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(54) **POSTURE NECKLACE AND METHOD OF MAINTAINING PROPER POSTURE**

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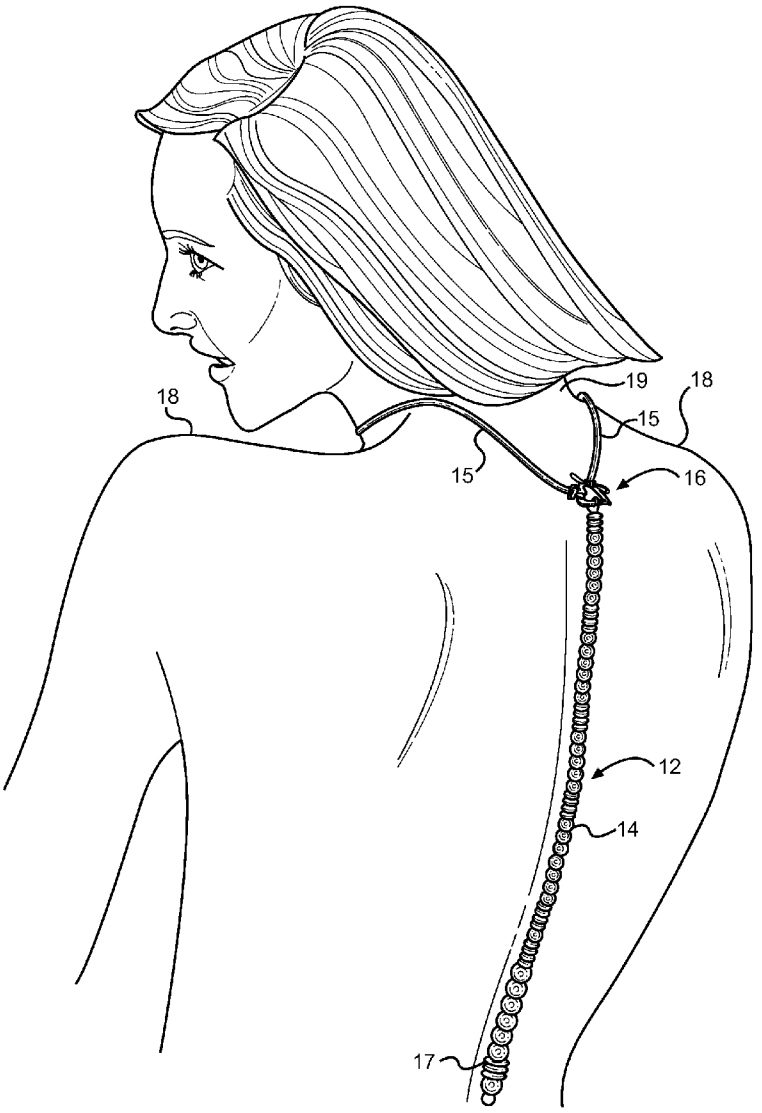
(57) **ABSTRACT**

Disclosed is a posture monitoring neckwear and associated method of maintaining proper posture, wherein the neckwear comprises a frontal necklace portion and a rear extension portion that extends from the posterior of the wearer's neck and along the length of the wearer's back. The frontal necklace portion surrounds the wearer's neck and includes a weighted frontal pendant to counteract movement of the extension portion connection point along the neck posterior. The extension portion comprises an elongated and adorned structure, wherein tactile feedback from the extension along the middle of the wearer's back and movement therefrom alerts the wearer of improper posture or contortion of the spine during movement. The associated method of maintaining and teaching proper posture comprises utilizing an elongated extension from a pendant necklace to monitor and adjust posture based on tactile input received therefrom.



