

INSTRUMENTATION FOR FUSING A SACROILIAC JOINT

BACKGROUND

[0001] (1) Field of Endeavor.

[0002] The present invention relates generally to the field of sacroiliac joint fusion procedures, and more particularly, to a unique system and instrumentation for fusing a sacroiliac joint.

[0003] (2) Description of Related Art.

[0004] The sacroiliac joint (“SI Joint”) is located at the interface between the sacrum and ilium bones in a human’s pelvic area. The SI Joint includes strong ligaments that permit only slight movement between the sacrum and the ilium. The sacrum is connected to the base of the spine, and each ilium is connected to the top of the leg and hip area. Thus, the SI Joint is the interface between a human’s upper body and lower body.

[0005] Dysfunction in the SI Joint is a common problem of back pain. In fact, over 25% of back pain is caused by SI Joint dysfunction. Even a properly functioning SI Joint can become painful after certain types of spinal procedures. For example, over 75% of lumbar fusion surgeries lead to SI Joint pain. Often, SI Joint pain or dysfunction is addressed by fusing the SI Joint, and many past procedures exist for doing so. Past SI Joint fusion procedures involve installation of complex implant devices, such as bone anchors, fusion devices, and multi-component implants. These procedures involve complex devices, such as drills and drill bits, and multi-component dilators, braces, and anchor installation devices. As a result, fusion procedures using these devices are complex and time consuming, often leading to suboptimal results.

[0006] The present set of instruments seeks to overcome these problems by providing

a streamlined system and procedure for installing an allograft implant in the SI Joint, without using a drill, drill bits, or other rotary cutting instruments.

[0007] Another complication of SI Joint fusion is that promoting bone fusion often involves decorticating the cortical bone inside the SI Joint. This decortication is accomplished with a broach, a rasp, or a similar abrading device. These abrading devices often become lodged inside the SI Joint during the decortication process. When the abrading device becomes lodged, counter pressure cannot be applied to the patient to counteract the pull-out force needed to dislodge the abrading device. Any such counter pressure applied to the patient could result in injury to the patient or damage to surrounding tissue. A past solution is to attach a separate slap hammer, or slide hammer, to the abrading device such that pull-out forces can be applied to the abrading device without the need for applying any counter pressure to the patient or to any other object. However, past slide hammer assemblies are cumbersome to operate, difficult to attach to the abrading device, and difficult to operate. They also complicate the instrumentation needed to perform the SI Joint fusion procedure.

[0008] The present set of instruments seeks to overcome these problems by providing a slide hammer integrated into the abrading device in a single tool.

SUMMARY OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0010] In the preferred embodiment, the system and instrumentation described herein comprises a working channel, a joint locator, an abrading device, and an implant inserter. The working channel has an insertion end and a working end, and a channel extending therebetween. The working channel provides a working passage for insertion of the other instruments of the system, and for delivery of the implant to the SI Joint. The insertion end has a pair of arms for providing engagement of the SI Joint and distraction of tissue surrounding the insertion end. The insertion end further comprises a first iliac contour and a first sacral contour, both of which are defined by the contour between the insertion arms and the body of the working channel. The inside surface of the working channel has an alignment means comprising a groove, recess, channel, indent, or the like for receiving and engaging a ridge, rib, detent, or other protrusion on the mating instrument that is keyed to the alignment means. In one embodiment, the working channel further comprises a channel collar for receiving mating components of the joint locator, abrading device, or implant inserter in an abutting engagement.

[0011] The joint locator has an insertion end and a handle. The insertion end comprises a penetration tip for penetrating the soft tissue in proximity to the SI Joint. A leading edge of the penetration tip may comprise, in whole or in part, a blade or chisel component to promote this penetration. The joint locator insertion end comprises a second iliac contour and a second sacral contour. The outside surface of the joint locator has a keying means for engagement with the alignment means of the working channel, the keying means comprising a ridge, rib, detent, or other protrusion on the outside

surface of the joint locator capable of engaging the alignment means.

