inlet of a respective chamber and the second tube is configured to be in fluid communication with the outlet of the respective chamber. The second disposable section includes: tubing in fluid communication with at least one container; the tubing configured to fit within one or more valves.

[0021] In some embodiments, the first disposable section includes return tubing in fluid communication with the at least one container. In some embodiments, the second disposable section includes return tubing in fluid communication with the at least one container. The first and second disposable sections may be configured to be connected using a sterile tube welding process.

[0022] In some embodiments, each chamber is a flexible translucent or transparent fluid chamber, wherein the chamber includes a substantially conical body portion. The chamber also includes a flange extending about at least a portion of a perimeter of the substantially conical body portion, and the flange includes an integral inlet fluid path and an integral outlet fluid path. The first tube connects with the flange inlet fluid path of a respective chamber and the second tube connects with the flange outlet fluid path of the respective chamber. The flange inlet and outlet fluid paths may be substantially parallel along a segment extending from the point at which the first and second tubes connect with the flange inlet and outlet fluid paths.

[0023] According to other embodiments of the present invention, a centrifugal fluid processing system includes: a housing having an interior cavity with an access aperture extending from an external surface of the housing to the interior cavity; a plurality of fluid chambers held in spaced apart relationship on a rotor in the interior cavity; a flexible conduit holding a plurality of flexible tubes in a spaced-apart relationship therein, the flexible conduit extending from a location that is external to the housing through the access aperture and into the interior cavity, wherein the plurality of tubes includes first and second tubes for each chamber, wherein the first tube is in fluid communication with an inlet of a respective chamber and the second tube is in fluid communication with an outlet of the respective chamber, wherein the flexible conduit comprises a solid flexible material that substantially fills an internal volume of the conduit and surrounds the flexible tubes, with the solid flexible material configured to hold the flexible tubes in the spaced-apart relationship; a substantially rigid curvilinear guide tube holding a portion of the flexible conduit in the

interior cavity; and a drive mechanism configured to rotate the guide tube at a first speed and the rotor and the fluid chambers at a second speed, wherein the second speed is about twice the first speed.

[0024] According to other embodiments of the present invention, a centrifugal fluid processing system includes: a housing having an interior cavity with an access aperture extending from an external surface of the housing to the interior cavity; a plurality of fluid chambers held in spaced apart relationship on a rotor in the interior cavity; a flexible conduit including a plurality of spaced-apart passageways therein, the flexible conduit extending from a location that is external to the housing through the access aperture and into the interior cavity, wherein the plurality of tubes includes first and second passageways for each chamber, wherein the first passageway is in fluid communication with an inlet of a respective chamber and the second passageway is in fluid communication with an outlet of the respective chamber; a substantially funnel-shaped support with an open center passage, the support having a shape that tapers outward as it extends further into the interior cavity, wherein the support surrounds the flexible conduit with a centerline of the funnel shaped support being in line with a centerline of the access aperture; a substantially rigid curvilinear guide tube holding a portion of the flexible conduit in the interior cavity; and a drive mechanism configured to rotate the guide tube at a first speed and the rotor and the fluid chambers at a second speed, wherein the second speed is about twice the first speed.

[0025] According to other embodiments of the present invention, a centrifugal fluid processing system includes: a housing having an interior cavity with an access aperture extending from an external surface of the housing to the interior cavity; a plurality of flexible translucent or transparent fluid chambers having an inlet and an outlet held in spaced-apart relationship on a rotor in the interior cavity, wherein each chamber includes a substantially conical body portion, each chamber including a flange extending about at least a portion of a perimeter of the conical body portion, the flange including an inlet fluid path and an outlet fluid path, wherein the flange inlet fluid path is in fluid communication with the inlet of the chamber and the flange outlet fluid path is in fluid communication with the outlet of the chamber; a flexible conduit including a plurality of elongate spaced-apart passageways therein, the flexible conduit extending from a location that is external to the housing through the access aperture and into the interior cavity, wherein the plurality of passageways includes first and second passageways for each chamber, and wherein the first passageway is in fluid communication with the flange inlet fluid path of a respective chamber and the second passageway is in fluid communication with the flange outlet fluid path of the respective

chamber; a substantially rigid curvilinear guide tube holding a portion of the flexible conduit in the interior cavity; a drive mechanism configured to rotate the guide tube at a first speed and the rotor and the fluid chambers at a second speed, wherein the second speed is about twice the first speed; and a plurality of substantially rigid chamber holders in the interior cavity, each sized and configured to releasably hold a respective flexible chamber attached to the rotor.

[0026] According to other embodiments of the present invention, a method of manipulating particles includes providing: at least one chamber on a rotor having an outer periphery, each chamber having an inlet and an outlet; a flexible conduit with first and second spaced-apart passageways therein for each chamber, wherein the first passageway is in fluid communication with the inlet of a respective chamber and the second passageway is in fluid communication with the outlet of the respective chamber; and a substantially rigid curvilinear guide tube holding a portion of the conduit therein and curving around the outer periphery of the rotor. The method further includes: rotating the rotor and the at least one chamber at a first speed, thereby creating a centrifugal force field; rotating the guide tube and conduit therein at a second speed, wherein the second speed is about one-half the first speed, thereby inhibiting the first and second passageways for each chamber from fully twisting; flowing media and particles into a respective chamber using the first passageway, wherein a continuous flow of media and particles creates a fluid force that substantially opposes the centrifugal force field, thereby immobilizing at least some of the particles in a fluidized bed in the respective chamber; and flowing media out of the respective chamber and through the second passageway.

[0027] It is noted that aspects of the invention described with respect to one embodiment, may be incorporated in a different embodiment although not specifically described relative thereto. That is, all embodiments and/or features of any embodiment can be combined in any way and/or combination. Applicant reserves the right to change any originally filed claim or file any new claim accordingly, including the right to be able to amend any originally filed claim to depend from and/or incorporate any feature of any other claim although not originally claimed in that manner. These and other objects and/or aspects of the present invention are explained in detail in the specification set forth below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0028] **Figure 1** is a side perspective view of a system according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0029] **Figure 2** is an opposing side perspective view of the system of **Figure 1**.

[0030] **Figure 3** is a side perspective view of an interior portion of the system of **Figure 1**, illustrating internal components.

[0031] **Figure 4** is a side perspective view of an interior portion of the system of **Figure 1**, illustrating internal components.

[0032] **Figure 5A** illustrates a chamber for use in systems and assemblies according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0033] **Figure 5B** illustrates a chamber holder for use in systems and assemblies according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0034] **Figure 6** illustrates a chamber and chamber holder in position in the system of **Figure 1** according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0035] **Figure 7** is a top perspective view of a disposable chamber according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0036] **Figure 8** is a perspective view of an umbilical assembly according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0037] **Figure 9A** is cross-sectional view of a portion of an umbilical assembly according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0038] **Figure 9B** illustrates a portion of an umbilical assembly according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0039] **Figure 10** is a perspective view of an umbilical assembly according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0040] **Figure 11** is a perspective view illustrating the umbilical assembly of **Figure 10** connecting with a drum.