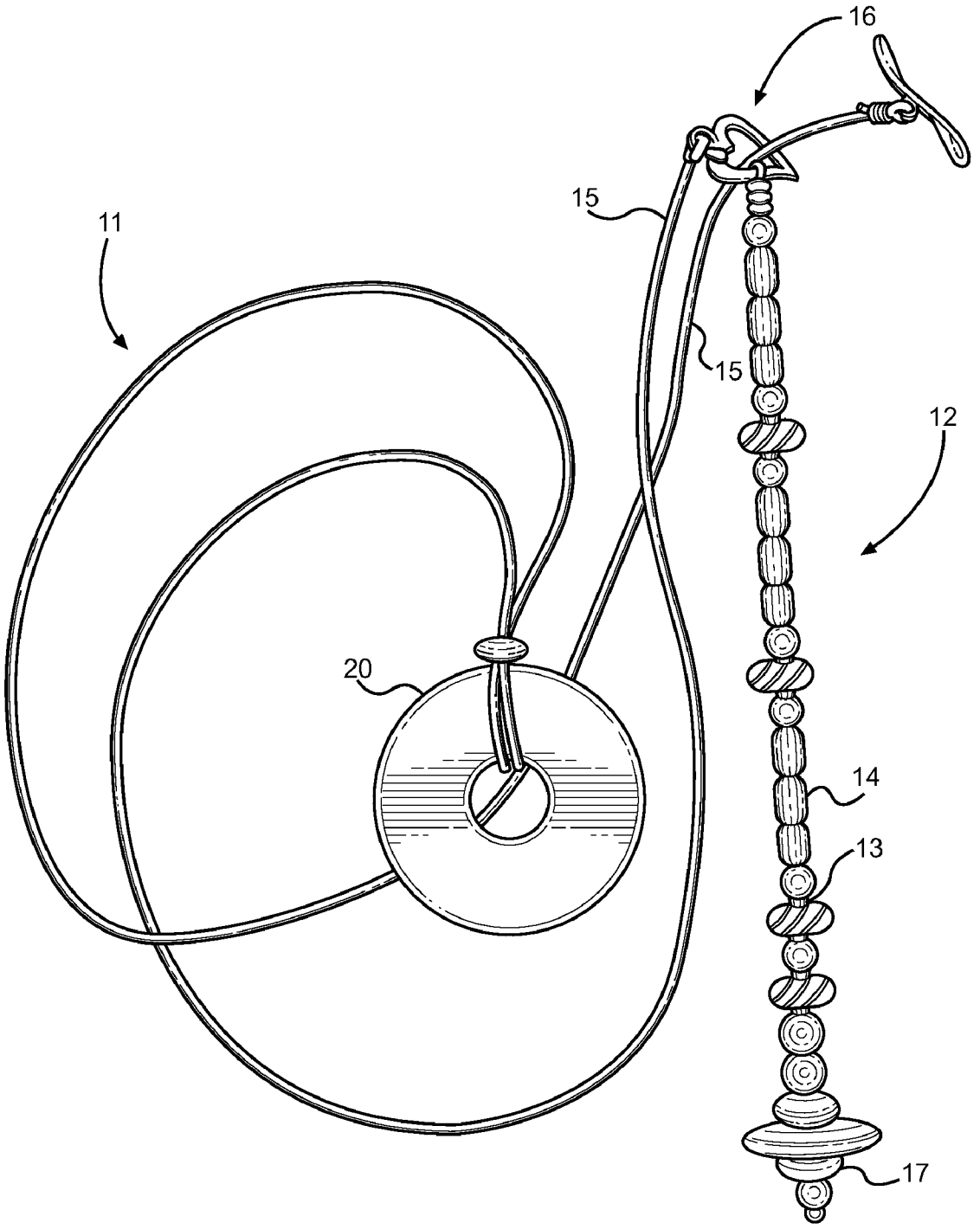


FIG. 1

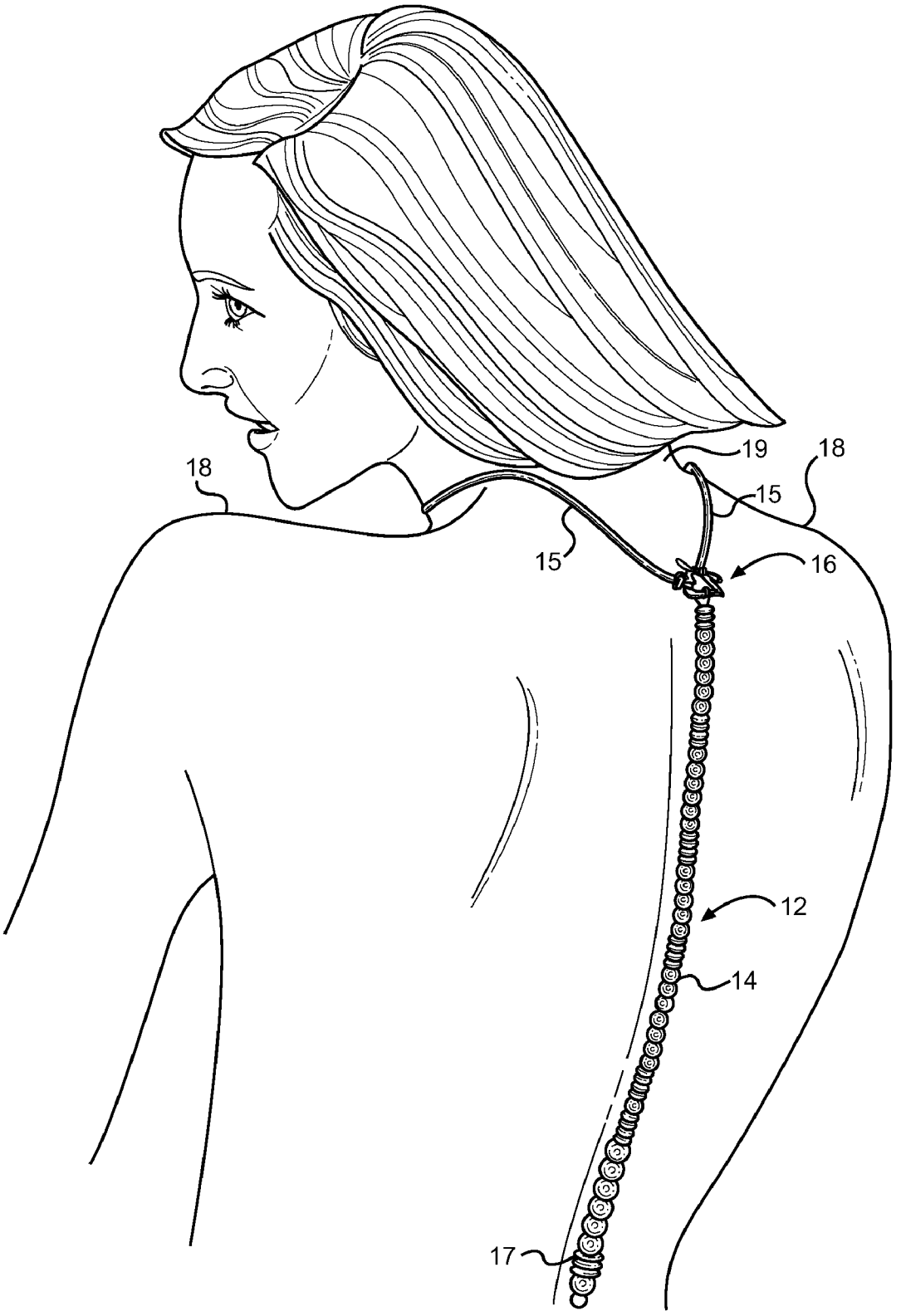


FIG. 2

POSTURE NECKLACE AND METHOD OF MAINTAINING PROPER POSTURE

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/500,348 filed on Jun. 23, 2011, entitled "Posture Beads." The patent application identified above is incorporated here by reference in its entirety to provide continuity of disclosure.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to neckwear, articles of jewelry and means for monitoring posture. More specifically, the present invention pertains to a necklace that includes a decorative frontal region and an elongated rear portion adapted extend along the centerline of a user's back for monitoring one's posture and preventing slouching or contorting.