[0012] The abrading device comprises a hammer sleeve at a proximate end, an abrading head at a distal end, and a keying means that is similar to the joint locator keying means of the joint locator. In the preferred embodiment, the abrading device further comprises a slap hammer assembly, or slide hammer assembly. In one embodiment, the slide hammer assembly comprises a base connected to a shaft, and a releasing means that releasably connects a hammer sleeve to the base. The released hammer sleeve is configured for sliding engagement along the shaft. To operate the slide hammer assembly, the hammer sleeve is disengaged from the base, placing the slide hammer assembly in its open position. This open position enables the hammer sleeve to slide freely along the shaft. The hammer sleeve is pulled until a diaphragm inside the hammer sleeve engages a stop end of the shaft, thereby causing an impact that delivers the slide hammer force.

[0013] The implant inserter comprises a handle and an implant insertion end. The implant insertion end has a pair of tines for holding the implant during the process of inserting the implant into the SI Joint. The implant inserter further comprises an inserter keying means, which is similar to the keying means of the joint locator.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- [0014] FIG. 1 shows the posterior view of a typical human pelvis.
- [0015] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of an embodiment of an allograft implant for insertion into the SI Joint.
- [0016] FIG. 3 shows an alternate view of one embodiment of an allograft implant.
- [0017] FIG. 4 shows an embodiment of the instruments in the joint fusion apparatus.
- [0018] FIG. 5 shows an embodiment of the working channel and an embodiment of the joint locator.
- [0019] FIG. 6 shows a close up of the insertion end of one embodiment of a working channel.
- [0020] FIG. 7 shows an alternate view of the embodiment shown in Fig. 6.
- [0021] FIG. 8 is an enlarged view of the insertion end of an embodiment of the joint locator fully inserted into the working channel of Fig. 4.
- [0022] FIG. 9 is an enlarged view showing the device of Fig. 8 with the orientation reversed.
- [0023] FIG. 10 shows a close up of the working end of one embodiment of a working channel.
- [0024] FIG. 11 shows the joint locator of Fig. 4 partially inserted into the working channel.
- [0025] FIG. 12 shows the joint locator of Fig. 4 fully inserted into the working channel.

[0026] FIG. 13 shows the working channel of Fig. 4 and an embodiment of the abrading device.

[0027] FIG. 14 is an enlarged view of an embodiment of the abrading head.

[0028] FIG. 15 shows an enlarged view of one embodiment of an abrading head.

[0029] FIG. 16 shows the abrading device of Fig. 13 with an embodiment of a slide hammer disassembled.

[0030] FIG. 17 is an enlarged view of an embodiment of the connection interface of a slide hammer.

[0031] FIG. 18 shows a close up of one embodiment of the diaphragm and threaded connector of a slide hammer assembly.

[0032] FIG. 19 shows the abrading device of Fig. 13 partially inserted into the working channel of Figs. 4.

[0033] FIG. 20 shows the abrading device of Fig. 13 fully inserted into the working channel of Fig. 4 with the slide hammer in its closed position.

[0034] FIG. 21 shows the abrading device of Fig. 13 fully inserted into the working channel of Fig. 4 with the slide hammer in its extended position.

[0035] FIG. 22 shows the working channel of Fig. 4 and an embodiment of the insertion device.

[0036] FIG. 23 is an enlarged view of the insertion end of the insertion device of Fig. 22.

[0037] FIG. 24 shows the insertion device of Fig. 22 with an embodiment of an allograft implant loaded into the tines of the insertion end.

[0038] FIG. 25 shows the insertion device of Fig. 22 and the allograft implant partially inserted into the working channel of Fig. 4.

[0039] FIG. 26 shows the insertion device of Fig. 22 and the allograft implant fully inserted into the working channel of Fig. 4.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0040] With reference to the drawings, the system and instrumentation for fusing a sacroiliac joint (“SI Joint”) now will be described with regard for the best mode and the preferred embodiment. The embodiments disclosed herein are meant for illustration and not limitation of the invention. An ordinary practitioner will appreciate that it is possible to create many variations of the following embodiments without undue experimentation.