[0041] **Figure 12** is a perspective view illustrating a drive mechanism associated with the umbilical assembly of **Figure 10**.

[0042] **Figure 13** is a top view of an umbilical assembly according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0043] **Figure 14A** is a perspective view of a funnel-shaped ingress/egress port for use with an umbilical assembly according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0044] **Figure 14B** illustrates a clamp for use with an umbilical assembly according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0045] **Figure 14C** is a perspective view of a funnel-shaped ingress/egress port for use with an umbilical assembly according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0046] **Figure 14D** illustrates a funnel-shaped ingress/egress port for use with an umbilical assembly according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0047] **Figure 15** is a perspective view of a system including disposable flow paths according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0048] **Figure 16** is another perspective view of the system of **Figure 15**.

[0049] **Figure 17** is flow diagram illustrating operations according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0050] **Figures 18-20** are simulated screenshots of a display associated with systems according to some embodiments of the present invention.

[0051] **Figure 21** illustrates a portion of an umbilical assembly according to some embodiments of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION AND EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0052] The present invention now is described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which some embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those skilled in the art.

[0053] Like numbers refer to like elements throughout. In the figures, the thickness of certain lines, layers, components, elements or features may be exaggerated for clarity.

[0054] The terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular embodiments only and is not intended to be limiting of the invention. As used herein, the singular forms "a", "an" and "the" are intended to include the plural forms as well, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. It will be further understood that the terms "comprises" and/or "comprising," when used in this specification, specify the presence of stated features, steps, operations, elements, and/or components, but do not preclude the presence or addition of one or more other features, steps, operations, elements, components, and/or groups thereof. As used herein, the term "and/or" includes any and all combinations of one or more of the associated listed items.

[0055] Unless otherwise defined, all terms (including technical and scientific terms) used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art to which this invention belongs. It will be further understood that terms, such as those defined in commonly used dictionaries, should be interpreted as having a meaning that is

consistent with their meaning in the context of the specification and relevant art and should not be interpreted in an idealized or overly formal sense unless expressly so defined herein. Well-known functions or constructions may not be described in detail for brevity and/or clarity.

[0056] It will be understood that when an element is referred to as being "on", "attached" to, "connected" to, "coupled" with, "contacting", etc., another element, it can be directly on, attached to, connected to, coupled with or contacting the other element or intervening elements may also be present. In contrast, when an element is referred to as being, for example, "directly on", "directly attached" to, "directly connected" to, "directly coupled" with or "directly contacting" another element, there are no intervening elements present. It will also be appreciated by those of skill in the art that references to a structure or feature that is disposed "adjacent" another feature may have portions that overlap or underlie the adjacent feature.

[0057] Spatially relative terms, such as "under", "below", "lower", "over", "upper" and the like, may be used herein for ease of description to describe one element or feature's relationship to another element(s) or feature(s) as illustrated in the figures. It will be understood that the spatially relative terms are intended to encompass different orientations of the device in use or operation in addition to the orientation depicted in the figures. For example, if the device in the figures is inverted, elements described as "under" or "beneath" other elements or features would then be oriented "over" the other elements or features. Thus, the exemplary term "under" can encompass both an orientation of "over" and "under". The device may be otherwise oriented (rotated 90 degrees or at other orientations) and the spatially relative descriptors used herein interpreted accordingly. Similarly, the terms "upwardly", "downwardly", "vertical", "horizontal" and the like are used herein for the purpose of explanation only unless specifically indicated otherwise.

[0058] Apparatus, systems, and methods for the manipulation of particles are disclosed herein. Also, components useful in apparatus and systems for the manipulation of particles are disclosed herein.

[0059] **Figures 1 and 2** illustrate a system **10** according to some embodiments of the present invention. The system **10** includes an enclosure or housing **15** and a door **20**. The door **20** provides access to the internal components of the system **10**, which are described in more detail below. The door **20** may include a window **25** to provide visual access to the internal components. The door **20** can be hingedly attached to the enclosure **15**, and can be opened by a handle **30**, for example.

[0060] The system 10 includes a flange 35. The flange 35 may be included with the door 20, or may be a separate component (i.e., when the door 20 is opened, the flange 35 remains in place). The flange 35 includes an access aperture 40, through which conduit with channels, passageways, or tubing therein, for example, can extend, as described in more detail below. The door 20 and/or the flange 35 can include a clamp 42, which is configured to hold the conduit in place and/or release the conduit.

[0061] Figure 3 illustrates the system 10 with the door 20 opened. As shown, the flange 35 remains in place. Figure 4 illustrates the system 10 with the door 20 and the flange 35 pivotably opened. The enclosure or housing has an interior cavity 44, which can be seen in Figures 3 and 4 when the door 20 and/or the flange 35 have been opened. Some of the internal components of the system 10 are contained in the interior cavity 44, as seen in Figures 3 and 4. Notably, a rotor 45 is configured to be rotatable about an axis. At least one fluid chamber 50 is attached to or mounted on the rotor 45, so as to be held in a fixed spaced-apart relationship and rotate in response to rotation of the rotor 45. In some embodiments, a plurality of chambers 50 are attached to or mounted on the rotor 45; in the illustrated embodiment, four chambers 50 are present.

[0062] An exemplary chamber 50 is illustrated in more detail in Figure 5A. The chamber 50 may be substantially cone-shaped or may include a substantially cone-shaped portion, as illustrated, although other shapes are contemplated including, for example, cylindrical, rectangular, frustoconical, pyramidal, etc. The chamber 50 includes an inlet 55 and an outlet 60. The chamber 50 is typically attached to or mounted on the rotor 45 such that inlet 55 is situated toward the outer periphery of the rotor 45, and the outlet 60 is typically situated toward the center of the rotor 45 (see Figure 6). The chamber 50 is configured to allow fluid flow therethrough while the rotor 45 and the chamber 50 rotate about an axis. The force of fluid flowing from the inlet 55 to the outlet 60 can substantially oppose a centrifugal force created by the rotation of the rotor 45 and the chamber 50. In this regard, particles can be substantially immobilized in the chamber 50, such as in a fluidized bed in the chamber 50, by use of the summation of forces acting on the particles. This action is described in more detail in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,622,819; 5,821,116; 6,133,019; 6,214,617; 6,334,842; 6,514,189; 6,660,509; 6,703,217; 6,916,652; 6,942,804; 7,029,430; and 7,347,943; and U.S. Patent Application Publication Nos. 2005/0266548 and 2008/0264865.

