



(51) International Patent Classification:
A61M 29/00 (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:
PCT/US2009/069740

(22) International Filing Date:
29 December 2009 (29.12.2009)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
61/145,932 20 January 2009 (20.01.2009) US

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(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RS, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, NA, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

— with international search report (Art. 21(3))

(54) Title: STERILIZATION METHODS AND APPARATUS

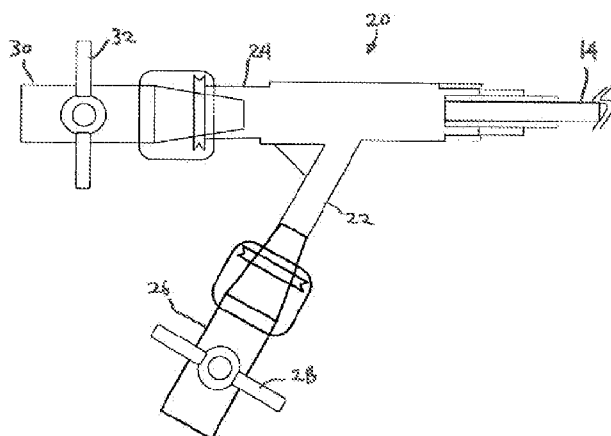


FIG. 5A

(57) Abstract: Sterilization methods for implantable prostheses are described where a polymeric stent may be sterilized, e.g., via ETO sterilization, at a temperature below a glass transition temperature of the stent. A separate delivery catheter may be sterilized separately and the stent and delivery catheter may then be combined in an aseptic or semi-aseptic environment and sterilized as an assembled system such that the requirements for sterilizing the system are relatively lower. Additionally and/or alternatively, valve and filter assemblies may be used with an optional mandrel assembly for maintaining sterility of the internal components of a catheter system.