[0041] The system and instrumentation described herein are used for fusing an SI Joint 3 in the pelvis of a human. Referring to Figs. 1-3, an allograft implant 5 is placed in the soft tissue of the SI Joint 3 between the sacrum 1 and the ilium 2 of the pelvis. The implant 5 provides a matrix for bone healing across the SI Joint, thereby fusing the sacrum 1 and ilium 2 together. In one embodiment, the implant 5 generally comprises a nose 6 and at least one pair of opposing lateral sides 7, each comprising a groove 8 that is disposed at least partially along the length of each such lateral side 7.

[0042] Referring to Fig. 4, in one embodiment, the system comprises a working channel 10, a joint locator 20, an abrading device 30, and an implant inserter 60. Each of these instruments has a longitudinal axis along the centerline of its length. Referring to Fig. 5, the working channel 10 is a tube-like member that provides a working passage for insertion of the other instruments of the system, and for delivery of the implant 5 to the SI Joint 3. The working channel 10 is a cannula, a lumen, a sleeve, or another device suitable for providing working access of the other instruments to the SI Joint 3, as described below. The working channel 10 has an insertion end 11 and a working end 12, and a channel 13 extending therebetween. The channel 13 is a tube or bore having a

cross section that is rectilinear or curvilinear. The insertion end 11 has a pair of arms 14 for providing engagement of the SI Joint 3 and distraction of tissue surrounding the insertion end 11. The arms 14 are probes, prongs, or other members protruding from the insertion end 11 of the working channel 10. Insertion of the arms 14 into the SI Joint 3, as described below, resists or prevents the working channel 10 from rotating about its longitudinal axis in relation to the SI Joint 3. The longitudinal axis generally extends along the length of the working channel 10 in proximity to the centerline of the channel 13.

[0043] The insertion end 11 of the working channel 10 is configured for seating in and against the SI Joint 3, and against the sacrum 1 and ilium 2 in particular. The insertion end 11 comprises a first iliac contour 15 and a first sacral contour 16, both of which are defined by the contour between the insertion arms 14 and the body of the working channel 10. For example, referring to Figs. 6-9, one side of the insertion end 11 comprises the arms 14 connected to the working channel 10 via the first iliac contour 15, which is configured for abutment against the ilium 2 when the arms 14 are inserted into, and seated within, the SI Joint 3 as described below. The other side of the insertion end 11 comprises the arms 14 connected to the working channel 10 via the first sacral contour 16, which is configured for abutment against the sacrum 1 when the arms 14 are inserted into, and seated within, the SI Joint 3.

[0044] Referring to Figs. 5 and 10, the inside surface of the working channel 10 has a means for aligning instruments, the alignment means 17 comprising a groove, recess, channel, indent, or the like for receiving and engaging a ridge, rib, detent, or other protrusion on the mating instrument that is keyed to the alignment means 17. In one

embodiment, the working channel 10 further comprises a channel collar 18 for receiving mating components of the joint locator 20, abrading device 30, or implant inserter 60 in an abutting engagement, as described below. In an embodiment of the channel collar 18, the collar further comprises an alignment means 17.

[0045] Referring to Fig. 5, the joint locator 20 has an insertion end 21 and a handle 22, or working end. The insertion end 21 comprises a penetration tip 23 for penetrating the soft tissue in proximity to the SI Joint 3. This soft tissue is the soft tissue between the surface of the patient's skin the SI Joint 3, such as muscle tissue, and the soft tissue inside the SI Joint 3, such as cartilage and ligaments. The penetration tip 23 is configured for penetrating these types of soft tissue. For example, one embodiment of the penetration tip 23 comprises a blade or chisel component for cutting the soft tissue. A leading edge of the penetration tip 23 may comprise, in whole or in part, such a blade or chisel component.