[0063] In some embodiments of the present invention, and as illustrated in the figures, the rotor 45 may rotate in a plane substantially coaxial with the gravitational axis (i.e., the

rotor may rotate about a substantially horizontal axis). Particles are substantially immobilized within a fluidized bed within the chamber 50 by use of the summation of the vector forces acting on each particle. Embodiments of such apparatus have been disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,622,819; 5,821,116; 6,133,019; 6,214,617; 6,660,509; 6,703,217; 6,916,652; 6,942,804; 7,347,943; and U.S. Patent Application Publication Nos. 2005/0266548 and 2008/0264865. Though cells and particles are light in weight, their mass is non-zero. Consequently, gravity has a significant effect on the suspended particle or cell, and this effect will increase with time. The weight of the suspended particles or cells causes these particles to settle to the lowest regions of the container, disrupting the balance of forces which initially suspended them in the chamber. As is seen in prior art devices, particles tend to aggregate and the aggregation of these particles into a larger particle results in an increased centrifugal effect which causes the aggregates to migrate to longer radii, eventually causing destabilization of the fluidized bed.

[0064] In some other embodiments of the present invention, the rotor 45 may rotate in a plane substantially transverse to the gravitational axis. In this regard, the rotor 45 may rotate about a substantially vertical axis. Embodiments of such apparatus have been disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,939,087; 5,674,173; 5,722,926; 6,051,146; 6,071,422; 6,334,842; 6,354,986; 6,514,189; 7,029,430; 7,201,848; and 7,422,693. Particles are substantially immobilized within a fluidized bed within the chamber 50 by use of the summation of the vector forces acting on each particle. More particularly, the flow of liquid media acts to create a force which opposes the centrifugal force field created by the rotating chamber(s).

[0065] In still other embodiments, the rotor may rotate about any axis between a horizontal axis and a vertical axis, including, for example, a substantially horizontal axis.

[0066] Referring again to Figure 5A, the chamber 50 may include a substantially conical body portion 71, and a flange 72 that surrounds at least a portion of the conical body portion 71 and/or that extends about at least a portion of a perimeter of the conical body portion 71 {e.g., the flange 72 defines a plane that "wraps around" at least a portion of the chamber 50 and/or the conical body portion 71). As illustrated, the chamber 50 includes inlet and outlet fluid paths 65, 70 which may be integrated with the flange 72 of the chamber 50. As described in more detail below, tubes may connect with the flange inlet and outlet fluid paths 65, 70. In these embodiments, the flange inlet and outlet fluid paths 65, 70 may include

substantially parallel segments 73, 74 extending from the point at which the tubes connect with the flange inlet and outlet fluid paths 65, 70.

[0067] The chamber 50 may fit within a holder, such as the chamber holder 75 illustrated in **Figure 5B**. The chamber holder 75 can carry all or a significant portion of centripetal forces on the chamber 50. In some embodiments, the chamber 50 (which may include the inlet and outlet paths 65, 70) may be disposable, as will be described in more detail below. In some embodiments, such as illustrated in **Figure 7**, the chamber 50 is disposable and made of a polymeric material which may be flexible (*e.g.*, a "bag chamber"). Therefore, the chamber holder 75 may be particularly useful where the chamber 50 is disposable, as the chamber 50 (on its own) may not be able to take the loads experienced when the rotor 45 and chamber 50 is rotating, especially at high speeds and/or for a long period of time. The chamber holder 75 can have increased rigidity or strength relative to the chamber 50.

[0068] The chamber holder 75 includes cavities 80 sized to matably receive the chamber 50 and the associated inlet and outlet paths 65, 70 (where used) when the chamber holder 75 holds the chamber 50. Turning to **Figures 6 and 7**, the chamber holder 75 and/or the rotor 45 may include a hinge assembly 85 located on or near the rotor 45 such that the chamber holder 75 can be rotated to open and close over or under the chamber 50. In this regard, the chamber holder(s) 75 may be configured to releasably enclose the chamber(s) 50. At least one locating pin 90 may be located on or near the rotor 45, with the pin(s) 90 configured to mate with corresponding aperture(s) 95 in the chamber holder 75. In some embodiments, the pin(s) 90 can be located on the chamber holder 75 and the corresponding apertures 95 can be located on or near the rotor 45. The chamber holder 75 may also include at least one lock 100 configured to mate with corresponding aperture(s) 105 located on or near the rotor 45. In some embodiments, the lock(s) 100 may be on or near the rotor 45 and the corresponding aperture(s) 105 may be located on the chamber holder 75. Referring back to **Figure 5B**, the chamber holder 75 may include a top shell 75₁ and a bottom shell 75₂. In some embodiments, the bottom shell 75₂ may be mounted to or integrated with the rotor 45 and the top shell 75₁ may be configured to open and close. In other embodiments, the top shell 75₁ may be mounted to or integrated with the rotor 45 and the bottom shell 75₂ may be configured to open and close. In these embodiments, the pin(s) 90, aperture(s) 95, and/or lock(s) 100 may be located on either the top shell 75₁ or the bottom shell 75₂.

[0069] Referring back to **Figures 3 and 4**, at least one chamber 50 may be attached to or mounted on or held by the rotor 45. In the illustrated embodiment, four chambers 50 are

attached to or mounted on the rotor **45**. In other embodiments, any number of chambers **50** may be attached to or mounted on the rotor **45**. Also, in the illustrated embodiment, a chamber holder **75** has been rotated closed to cover each of the chambers **50**. The chamber holders **75** may include a window **110**, which may allow an operator to view or allow visual access to the interior of the chamber **50**. Although shown as two pieces **75₁**, **75₂** in **Figure 5B**, the chamber holder **75** may comprise a single piece or more than two pieces to hold a respective chamber **50**.

[0070] Turning to **Figure 8**, at least a portion of an umbilical assembly **120** extends through the aperture **40** of the flange **35**. The umbilical assembly **120** can include a curvilinear umbilical guide or guide tube **125**, which curves around or extends about the outer periphery of the rotor **45** and enters into and/or connects to a drum at the rear side of the rotor **45**, as described in more detail below. The guide **125** is typically constructed of a relatively strong material, such as aluminum or steel, to provide strength to the umbilical assembly **120** such that the umbilical assembly **120** can be "spun" about the same axis as the rotor **45**, as described in more detail below. In various embodiments, the guide **125** may extend all the way through the aperture **40** of the flange **35**, may extend to the aperture **40**, or may terminate before reaching the aperture **40**, as illustrated in **Figure 8**.

[0071] Umbilical assemblies described herein may include a flexible conduit residing in the guide tube **120**. First and second elongate channels or passageways for each chamber **50** extend through the conduit. The first channel or passageway is in fluid communication with the inlet **55** of a respective chamber **50** and the second channel or passageway is in fluid communication with the outlet **60** of the respective chamber **50**. The channels or passageways (*i.e.*, all the channels or passageways in the conduit) are preferably held in a spaced-apart relationship relative to one another, as will be described in more detail below. As used herein, the terms "channel" and "passageway" are interchangeable in this context.