[0004] Proper and upright posture are crucial aspects of overall personal health and wellness, and provide a means to reduce stress on the body during movement, weight bearing activities and further during periods of extending seated or stationary positioning. Good posture includes training one's body to stand, walk, sit and lie in positions that minimize strain on supporting muscles and ligaments of the back, and further encourage proper spinal alignment. This positioning reduces stress on the spine and supporting muscles, prevents strains due to abnormal positioning or lifting using an incorrect technique, and further contributes to overall good health and appearance. Proper posture is recognized as sitting or standing up with one's back being in a vertically straight position with the shoulders slightly pulled back. This position while standing and seated contributes to a neutral spine position and the three natural curves present in a healthy spine.

[0005] It is recognized that departures from a proper posture can lead to fatigue, back and body injuries and even long-term wear on the joint surfaces of the spine. This is a result of improper alignment of the spine and the misuse of muscles in the back and body due to poor positioning and awkward motions. Improved posture can improve one's health, physical fitness and body alignment, as the spine and supporting muscles are positioned such that they are not strained and are efficiently and safely utilized. However, despite these known drawbacks and the advantages of proper posture, it is very common for individuals to slouch, lean or contort their bodies while in a standing or seated for periods of time. This is due to the fact that proper posture is a learned behavior and one that must be properly taught and exercised.

[0006] The present invention pertains to a functional article of neckwear and associated method of use that addresses the need for a means to teach proper posture, both while standing and while seated. The present invention comprises a device that provides tactile feedback for the wearer to alert the wearer of a departure from proper back position and postured alignment. The tactile feedback and continued use of the neckwear develops new learned behavior that supplants previous departures from and natural tendencies to disregard paying attention to proper posturing. It is desired that the present article and method of use improve overall posture of the individual wearer, as well as whole body health associated with a correction in spine alignment and shoulder and back positioning while seated and standing.

[0007] Devices have been developed in the art and in the medical industry for correcting posture abnormalities and for training proper posture; however these devices are generally intrusive on the individual wearer or do not provide a means to teach proper posture, and instead provide a form of crutch that resists slouching. Such devices are generally categorized as torso structures or support devices that physically correct posture or provide a means to support the individual's back or neck. Few devices are available to teach posture based on feedback or training, without the use of a back pad, torso strap or similar structure that does not develop the proper techniques and habits required to maintain posture without such supporting devices in place. The present invention is therefore submitted as a means to teach proper back alignment to an individual wearer by means of tactile feedback along the centerline of the wearer's back, wherein positional departures of a beaded extension provide notice that the wearer's body is misaligned or the wearer is slouching.

[0008] 2. Description of the Prior Art

[0009] Devices have been disclosed in the prior art that relate to posture and neckwear devices. These include devices that have been patented and published in patent application publications. These devices generally relate to necklace pendants and means for stabilizing the frontal portion of a necklace using a weighted and elongated rear portion. They are not readily adapted or intended for teaching and adapted behavior for proper posture mechanics. The devices deemed most relevant to the present disclosure are herein described for the purposes of highlighting and differentiating the unique aspects of the present invention, and further highlighting the drawbacks existing in the prior art.

[0010] Specifically, U.S. Published Patent Application Publication No. 2008/0256796 to Fix is one such device that discloses an improved method and device for stabilizing a necklace while on a wearer, comprising a necklace having a weight attached to the necklace at the nape of the wearer's neck. The weight extends downwardly from the necklace to maintain the orientation of the front portion of the necklace while being donned, such that the front of the necklace does not wrap around or shift around the user's neck. The weight is one that is mounted on an extender that connects to the necklace at a connecting means, such as a clasp or hook and eye. The extender is positioned rear of the wearer's neck, wherein the weight may comprise a decorative or jewelry type item. The method of the Fix device relates to maintaining a necklace forward orientation, and the device of the Fix invention does not necessarily provide a sufficiently elongated structure along the wearer's back that the wearer may feel its position relative to his or her spin and adjust their posture accordingly. The present invention provides an elongated and weighted back portion that provides a plurality of beads or textured objects along its length such that posture and alignment of one's back may be actively monitored as the back portion is vertically suspended.