[0046] Referring again to Figs. 8 and 9, the joint locator 20 insertion end 21 comprises a second iliac contour 24 and a second sacral contour 25. For example, one side of the joint locator 20 insertion end 21 comprises the second iliac contour 24, which is configured for abutment against the ilium 2 when the penetration tip 23 is inserted into the SI Joint 3, as described below. The other side of the joint locator 20 insertion end 21 comprises the second sacral contour 25, which is configured for abutment against the sacrum 1 when the penetration tip 23 is inserted into the SI Joint 3.

[0047] The outside surface of the joint locator 20 has a means for keying with the alignment means 17 of the working channel 10, the keying means 27 comprising a ridge, rib, detent, or other protrusion on the outside surface of the joint locator 20 capable of

engaging the alignment means 17 to resist or prevent relative rotation between the joint locator 20 and the working channel 10.

[0048] In one embodiment, referring to Figs. 5, 11, and 12, the joint locator 20 has a channel 26 for receiving the K-wire 4. This channel 26 is a cannula, lumen, or other bore-like feature capable of receiving the K-wire 4 in a pass-through manner, preferably along a longitudinal axis, or centerline, of the joint locator 20. In one embodiment of the joint locator 20, the handle 22 further comprises a stop 28 for abutting against the channel collar 18 of the working channel 10.

[0049] Referring to Fig. 13, the abrading device 30 comprises a hammer sleeve 31 at a proximate end and an abrading head 32 at a distal end. The abrading head 32 is a rasp, broach, or other abrading tool that is used to grate, abrade, or otherwise decorticate the cortical bone inside the SI Joint 3. In one embodiment, shown in Fig. 14 and 15, the abrading head 32 is a generally rectangular member comprising abrading surfaces 33 on opposing sides of the head 32, an open tip 34 for insertion into the SI Joint 3, and open lateral sides 35 between the abrading surfaces 33. Each abrading surface 33 comprises one or more teeth, barbs, blades, ridges, slots, broaches, or other members or features capable of abrading the cortical bone in the SI Joint 3. The open tip 34 comprises a cutting edge 36 around all or part of the open tip 34.

[0050] Referring again to Fig. 19, the abrading device 30 further comprises a keying means 37, which is similar to the joint locator 20 keying means 27 described above. The keying means 37 mates with the alignment means 17 in the working channel 10 to resist or to prevent relative rotation between the abrading device 30 and the working channel 10 about each member's respective longitudinal axis. The abrading device 30 further

comprises an abrading stop 38 for abutting against the channel collar 18 of the working channel 10. In one embodiment, the abrading device 30 further comprises a K-wire channel for receiving the K-wire 4. This K-wire channel is a cannula, lumen, or other bore-like feature capable of receiving the K-wire 4 in a pass-through manner, preferably along a longitudinal axis of the abrading device 30.

[0051] Referring to Figs. 16, 17, and 18, the abrading device 30 further comprises a slap hammer assembly, or slide hammer assembly 40. In one embodiment, the slide hammer assembly 40 comprises a base 51 connected to a shaft 44, and a releasing means that releasably connects a hammer sleeve 31 to the base 51. The released hammer sleeve 31 is configured for sliding engagement along the shaft 44. The releasing means is any means for releasably connecting the hammer sleeve 31 to the base 51. The releasing means could be a mating threaded connection, a quick disconnect attachment, a depressible tab, a latch, a clasp, a clip, a clamp, or other equivalent connection structure.

[0052] In one embodiment, shown in Figs. 16, 17, and 18, the releasing means is a mating threaded connection. This embodiment includes a collar 41 on the abrading device 30, a slide hammer shaft 44, and the hammer sleeve 31. The collar 41 comprises internal threads 42 and external threads 43. The shaft 44 comprises a threaded end 45 and a stop end 46. The hammer sleeve 31 has a threaded connector 48 and a hollow, cylindrical bore comprising an internal diaphragm 47 having a diaphragm opening 49 (see Fig. 18). The diaphragm opening 49 is sized to permit sliding passage of all parts of the shaft 44 except the stop end 46. The stop end 46 is sized too large to fit through the diaphragm opening 49.