[0072] As illustrated in **Figure 8**, for example, the umbilical assembly **120** can include a flexible conduit **130** mounted within and extending along the length of the umbilical guide **125**. In other words, the conduit **130** can reside within the umbilical guide or guide tube **125**. The conduit **130** may comprise a convoluted tube which provides suitable flexibility to bending and can also have high torsional rigidity or strength. The conduit **130** preferably has a sufficiently long fatigue life that can withstand continual flexing associated with centrifugal operation; an exemplary conduit **130** is type FPI available from Flexicon Limited, Birmingham, England, constructed of a modified Polyamide 12. The conduit **130** may have any inside diameter and any outside diameter suitable to accommodate the other

components of the umbilical assembly **120**, described below. In some embodiments, the conduit **130** may have inside diameter of about 35.5 millimeters and an outside diameter of about 42.5 millimeters. In some embodiments, grease or another lubricous material is provided between the umbilical guide **125** and the conduit **130** to reduce friction therebetween.

[0073] The aforementioned channels or passageways of the umbilical assembly **120** can be or include first and second flexible tubes **135** for each chamber **50**. The tubes **135** may be constructed of any flexible material such as any flexible polymer including, but not limited to, PVC. The tubes **135** are mounted within and extend along the length of the conduit **130**. One of the tubes **135** of each chamber **50** can connect with the inlet **55** of the chamber **50** (or, where used, the inlet path **65** of the chamber **50**) and the other can connect with the outlet **60** of the chamber **50** (or, where used, the outlet path **70** of the chamber **50**) (see **Figure 5A**). In the illustrated embodiments, umbilical assembly **120** includes eight flexible tubes **135**, wherein two of the tubes **135** connect with each of the four chambers **50**. The conduit **130** and the tubes **135** extend through the aperture **40** of the flange **35**, regardless of whether the umbilical guide **125** extends that far. In other words, the flexible conduit **130** and the tubes **135** therein extend from a location that is external to the enclosure or housing **15**, through the access aperture **40**, and into the internal cavity **44**. The tubes **135** may have any inner diameter and any outer diameter suitable to fit an appropriate number of tubes **135** within the conduit **130**, which may also include potting material therein, as described in more detail below. In some embodiments, the tubes **135** may have an inner diameter of about 1/4 inch and an outer diameter of about 3/8 inch (*e.g.*, where the conduit **130** has the dimensions described above, and where eight tubes **135** are employed).

[0074] Referring to **Figures 9A** and **9B**, in some embodiments, the umbilical assembly **120** includes a flexible center member **140** mounted within and extending along the length of the conduit **130**. The flexible member **140** extends substantially along a centerline of the conduit **130**, and the flexible tubes **135** form an array and surround the flexible member **140**. The flexible member **140** may comprise a "dummy tube," similar to the tubes **135**, but not in fluid communication with any of the chambers **50**. In other embodiments, the flexible member **140** may be a tube with an open cavity having the same or smaller or larger diameter than the tubes **135**, or may be solid tube, for example of polymeric material. For example, the flexible member **140** may comprise a tube having an inner diameter of about 3/8 inch and an outer diameter of about 9/16 inch, and the tubes **135** may have an inner diameter of about 1/4 inch and an outer diameter of about 3/8 inch. Where the flexible member **140**

comprises a tube, the inside of the tube may include potting material, as described in more detail below. In some other embodiments, the flexible member **140** comprises a tube configured to have fluid flow through the tube. The fluid may provide additional cooling to the umbilical assembly **120**, for example.

[0075] The umbilical assembly **120** may also include potting material **145** within the conduit **130**. The potting material **145** can separate the tubes **135** from the conduit **130**, can separate the tubes **135** from each other, and/or can separate the tubes from the flexible member **140**, where used. More specifically, the potting material **145** may be configured to hold the tubes **135** in a spaced-apart relationship relative to one another and/or hold the tubes **135** in a spaced-apart relationship relative to the conduit **130** and/or hold the tubes **135** in a spaced-apart relationship relative to the flexible member **140**, where used. The potting material **145** can be useful in restricting movement (*e.g.*, twisting) of the tubes **135** relative to one another during operation, as described in more detail below. In other words, the potting material **145** can "lock" the tubes **135** and/or the conduit **130** together so that the tubes **135** are inhibited from moving relative to one another and/or relative to the conduit **130**. As used herein, "potting material" includes any solid flexible material that substantially fills the internal volume of the conduit and surrounds the tubes and/or flexible center member. The potting material **145** can be any suitable material, including a polymer such as polyurethane, for example. An exemplary potting material is F-25 flexible polyurethane, available from BJB Enterprises, Inc., Tustin, California.

[0076] As will be discussed in more detail below, the conduit **130** has opposite proximal and distal ends **130₁**, **130₂**. In some embodiments, the proximal end **130₁** of the conduit **130** and the tubes **135** contained therein extend through the access aperture **40**. As illustrated in **Figure 9B**, the proximal end **130₁** of the conduit **130** may include a flange **132** through which the tubes **135** extend. Where potting material is employed, the flange **132** may assist in housing the potting material in the conduit **130**. The flange **132** may also assist in proper positioning of the conduit **130** with the tubes **135** contained therein. For example, the flange **132** may be situated on the outside of the aperture **40** (*e.g.*, on the outside of the enclosure **15**); the flange **132** may therefore allow an operator to position the proper length of conduit **130** in the interior cavity **44**.

[0077] Referring now to **Figures 10-12**, the umbilical assembly **120** curves around or extends about the outer periphery of the rotor **45** and enters a drum **150** at the rear side of the rotor **45**. In some embodiments, a portion of the umbilical assembly **120** connects with the drum **150**. In the illustrated embodiment, a drive mechanism **155** is driven by a motor **160**

and a belt 165. The drive mechanism 155 may include various gears 170, at least some of which may be located within the drum 150. In particular embodiments, the drive mechanism 155 causes the umbilical assembly 120 to rotate about an axis at speed X, and causes the rotor 45 to rotate about the same axis at speed 2X or about speed 2X. In other words, the umbilical assembly 120 rotates at one-half or about one-half the speed of the rotor 45. In some embodiments, the drum 150 is driven at speed X by the motor 160 (the umbilical assembly 120 in turn rotates at speed X), and the drive mechanism 155 includes gearing which causes the rotor 45 to rotate at speed 2X or about speed 2X.

[0078] Figure 13 illustrates an exemplary arrangement and shape of the umbilical assembly 120. The conduit 130 has opposite proximal and distal ends 130₁, 130₂. In some embodiments, the proximal end 130₁ of the conduit 130 and the tubes 135 contained therein extend through the access aperture 40 (see Figures 15 and 16, for example). The distal end 130₂ of the conduit 130 extends through the drum 150 and may connect to the rotor 45 to thereby allow the tubes 135 to be fluidly connected with the chambers 50. In some embodiments, and as illustrated, the conduit distal end 130₂ includes a coupling 133. The coupling 133 can couple the conduit 130 to the rotor 45 and therefore allow the tubes 135 to be fluidly connected with the chambers 50. In some embodiments, the coupling 133 has a hexagonal shape, although other shapes are contemplated, including other polygonal shapes.

