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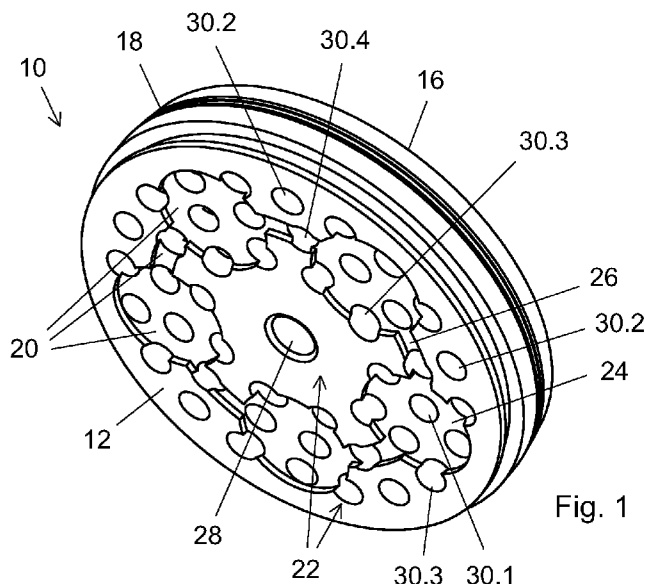


Fig. 1

(57) Abstract: In a reverse osmosis desalination plant a number of membranes (34, 36, 38, 40) are arranged end- to-end in a cylindrical outer casing (42). Each membrane comprises a sleeve, a permeate pipe (56) passing centrally through the sleeve, a plurality of leaves of permeable material (54) wound around the pipe and contained within the sleeve and an apertured plate (10, 58) at each end of the sleeve. According to the invention the flow distributor plate (10) at the inlet end of each membrane is a flow distributor and has a plurality of bores (30.1, 30.2 etc) through it from a front face (12) to a rear face (14). The front face (12) has a recessed area (20) which is set back from the remainder (22) of the front face (12). The entrances to at least some of the bores (30.1, 30.2 etc) are within the recessed area (20).