[0011] U.S. Pat. No. 7,552,600 to Fields is another device that describes a neck ornament and attachment that resists improper placement of the ornament with respect to its frontal positioning. The device comprises a circumscribing element around the neck, a coupling device and an anchoring device. The anchoring device is positioned along the posterior of the circumscribing element and extends therefrom to anchor proper positioning thereof without the use of adhesive or

external support. Several embodiments for the anchoring device are proposed having various ornamental features and means of attaching to the circumscribing necklace element. While providing a necklace having a rear weight element, the Fields device is designed to prevent displacement of the necklace while in use. Its anchor extension length and elements thereon are not well adapted to or conceived to create a means to adjust and monitor a wearer's posture.

[0012] Further, U.S. Published Patent Application Publication No. 2005/0081560 to McCarrick discloses a religious object or scapular, comprising a necklace having a pendant and a piece of wool. The pendant includes a cavity and the piece of wool cloth is disposed within the cavity. The overall structure is one of a religious scapular comprising a necklace having a first and second chain, wherein the second chain connects at its ends together and to the first chain, which further connects to the pendant. The structure of the device is one having a circumferential necklace and a rearward chain extending therefrom, however the McCarrick device is related to a religious ornament or carrying piece, and is not suited or design for posture alignment or for an article of neckwear that teaches proper spinal posture while in operation.

[0013] Finally, U.S. Pat. No. 6,719,640 to Madole discloses a posture training device when the user is engaging in certain activities, including swinging a golf club. The device comprises an elongated rigid member having a securement element extending therefrom and adapted to affix around the torso of a wearer. The rigid member length is placed along the wearer's back just above or terminating at the user's waist, while the upper portion of the member extends above the user's head but remains unattached thereto. The rigid member provides tactile stimulation for proper back alignment and behavior modification. While disclosing a device related to posture training, the Madole device is limited to a rigid element that affixes to the wearer's back and is more suited for sport training activities. The present invention provides a more subtle and readily wearable neckwear article that trains posture alignment using tactile feedback from an elongated hanging portion extending from the neckwear along the wearer's back.

[0014] The present invention provides a functional necklace having a rear extension element that is adapted to span a significant length along the wearer's back. If the wearer bends improperly from sitting or standing by curving or twisting his or her back rather than keeping it straight, the extension changes its position by shifting along the wearer's back towards the sides and front of the user. If the wearer is slouching while seated against the chair, the wearer will be able to feel the extension against his or her back, which can immediately remind the wearer to resume good posture by repositioning his or her chest and shoulders to prevent contact between the lower back and the chair. In this way, the present invention provides a means of tactile feedback for behavior modification and posture training, which promotes overall back and body health. It is submitted that the present invention substantially diverges in design elements from the prior art, and consequently it is clear that there is a need in the art for an improvement to existing posture training devices. In this regard the instant invention substantially fulfills these needs.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0015] In view of the foregoing disadvantages inherent in the known types of posture training devices now present in the prior art, the present invention provides a new article of neckwear and method of posture training, wherein the same can be utilized for providing convenience for the user when aligning and training proper posture using a non-intrusive and tactile feedback neckwear extension.

[0016] It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a new and improved posture training device that has all of the advantages of the prior art and none of the disadvantages.

[0017] It is another object of the present invention to provide a posture training device that is an article of decorative neckwear having a weighted frontal portion and an elongated extension portion that is adapted to provide tactile feedback along the wearer's back for teaching proper seated and standing posture.

[0018] Another object of the present invention is to provide a posture training device that does not support or restrain the wearer in any way, and alternately teaches and exercises the user using only tactile feedback for modifying behavior naturally and without external support.

[0019] Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a posture training device that is accompanied by a method of posture training that comprises tactile feedback along an individual's back based on a hanging extension article that changes position or bears into the wearer if improper posture is realized.