[0079] In this configuration, the coaxial half-speed rotation of the umbilical assembly 120 inhibits the tubes 135 of the umbilical assembly 120 from being completely twisted during rotation of the rotor 45. The complete scientific explanation for this phenomenon can be found in, for example, U.S. Patent No. 3,586,413 to Adams. To summarize, if the rotor 45 has completed a first 360° rotation and the umbilical assembly 120 a 180° half-rotation in the same direction, the tubes 135 of the umbilical assembly 120 will be subjected to a 180° twist in one direction. Continued rotation of the rotor 45 for an additional 360° and umbilical assembly 120 for an additional 180° will result in the tubes 135 of the umbilical assembly 120 being twisted 180° in the other direction, returning the tubes 135 to their original untwisted condition. Thus, the tubes 135 of the umbilical assembly 120 may be subjected to a continuous partial twist or flexure or bending during operation but are never completely rotated or twisted about their own axis.

[0080] This solution can provide advantages over typical continuous flow centrifuges. In conventional mechanisms, when a length of tubing is fixedly attached to the rotation axis of a device which contains the fluid material to be centrifuged, the entire length of tubing must be rotated by use of rotating seals or other means to avoid twisting the tubing

must be rotated by use of rotating seals or other means to avoid twisting the tubing.

However, these seals too frequently become the source of leaks and/or contamination.

[0081] In contrast, the umbilical assembly **120** of the present invention provides a transition from the "rotating world," including the rotor **45**, to the "stationary world," such as that area outside the enclosure **15**. Rotary unions and seals are not required, providing a sterile and completely closed system. Other advantages can include the use of disposable components that can be easily replaced, resulting in sterile paths, as described in more detail below.

[0082] Umbilical-like arrangements for use with continuous flow centrifuges have been disclosed in, for example, U.S. Patent Nos. 4,216,770, 4,419,089, 4,389,206, and 5,665,048. However, these solutions do not adequately address the high stresses and strains imparted on the tubes due to the g-forces created by rotating the centrifuge at high speeds and/or due to the continuous fluid flow necessary to substantially immobilize particles. Moreover, rotating the centrifuge at high speeds creates increased torque of the umbilical system and the tubes contained therein, and the arrangements disclosed to date do not allow the umbilical system and the tubes contained therein to be rotated at a high rate of speed for an acceptable amount of time before failing. In other words, it is believed that the aforementioned solutions simply do not allow the systems to be "scaled up" to an appreciable degree and do not allow the system to be rotated at high rates of speed without rapid and catastrophic failure of the tubing system. This is the case, at least in part, because the friction increases as the speed and the scale increase, producing an increased torque of the umbilical system.

[0083] The present invention addresses these deficiencies by providing a more robust umbilical assembly that can withstand higher rotational speeds (and therefore higher g-forces), allowing a system, such as a continuous flow centrifuge, to be "scaled up" to larger sizes without subjecting the umbilical assembly to immediate or rapid catastrophic failure. This is due to the configuration of the umbilical assemblies of the present invention, such as the umbilical assembly **120** illustrated in **Figures 8-14**.

[0084] In this configuration, excessive twisting of the tubes **135** is inhibited during operation (*i.e.*, while the rotor is rotated about the axis at speed 2X and the umbilical assembly is rotated about the axis at speed X). More particularly, excessive twisting of the tubes **135** relative to one another and relative to the conduit **130** is prevented. Put another way, the tubes **135** and the conduit **130** are effectively "locked" together (*e.g.*, by use of the potting material **145**), thereby inhibiting relative movement of the components. In addition,

excessive rubbing of tubes **135** against each other and against the conduit **130** is reduced, if not totally prevented. The result is a tubing system that can experience a relatively long life in a large-scale system that is rotated about the axis at a high rate of speed.

[0085] This is accomplished, in part, by restricting the movement of the tubes **135** within the conduit **130**. The potting material **145** can maintain the tubes **135** in place, and thereby prevent the tubes **135** from excessive twisting relative to the conduit **130**. In other words, the potting material **145** can "lock" the tubes **135** and/or the conduit **130** together, thereby inhibiting movement of the tubes **135** relative to one another and/or relative to the conduit **130**. The potting material **145** can also provide a buffer between the individual tubes **135**, thereby preventing the tubes **135** from rubbing against one another. Moreover, the potting material **145** can provide a buffer between the tubes **135** and the conduit **130**, thereby preventing the tubes **135** from rubbing against the conduit **130** during operation. Rubbing of these components can not only cause continual stress, but can also generate heat, further weakening the components.

[0086] Moreover, where used, the flexible member **140** can serve to maintain the tubes **135** in an organized array around the flexible member **140**, further reducing twisting of the tubes **135**. Where potting material **145** is employed, the potting material **145** can serve to "lock" the conduit **130**, the tubes **135**, and/or the flexible member **140** together, thereby inhibiting movement of the components relative to one another. Moreover, the potting material **145** may serve as a buffer between the tubes **135** and the flexible member **140**, thereby preventing the tubes **135** from rubbing against the flexible member during operation. Rubbing of these components can not only cause continual stress, but can also generate heat, further weakening the components.

[0087] Selection of an appropriate material for the conduit **130** can prevent failure thereof due to rubbing against the umbilical guide **125** during operation. Furthermore, grease or other lubricous material can be applied between the conduit **130** and the guide **125** to further reduce friction and potential failure of the conduit **130** and/or the tubes **135** during operation (*e.g.*, fatigue failure of the conduit **130**). Moreover, the inside of the guide **125** can be polished (*e.g.*, mechanically polished) to further reduce friction between the conduit **130** and the guide **135**. Additionally or alternatively, the inside of the guide **125** and/or the outside of the conduit **130** can be coated with a lubricous material, such as Teflon®, to reduce friction between the two components.

[0088] Using these configurations, a system, such as a continuous flow centrifuge without use of rotary seals or the like, has been successfully "scaled-up" as follows. The

rotor and the chamber(s) can be rotated at speeds of at least 3000 RPM. This corresponds to a g-force of about 1000g at the chamber (*e.g.*, at 1/3 the height of the chamber "cone" or 1/3 chamber height from the "tip" of the chamber). The fluid flow rates through each chamber can be at least 1 liter/minute. Thus, where four chambers are employed, for example, the total flow rate can be at least 4 liters/minute. The volume of each chamber can be at least 1 liter. Thus, where four chambers are employed, for example, the total chamber volume can be at least 4 liters. Of course, lower rotational speeds, flow rates, and/or chamber volumes can be employed for various operations (*e.g.*, the rotational speed of the rotor can range from 0-3000 RPM and/or the fluid flow rate through each chamber can range from 0-1 liters/minute and/or the volume of each chamber can be less than 1 liter). Moreover, it is believed that the aforementioned embodiments and the alternative embodiments disclosed below can allow for a robust system that is "scaled-up" to an even higher degree (*e.g.*, rotational speeds higher than 3000 RPM, flow rates higher than 1 liter/minute per chamber, chamber volumes greater than 1 liter, etc.). More specifically, it is believed that the aforementioned embodiments and the alternative embodiments disclosed below can allow for a robust system that employs rotation speeds of about 10, 25, 50, 100, 250, 500, 750, 1000, 1250, 1500, 1750, 2000, 2500, 3000, 5000, or 10,000 RPM or more or any subrange therein; it is also believed that the aforementioned embodiments and the alternative embodiments disclosed below can allow for a robust system that can produce and withstand g-forces of about 10, 25, 50, 100, 250, 500, 750, 1000, 1250, 1500, 1750, 2000, 2500, 3000, 5000, or 10,000g or more or any subrange therein. Likewise, it is believed that the aforementioned embodiments and the alternative embodiments disclosed below can allow for fluid flow rates of about 0.0001, 0.001, 0.01, 0.1, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75, 1, 1.25, 1.5, 1.75, 2, 2.5, 3, 5, 10, 20, 25, or 50 liters/minute per chamber or more or any subrange therein; it is also believed that the aforementioned embodiments and the alternative embodiments disclosed below can allow for individual chamber volumes of about 0.0001, 0.001, 0.01, 0.1, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75, 1, 1.25, 1.5, 1.75, 2, 2.5, 3, 5, 10, 20, 25, or 50 liters or more or any subrange therein.