[0053] To assemble the slide hammer assembly 40 of this embodiment, the threaded

end 45 of the shaft 44 is inserted into the bore of the hammer sleeve 31, through the diaphragm 47 inside the hammer sleeve 31, and the threaded end 45 is threaded into, and mated with, the internal threads 42 of the collar 41. The threaded connector 48 in the hammer sleeve 31 is then mated to the external threads 43 on the collar 41 to promote a secure connection. The stop end 46 is disposed inside the bore of the hammer sleeve 31 on a side of the diaphragm 47 opposite that of the location of the threaded connector 48. In this configuration, shown in Fig. 20, the slide hammer assembly 40 is in its closed position.

[0054] To operate the slide hammer assembly 40, the threaded connector 48 is disengaged from the external threads 43 of the collar 41, placing the slide hammer assembly 40 in its open position, which is shown in Fig. 21. This open position enables the hammer sleeve 31 to slide freely along the shaft 44. The hammer sleeve 31 is pulled until the diaphragm 47 inside the hammer sleeve 31 engages the stop end 46 of the shaft 44, thereby causing an impact that delivers the slide hammer force.

[0055] Referring to Figs. 22-26, the implant inserter 60 comprises a handle 61 and an implant insertion end 62. The implant insertion end 62 has a pair of tines 63 for holding the implant 5 during the process of inserting the implant 5 into the SI Joint 3. Each tine 63 is supported by a tine shaft 66, which terminates at a shoulder 67. The tine shafts 66 provide flexibility such that the implant 5 is removably retained between the tines 63 with the shoulder 67 abutting against the implant 5 (see Fig. 24). For example, in one embodiment the width of the implant 5 between the opposing grooves 8 is slightly larger than the space between the respective tines 63 such that when the implant 5 is seated in the implant insertion end 62, the respective tines 63 are pushed slightly apart by the

grooves 8. This causes a slight amount of friction between the tines 63 and the grooves 8, thereby releasably retaining the implant 5 in the implant insertion end 62.

[0056] The implant inserter 60 further comprises an inserter keying means 65, which is similar to the keying means 27 of the joint locator 20. The inserter keying means 65 mates with the alignment means 17 in the working channel 10 to resist or to prevent relative rotation between the implant inserter 60 and the working channel 10 about each member's longitudinal axis. In one embodiment, the implant inserter 60 further comprises a channel 64 for receiving the K-wire 4 (see Fig. 23). This channel 64 is a cannula, lumen, or other bore-like feature capable of receiving the K-wire 4 in a pass-through manner. In one embodiment of the implant inserter 60, the handle 61 further comprises an inserter stop 68 for abutting against the channel collar 18 of the working channel 10.

[0057] In one embodiment of a method of installing the implant 5, the procedure for installing the implant 5 in the SI Joint 3 is started by inserting the K-wire 4 in the SI Joint 3 at the location where the implant 5 is to be installed. The K-wire 4 is preferably inserted from a posterior approach. It is preferable, but not required, that the implant 5 is installed under the portion of the posterior superior iliac spine that overhangs the SI Joint 3. One or more alternate location are also suitable for fusion of the SI Joint 3. A K-wire 4 is inserted into the SI Joint 3 at each location where an implant 5 is to be inserted.

[0058] The joint locator 20 is then fully inserted into the working channel 10 (see Fig. 12). In mating the joint locator 20 inside the working channel 10, the keying means 27 of the joint locator 20 is oriented to engage the alignment means 17 of the working channel 10. This engagement enables the first iliac contour 15 of the working channel to be

disposed in mating alignment with the second iliac contour 24 of the joint locator 20, and the first sacral contour 16 of the working channel 10 to be disposed in mating alignment with the second sacral contour 25 of the joint locator 20 (see Figs. 8 and 9). The respective first and second iliac contours 15, 24 are configured for placement against the ilium 2 when the insertion end 11 is disposed inside the SI Joint 3, and the respective first and second sacral contours 16, 25 are configured for corresponding placement against the sacrum 1 when the insertion end 11 is disposed inside the SI Joint 3.