[0020] A final object of the present invention is to provide a decorative neckwear article that is both fashionable and functional, and further one that may be provided in a unisex or his and hers variation. The neckwear may include decorative features and weighted pendants that are both visually appealing and functionally attached.

[0021] Other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0022] Although the characteristic features of this invention will be particularly pointed out in the claims, the invention itself and manner in which it may be made and used may be better understood after a review of the following description, taken in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein like numeral annotations are provided throughout.

[0023] FIG. **1** shows a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of the present posture training neckwear device.

[0024] FIG. **2** shows a perspective view of the rear extension portion f the posture training neckwear device in a working position.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0025] Reference is made herein to the attached drawings. Like reference numerals are used throughout the drawings to depict like or similar elements of the posture training device and method. For the purposes of presenting a brief and clear description of the present invention, the preferred embodiment will be discussed as used for training and modifying behavior of a wearer to assume proper posture at all times

while seated and standing. The figures are intended for representative purposes only and should not be considered to be limiting in any respect.

[0026] Referring now to FIG. **1**, there is shown a perspective view of the posture training device of the present invention, wherein a pendant neckwear is shown. The neckwear comprises a frontal necklace portion **11** that connects around the neck of a wearer, along with a rear extension portion **12** that extends from a connection point **16** along the posterior of the wearer's neck and down the wearer's back, using the weight of the extension and gravity to create a vertically aligned member along the back of the wearer. The frontal necklace portion **11** comprises an elongated or plurality of connected and elongated necklace portions **15** that form a continuous loop around the wearer's neck. A weighted pendant **20** is attached to the front necklace portion and is adapted to provide a decorative and functional member that acts as a balancing element or counterweight for the rear extension portion **12**. The pendant **20** places tension on the necklace so the extension connection point **16** is not prone to displace along the posterior of the wearer's neck, thus keeping the rear extension **12** aligned with the centerline of the wearer's back.

[0027] The rear extension portion **12** comprises a singular, elongated structure **13** that is adapted to support a plurality of textured or shaped objects **14** along its length. The objects **14** are preferably shaped beads or polished stones of varying size and shape. The goal of the extension **12** is to provide a length of objects that provides tactile feedback to the user when worn and while the extension is in contact with the user's back. The extension **12** is positioned along the centerline of the wearer's back, wherein the user assumes proper and upright posture to maintain the centerline position of the extension **12**. This keeps the extension **12** along the wearer's spine, and deviations therefrom alert the wearer that he or she may be twisting, contorting or slouching during movement, which allows the user to reestablish a proper spinal posture position to realign the extension **12**. The extension further provides a means of feedback while seated. Proper seated posture includes sitting with one's back straight, shoulder back and the buttocks touching the back of the chair. During periods of slouching, the wearer's back and thus the extension **12** depresses against the seat back. The feeling of the extension objects **14** bearing into the wearer's back is an indication to sit upright and not to slouch.

[0028] Through this extension member, which remains stationary at its upper connection **16** and is allowed to freely sway or move along the wearer's back, feedback through touch is provided for the wearer. Poor posture, arching of the back and slouching causes the extension member to stray from its centerline position around the wearer's back towards his or her frontal torso. Thus, as this occurs, the extension is felt by the wearer so he or she can correct the deviations from proper back and shoulder positioning. This prevents poor seated and standing positioning of the back, prevents twisting or slouching, and further allows the wearer to remember to bend his or her knees when picking up objects, as opposed to bending over. The extension readily moves during this motion and thus is an indication to the wearer not to engage in a specific motion or position that compromises the wearer's back.

[0029] The end of the extension member **12** may also include a weighted object **17** that eliminates any slack along the member length. This object **17** may include larger beads or stones, or alternatively a weighted pendant. The aligned objects **14** along the extension length are sufficient for providing feedback to the wearer by themselves and without a weighted end **17**; however the weighted end **17** may be included to increase the extension member's **12** willingness to deviate from its centerline position along the wearer's back, making the overall tactile feedback device more sensitive to movement.