[0089] Other embodiments of the umbilical assembly **120** are contemplated. For example, the flexible member along the centerline of the conduit can be omitted. One of the tubes may extend substantially along a centerline of the conduit, with the remaining tubes forming an array and surrounding the center tube. In this regard, the center tube takes the place of the "dummy tube," and it connects with either the inlet or outlet path of one of the chambers. Potting material may be provided to prevent twisting and rubbing, as described in more detail above.

[0090] In still other embodiments, potting material is not required. For example, the umbilical assembly could comprise one solid extrusion with a plurality of channels or passageways extending therethrough. Each channel or passageway would connect with either an inlet or an outlet of one of the chambers. The solid extrusion may be flexible, and may be contained within a guide to provide strength, such as the guide 120 described above.

[0091] An exemplary solid extrusion assembly 330 is illustrated in **Figure 21**. The solid extrusion assembly 330 may form part of the umbilical assembly 120 described herein. More specifically, the solid extrusion assembly 330 may take the place of the conduit 130 and the tubes 135 (as well as the potting material 145 and/or the flexible member 140 where these components are used) in all embodiments described above and below. Thus, it will be understood that the solid extrusion assembly 330 may fit within the guide tube 125 and define the conduit with spaced-apart elongate passageways therein.

[0092] Still referring to **Figure 21**, the solid extrusion assembly 330 includes a solid extrusion 330e. The solid extrusion is flexible with an outer wall and internal elongate channels or passageways 335 that define the spaced-apart passageways. Similar to the tubes 135 described in detail herein, the passageways 335 are in fluid communication with the chamber(s) 50. In particular, one passageway 335 is in fluid communication with the inlet 55 of a respective chamber 50 and another, different passageway 335 is in fluid communication with the outlet 60 of the respective chamber 50. In the illustrated embodiment, the solid extrusion 330e includes eight passageways 335, and is therefore configured for use with four chambers 50. The extrusion 330e may include greater or fewer than eight passageways 335 as needed.

[0093] As explained above, the extrusion assembly 330 may take the place of at least the conduit 130 in the umbilical assembly 120. Any differences between the extrusion assembly 330 and the conduit 130 will now be described.

[0094] As described above, the passageways 335 generally take the place of the flexible tubes 135. However, unlike the tubes 135, the passageways 335 may not extend all the way to the chamber(s) 50 and/or all the way to connection points outside the enclosure 15 (see **Figures 15** and **16**). Thus, in some embodiments, connectors (such as barbed connectors) may be included or used at one or both ends of each passageway 335. Connectors at a distal end of the passageways 335 may allow for tubing (which may be similar to the flexible tubing 135 described herein) to connect the passageways 335 with the inlet 55 and outlet 60 of the chamber(s) 50 (or the flange inlet and outlet paths 65, 70, where used). Similarly, connectors at a proximal end of the passageways 335 may allow for tubing

(which may be similar to the flexible tubing **135** described herein) to connect the passageways **335** with components outside the enclosure **15**, such as pumps or other tubing, which are described in more detail below.

[0095] In some embodiments, and as illustrated, the solid extrusion assembly **330** includes a sheath **330s**. The sheath **330s** material and configuration may have similar properties and provide similar advantages to the conduit **130** material and configuration described above. In particular, the sheath **330s** may help withstand friction with the guide tube **125** and/or may help transfer torque during operation. In some embodiments, the sheath **330s** may include ridges to minimize contact area with the guide tube **125** and/or to minimize friction during operation. The sheath **330s** may be adhered to or may snugly fit around an outer wall of the solid extrusion **330e**. In some embodiments, the sheath **330s** and the solid extrusion **330e** are sized and configured such that there is an interference fit (perhaps a substantial interference fit) between the two components. In this regard, the sheath **330s** and the solid extrusion **330e** may act as a single unit during operation (*i.e.*, as the extrusion assembly **330**). In some embodiments, the sheath **330s** and the solid extrusion **330e** may be integrated, and in some embodiments the sheath **330s** may be omitted.

[0096] The solid extrusion assembly **330** may provide the same or substantially the same advantages as the conduit **130**, tubes **135**, and potting material **145** as described in detail above. Briefly, the passageways **335** may be positioned in the solid extrusion **330e** such that they are spaced-apart from one another and/or from an outer wall of the extrusion **330e** and/or from the sheath **330s**, where used. The spaced-apart relationship may be maintained during operation, and therefore may help minimize movement/twisting of the passageways **335** relative to one another and/or may help minimize movement/twisting of the passageways **335** relative to the sheath **330s**, where used. The result is a more robust umbilical assembly that can be used in "scaled-up" operations, as described in more detail above.

[0097] The solid extrusion **330e** may comprise polymeric material, such as PVC, platinum-cured silicon, C-Flex, and other similar materials. The sheath **330s**, where used, may comprise materials similar to those described above with regard to the conduit **130**.

[0098] Again, to avoid repetition, the embodiments described above and below will only be described with the umbilical assembly **120** including the conduit **130** and the tubes **135** (and optionally the potting material **145** and/or the flexible member **140**). However, it will be understood that the umbilical assembly **120** may include the extrusion assembly **330**

or simply the extrusion **330e** in place of the conduit **130**, the tubes **135**, and/or the potting material **145**.

[0099] In some embodiments, and as illustrated in **Figures 14A-D**, a funnel **180** is provided on the rear side of the flange **35** and/or the door **20**. The funnel **180** includes an opening **185** opposite the aperture **40**. The funnel **180** is configured to accept at least part of the umbilical assembly **120**. In the illustrated embodiments, the funnel **180** accepts the conduit **130**, with the tubes **135** contained therein. The conduit **130** passes through the opening **185** and the aperture **40** such that at least the tubes **135** extend through the aperture **30**. The tubes **135** can then be connected to additional components, as described in more detail below.