[0059] The free end of the K-wire is inserted into the K-wire channel 26 of the combined joint locator 20 / working channel 10, and this combined device is advanced toward the SI Joint 3, guided by the K-wire 4. As the joint locator 20 / working channel 10 combination is advanced, the penetration tip 23 cuts through the soft tissue above and inside the SI Joint 3. If necessary, the combined joint locator 20 / working channel 10 is advanced via blows from a mallet against the handle 22. The impact force from the mallet is transmitted through the handle 22 to the stop 28, where the force is imparted to the channel collar 18 and into the working channel 10. As such, the impact force from a mallet is balanced between the working channel insertion end 11 and the joint locator insertion end 21.

[0060] The combined joint locator 20 / working channel 10 is advanced until the respective first and second iliac contours 15, 24 abut the ilium 2 and the respective first and second sacral contours 16, 25 abut the sacrum 1. In this position, the arms 14 of the working channel 10 are disposed inside the SI Joint 3 to retain the proper alignment of the working channel 10, and therefore the alignment means 17, thereby ensuring a proper alignment of the abrading device 30 and the implant inserter 60 later in the procedure. In

some embodiments, insertion of the arms 14 into the SI joint 3 will distract the joint, thus separating the sacrum 1 and the ilium 2. This distraction establishes a uniform width of the spacing in the SI joint 3 prior to use of the other instrumentation. Thus, the instrumentation described herein will work with a patient of any size because the arms 14 set the width of the SI joint 3 to a uniform distance regardless of the size or scale of the sacrum 1 or ilium 2.

[0061] In an alternate embodiment of the installation method, a K-wire 4 is omitted from the procedure. Instead, the combined joint locator 20 / working channel 10 is advanced through an incision in the patient, and this advancement continues as described above until the insertion ends 11, 21 are inserted into the SI Joint 3 as described above.

[0062] Once the combined joint locator 20 / working channel 10 device is properly seated in the SI Joint 3, the joint locator 20 is removed from the working channel 10. The surrounding soft tissue remains distracted or dilated by the working channel 10 and the respective arms 14, thereby enabling direct access to the SI Joint 3 area. The abrading device 30 is then inserted into the working channel 10, with the keying means 37 engaging the alignment means 17 to promote proper alignment of the abrading head 32 with respect to the SI Joint 3. The abrading head 32 is advanced through the working channel 10 until the abrading head 32 makes contact with the SI Joint 3. The abrading head 32 is forced into the SI Joint 3 (using a mallet if necessary), and the cutting edge 36 cuts the soft tissue, such as ligaments or cartilage. The abrading stop 38 abuts against the channel collar 18 of the working channel 10 to prevent over penetration of the abrading head 32 into the SI Joint 3.

[0063] The abrading device 30 is then worked in and out of the working channel 10

such that the abrading surfaces 33 abrade, or decorticate, the respective surfaces of the sacrum 1 and the ilium 2 inside the SI Joint 3. Again, the abrading stop 38 abuts against the channel collar 18 to prevent over penetration of the abrading head 32. During this process, the abrading head 32 may become lodged in the SI Joint 3, becoming difficult to remove. In these instances, the slide hammer assembly 40 is enabled so that the abrading head 32 may be removed by the impact force of the slide hammer assembly 40, as described above. Operation of the slide hammer assembly 40 provides a significant advantage over prior systems because when the abrading head 32 becomes lodged in the SI joint 3, counter pressure cannot be applied to the patient to counter the pull-out force needed to dislodge the abrading head 32 from the SI joint 3. The slide hammer assembly 40 enables removal of a lodged abrading head 32 in a safe manner without applying any counter pressure to the patient.

[0064] As the abrading head 32 is worked in and out of the SI Joint 3, the abrading surfaces 33 abrade the cortical bone of the sacrum 1 and the ilium 2 inside the SI Joint 3. The cortical bone is abraded until bleeding begins, thereby promoting the patient's healing process of the cortical bone. This degree of abrasion and corresponding healing promotes fusion of the SI Joint 3.

[0065] Once the SI Joint 3 is adequately abraded, the abrading device 30 is removed from the working channel 10. At this point in the procedure, the K-wire 4 may be removed from the working channel 10 to enable proper advancement of the implant 5 through the working channel 10 and proper installation of the implant 5 into the SI Joint 5. Alternately, the K-wire 4 can be removed from the working channel 10 at any time after the working channel 10 is properly seated in the SI Joint 3, as described above.

[0066] The allograft implant 5 is placed into the tines 63 of the implant inserter 60 such that each tine 63 is seated into a mating groove 8 on the lateral side 7 of the implant 5, and the shoulder 67 abuts the implant 5. The implant inserter 60 is then inserted into the working channel 10 such that the keying means 65 engages the alignment means 17 to ensure proper orientation of the implant inserter 60, and thus, the implant 5. The implant inserter 60 is used to deliver the implant 5 to the abraded area of the SI Joint 3 through the working channel 10. If necessary, the implant inserter 60 is struck by a mallet to force the implant 5 into the abraded area of the SI Joint 3, the shoulder 67 transferring the impact force to the implant 5. In these instances, the inserter stop 68 abuts against the channel collar 18 of the working channel 10 to prevent over penetration of the implant 5 into the SI Joint 3.

[0067] Once the implant 5 is fully inserted into the SI Joint 3, the implant inserter 60 is removed from the working channel 10, leaving the implant 5 installed in the abraded area of the SI Joint 3. In most instances, the friction force between the implant 5 and the inside of the SI Joint 3 is greater than the friction force between the respective tines 63 and grooves 8. In these instances, removal of the implant inserter 60 is accomplished by applying a removal force to the implant inserter 60 greater than the friction force between the tines 63 and the grooves 8. In other instances, the friction force between the implant 5 and the inside of the SI Joint 3 is less than the friction force between the respective tines 63 and grooves 8. In these instances, removal of the implant inserter 60 is accomplished by inserting a K-wire 4 or similar device into the K-wire channel 64 and advancing the K-wire 4 until the distal end of the K-wire abuts against the implant 5 between the tines 63. The K-wire 4 is used to hold the implant 5 in place inside the SI

Joint 3 as the removal force is applied to the implant inserter 60. The tines 63 are thereby removed from the grooves 8 as the K-wire 4 holds the implant 5 in its installed location. Once the tines 63 are pulled free from the grooves 8, the implant inserter 60 is disengaged from the implant 5, and the implant inserter 60 and the K-wire 4 are removed from the working channel 10. The working channel 10 is then removed from the surgical site, which is sterilized and closed for healing.

[0068] As the abraded cortical bone heals, the bone fuses with the allograft implant 5, eventually causing the sacrum 1 and the ilium 2 to grow together at the location of the implant 5, thereby fusing the SI Joint 3.

[0069] In any of the foregoing embodiments, one or more instruments may comprise disposable material, such as medical grade plastics, certain metals, or other disposable material.

[0070] The foregoing embodiments are merely representative of the SI Joint fusion instruments and not meant for limitation of the invention. For example, persons skilled in the art would readily appreciate that there are several embodiments and configurations of abrading devices, slide hammer devices, and other devices described herein that will not substantially alter the nature of the SI Joint fusion instruments. As another example, the alignment means 17 and the respective keying means 27, 37, 67 could be reversed such that the working channel 10 comprises a keying means, and the joint locator 20, rasp device 30, and implant inserter 60, respectively, comprise a mating alignment means. Consequently, it is understood that equivalents and substitutions for certain elements and components set forth above are part of the invention described herein, and the true scope of the invention is set forth in the claims below.