[0100] The funnel **180** can provide for reduced strain/stress on the conduit **130** and the tubes **135** where the conduit makes a final bend before extending through the aperture **30**. In this regard, the funnel **180** provides a controlled bend of the conduit **130** and tubes **135** contained therein. This can reduce the chance of failure of the conduit **130** and/or the tubes **135** at what otherwise would be a high stress concentration point. The centerline of the opening **185** is preferably aligned or substantially aligned with the axis of rotation of the umbilical assembly **120**; otherwise, additional, unnecessary loads could be applied to the conduit **130** and/or the tubes **135**. Also, the funnel **180** preferably has a bend radius that is greater than the minimum dynamic bend radius of the conduit **130**.

[0101] Moreover, the shape of the funnel **180** provides for a consistent bend of the conduit **130** and the tubes **135** contained therein while the umbilical assembly **120** is rotating during operation. The funnel **180** may be machined and/or polished to reduce friction or rubbing while the conduit **130** is rotating within the funnel **180**. In addition, grease or other lubricous material may be applied to the funnel **180** to further reduce friction or rubbing. Additionally or alternatively, the funnel and/or the outer surface of the conduit **130** may be coated with a lubricous material such as Teflon® to reduce friction or rubbing.

[0102] Turning now to **Figures 15** and **16**, the conduit **130** and the tubes **135** are seen protruding from the aperture **40**. At least one pump **200** may be provided on the enclosure **15** or on a panel thereon, or may be provided away from the enclosure **15**. At least one valve may be provided on the enclosure **15** or on a panel thereon, or may be integrated with the tubing shown on the right side of the enclosure **15**, or may be provided away from the enclosure **15**. For example, one or more pinch valves may be provided on the enclosure **15**, with the pinch valves configured to allow tubing to be inserted therethrough such that the tubing can be squeezed (or pinched) closed or partially closed.

[0103] **Figure 17** illustrates an exemplary flow diagram of the system. The system may include two sets: the chambers/umbilical set and the valve/fluid path set. The chambers/umbilical set may include at least the chamber(s) **50**, the conduit **130**, and the tubes **135** within the conduit **130**. In the illustrated embodiment, the tubes **135** in fluid communication with the inlet paths **65** of the chambers **50** may connect with the pump **200** (see also **Figures 15 and 16**). Also in the illustrated embodiment, the tubes **135** in fluid communication with the outlet paths **70** of the chambers **50** may connect with at least one return tube **205** (see **Figures 15 and 16**). On the opposite side of the pump **200**, tubes **210** may connect with a harness or manifold **215**, which connects the chambers/umbilical set with the valve/fluid path set. In some embodiments, the two disposable sets can be connected by a sterile tube welding process. The disposable sets can be supplied sealed and/or sterilized. By employing a sterile tube welding process, the disposable sets can be connected without using any sort of connector (*e.g.*, harness, manifold, etc.), and the disposable sets do not need to be "opened," which could result in a loss of sterility.

[0104] The valve/fluid path set typically comprises tubing and/or valves, which may be integrated with the tubing. In some embodiments, the valve/fluid path set is configured to be routed through one or more valves, such as pinch valves included on the enclosure, for example. In the embodiment illustrated in **Figures 15 and 16**, the valve/fluid path set includes the tubing seen on the right side of the enclosure **15**. In some embodiments, the valve/fluid path set includes the return tube(s) **205**. It is noted that, although the tubes are shown as "broken" in **Figures 15 and 16**, the tubes **135** protruding from the aperture **40** of the flange **35** will typically connect with the pump **200** and/or the return tube(s) **205**. The return tube(s) **205** and/or the tubes **135** running to the pump **200** may be routed through the handle **30** of the door **20** and/or kept in place by one or more holders **220**, such as hooks.

[0105] As seen in the flow diagram of **Figure 17**, the valve/fluid path set can connect to various containers, such as a bioreactor **230**, a waste media container **235**, a clean media container **240**, and/or a cell harvest container **245**. The various containers will typically be located away from the enclosure **15**, although at least some of the containers may be contained within the enclosure **15** in some embodiments. In the embodiment illustrated in **Figures 15 and 16**, the lower (open) portions of the tubes on the right side of the enclosure **15** may connect with various containers, such as the containers described above. The valve/fluid path set may be configurable to perform various operations, as will be summarized in more detail below. At least one secondary pump **250** may be included on the enclosure **15** or away

from the enclosure **15**; the secondary pump **250** may be useful in at least some of these various operations.

[0106] At least some of the components described herein may be disposable. For example, the chambers **50**, the conduit **130**, and/or the tubes **135** contained therein may be disposable. As described above, the disposable chambers **50** may be constructed of a flexible or resilient polymer, such as a transparent or translucent polymer, thereby forming a "bag chamber." In some embodiments, the disposable chambers **50** may be thermoformed. In some embodiments, the material of the disposable chambers **50** may be relatively thin (*e.g.*, less than 1 mm thick medical grade PVC). In other embodiments, the material of the disposable chambers **50** may be another material (*e.g.*, FEP, C-Flex, blow molded EVA, low-density polyethylene, etc.), to permit compliance with good manufacturing practice (cGMP). The disposable chambers **50** may include inlet and outlet fluid paths **65**, **70** (which may be integrated), as illustrated in **Figure 5A**, and as described in more detail above. The chamber holders **75** (see **Figure 5B**) can inhibit failure of the disposable chambers **50** by accommodating the majority of or all of the loads experienced due to rotation of the rotor **45** and the chambers **50**.

[0107] A system comprising two separate disposable fluid paths is also contemplated. In this system, the two sets described above (*i.e.*, the chambers/umbilical set and the valve/fluid path set) may be separately disposable. For example, referring to **Figures 15-17**, the chambers **50**, the conduit **130**, and the tubes **135** contained therein (leading up to or extending just past the pump **200**) may comprise a first disposable flow path (Set #1). The tubing and/or valves to the right of the harness or manifold **215** may comprise a second disposable flow path (Set #2). The return tube(s) **205** will typically be included in disposable Set #2, but may be included in either disposable flow path.

[0108] The disposable fluid path(s) can provide advantages over conventional continuous flow centrifuges and like apparatus. Systems that do not employ disposable flow paths generally have to adhere to Cleaning-in-Place (CIP) and Sterilization-in-Place (SIP) procedures and standards. This is especially the case for those systems that perform operations that are sensitive to contamination, such as cell culturing/harvesting and blood processing, for example. The disposable flow paths described herein can eliminate the need to perform CIP and SIP procedures. Furthermore, the use of completely disposable fluid paths permits compliance with good manufacturing practice (cGMP). The paths can be provided as sterile components ready for insertion and use.

[0109] As discussed above, the systems disclosed herein can be used to perform a number of processing, harvesting, etc. methods and operations. Exemplary methods and operations are disclosed in detail in co-pending and commonly owned International Application Nos. PCT US2009/004113 (International Publication No. WO 2010/008563) and PCT/US2009/004137 (International Publication No. WO 2010/008579), both filed July 16, 2009. A brief overview of some of the methods and operations follow, with reference to Figure 17.

[0110] In continuous flow centrifugation operations, media containing particles such as cells will be fed in the rotating chambers 50 to form a fluidized bed of cells. After the chambers 50 are filled with cells, the flow will be reversed to empty out the chambers 50. The system (i.e., the rotors and the chambers) does not need to stop rotating throughout this application. The cycle can be repeated to concentrate cells from large volumes.

[0111] Similarly, in perfusion operations, particles such as cells are immobilized in the rotating chambers 50 in fluidized beds for culturing and/or harvesting. For example, cells and media may be removed from the bioreactor 230 and transported to the chambers 50. A continuous flow of media and cells substantially opposes the centrifugal force created by the rotating chambers 50, thereby immobilizing the cells in a fluidized bed. Using a perfusion cycle, the cells are provided with fresh media continuously and spent media is removed, such as to the waste container 235. The cells can then be removed from the chambers 50, perhaps by reversing the fluid flow and returning the cells to the bioreactor 230 or the cell harvest container 245.

[0112] The systems disclosed herein can also perform media exchanges during cell culture or harvest. In this application, cell culture is first fed to the rotating chambers 50 to form a bed of fluidized cells, and then a new media or buffer is fed through the inlet paths 65 of the chambers 50 to be perfused through the bed. For example, the new media or buffer may be introduced from the clean media container 240. After the cells are washed with the media or buffer, the chambers 50 are emptied out by reversing the flow (i.e., introducing media to the outlet paths 70 of the chambers 50). It is noted that the media/ buffer exchange application could be used prior to additional processes such as transfection, cell dispensing, seeding a bioreactor, etc.

[0113] The systems are also capable of separating population of cells based on density and/or size. In this application, fluid containing different populations of cells will be fed into the rotating chambers 50. Cells will be separated by modulating the fluid feed rate and/or the

centrifugal force (*i.e.*, the rotational speed of the rotor). Once the fluid feed rate and centrifugal forces are adjusted appropriately, lighter/smaller cells will exit out of the chambers **50** with media. After a cell bed is formed, fresh media or buffer could be used to separate another population by once again adjusting the feed rate and/or centrifugal force. This process can be repeated several times to separate multiple populations of cells that differ by density and/or size. Finally heavier/larger cells are harvested by reversing the flow of fresh media.

[0114] These are just a sampling of the processes that can be performed by the disclosed systems. Other processes include cell dispensing, transfection, eletroporation, selection/purification/enrichment (such as by using affinity matrices), fractionation of proteins/biomaterials, associating particles with and/or removing particles from scaffolding material, and coating particles. These processes are described in detail in the aforementioned applications.

[0115] Referring again to **Figures 15 and 16**, a display **260** may be provided on the enclosure **15**, or may be provided on a panel attached or adjacent to the enclosure **15**, or may be provided away from the enclosure **15**. The display **260** is connected (*e.g.*, directly or wirelessly) to at least one controller (not shown). There may be controllers associated with the various components of the system, including the motor, the pump(s), the valves, etc. There may be one controller associated with all components or certain components may have dedicated controllers.

[0116] Simulated screenshots of the display **260** are illustrated in **Figures 18-20**. The display **260** may allow parameters to be entered and data or progress to be read by an operator. The display may include touch screen buttons that dictate the operation of various components, as seen in **Figure 18**. In some embodiments, there is a separate user input device such as a keyboard; in other words, the display may not employ a touch screen.

[0117] In some embodiments, a light source and/or a camera may be included on the enclosure or in the interior cavity of the enclosure. The light source and/or the camera may be useful to illuminate the chamber(s) and/or capture images of the chamber(s) (*e.g.*, the interior of the chamber(s) during operation). The captured images may be useful to provide feedback to the operator and/or the system as to the progress of the particular process taking place within the chamber(s). The camera may be in communication with the display (either directly or via a controller), such that the images may be transmitted to the display, for example. The controller(s) and/or software associated with the controller(s) may automatically correlate captured images with a particular chamber.

[0118] The foregoing is illustrative of the present invention and is not to be construed as limiting thereof. Although a few exemplary embodiments of this invention have been described, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that many modifications are possible in the exemplary embodiments without materially departing from the teachings and advantages of this invention. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of this invention as defined in the claims. The invention is defined by the following claims, with equivalents of the claims to be included therein.

Claims

1. A centrifugal fluid processing system, comprising:
 - a housing having an interior cavity;
 - a plurality of fluid chambers held in spaced apart relationship on a rotor in the interior cavity, each chamber having an inlet and an opposed outlet;
 - a drive mechanism configured to rotate the rotor ; and
 - a first container containing media and particles in fluid communication with the inlet of each chamber;
 - a second container in fluid communication with the outlet of each chamber;wherein, in operation, the rotor is rotated to create a centrifugal force field and media and particles flow continuously from the first container to the inlet of a respective chamber to create a fluid force that substantially opposes the centrifugal force field, thereby immobilizing at least some of the particles in a fluidized bed in the respective chamber, and media flows from the respective chamber outlet to the second container.
2. The centrifugal fluid processing system of Claim 1, wherein:
 - each chamber comprises a substantially conical body portion, each chamber including a flange extending about at least a portion of a perimeter of the conical body portion, the flange including an inlet fluid path and an outlet fluid path, wherein the flange inlet fluid path is in fluid communication with the inlet of the chamber and the flange outlet fluid path is in fluid communication with the outlet of the chamber; and
 - the first container is in fluid communication with the flange inlet fluid path of a respective chamber and the second container is in fluid communication with the flange outlet fluid path of the respective chamber.
3. The centrifugal fluid processing system of Claim 1, wherein the plurality of fluid chambers comprise a plurality of flexible translucent or transparent fluid chambers.
4. The centrifugal fluid processing system of Claim 1, further comprising a plurality of substantially rigid chamber holders in the interior cavity, each sized and configured to releasably enclose a respective flexible chamber attached to the rotor.

5. The centrifugal fluid processing system of Claim 4, wherein each chamber holder includes a window to allow visual access to the enclosed chamber.

6. The centrifugal fluid processing system of Claim 4, wherein each chamber holder is pivotable between an open configuration and a closed configuration.

7. The centrifugal fluid processing system of Claim 1, wherein the drive mechanism is configured to rotate the rotor about a substantially horizontal axis.

8. A disposable chamber for use with a continuous flow centrifuge comprising a rotor, the disposable chamber comprising a fluid inlet and an opposed fluid outlet, wherein the chamber is sized and configured to be mounted on the rotor.

9. The disposable chamber of Claim 8, wherein the chamber comprises a substantially conical body portion, the chamber including a flange extending about at least a portion of a perimeter of the conical body portion, the flange including an inlet fluid path extending to the fluid inlet of the chamber and an outlet fluid path extending from the fluid outlet of the chamber.

10. The disposable fluid path of Claim 8, wherein the flange inlet and outlet fluid paths are substantially parallel along a segment extending from the point at which fluid enters the inlet fluid path and fluid exits the outlet fluid path.

11. The disposable chamber of Claim 8, wherein the chamber is a flexible translucent or transparent fluid chamber.

12. The disposable chamber of Claim 11, wherein the chamber is sized and configured to be enclosed by a rigid chamber holder that is mounted to the rotor.