[0030] Referring now to FIG. **2**, there is shown a view of the present tactile feedback device of the present invention in a working position and aligned along the back of the wearer. As shown, the rear extension portion **12** of the device extends from a connection point **16** with the necklace portions **15** of the frontal necklace portion. This connection may comprise a clasp, hook and eye or similar connecting means commonly utilized in the art of jewelry articles. The connection point **16** is adapted to be aligned along the posterior of the wearer's neck **19**, while the necklace surrounds the neck and rests on the wearer's shoulders **18**. Once aligned, the extension portion **12** rests against the wearer's back and provides feedback thereto when moving relative to the wearer's centerline. The objects **14** and optional weighted end **17** provide a means of contact and increased means of movement sensitivity, respectively.

[0031] It is recognized that correct posture is important to overall body wellness and to prevent injuries caused by awkward movements or positioning of the back and neck, including sitting, standing and even while lying down. It can be difficult, however, to continually monitor and maintain a straightened back with one's shoulders back, as sitting or standing in this posture can easily escape one's attention throughout the course of the day. This can lead to strain and injury, and even back and neck problems related to the body compensating for this improper positioning or movement. These injuries or ailments can be especially difficult to overcome once they have occurred, requiring physical therapy or chiropractic adjustments to align or heal the injured back and neck. For this reason, there exists a need for a means of teaching and monitoring proper posture that can be easily deployed and worn throughout the day without being intrusive on the wearer's normal activities. Braces and other means of correction provide a crutch that does not allow users to be taught or to correct themselves. Therefore, the present invention is disclosed for providing a tactile feedback device that provides notice to the wearer upon initiating a poor back position. The present device also provides individuals with a trendy and stylish way to accessorize their outfits while also functionally monitoring their posture while being worn.

[0032] Further disclosed is a method of monitoring and correcting posture utilizing a tactile feedback device having an elongated extension structure that is aligned with the centerline of the wearer's back. The method comprises utilizing a suspended extension member initiating from the posterior of the user's neck and extending along a majority of the user's back along his or her back centerline. The method contemplates placing or adorning the length of the extension member with various shaped or textured objects that are readily noticeable upon contact with the user's back and skin. Finally, the method comprises suspending the extension member and utilizing the tactile feedback created by movement of the extension along the wearer's back as a means of notice that the user has deviated from proper back alignment and posture. The method further contemplates this tactile feedback while seated, wherein the extension bears into the wearer's back when the wearer slouches and thus contacts the upstanding seatback portion of the seat. The wearer thus monitors the position of the extension member for maintaining proper back alignment and for maintaining a proper posture through movement and during periods of stationary non-movement.

[0033] Overall, the present device and method of maintaining posture provide a means to affect normal behavior and

body positioning. The device and method is a behavioral modification and teaching device, such that one's body position may be monitored and adjusted for proper alignment and posturing of the body while seated and standing. This allows the user to adjust his or her body to maintain the extension member position, utilizing no support or means of crutching the user during this exercise. Thus, the user learns what body positioning creates proper posture and thus is taught to maintain this positioning over time, wherein the device may be removed or utilized continuously as required. The structure of the device is one that is both decorative and functional, adding to its appeal and concealing its true purpose if desired. It provides a gentle alert for the wearer to assume correct posture throughout various movements and positions. The feel of the back beads can also continuously serve to remind the wearer to correct her total body posture

[0034] The necklace portion includes a weighted pendant that can hang down in the front of the wearer on a cotton, silk, or hemp chain, or any similarly decorative member utilized in necklace structures. The pendant and overall necklace may be formed of different shapes, colors, and sizes to suit user preference. No matter the design, however, the pendant is slightly weighted to provide counterweight to the extension member along the wearer's back. The back of the necklace is preferably a string of weighted beads that runs vertically down the wearer's back. If the wearer is bending improperly from sitting or standing by curving or twisting the back rather than keeping the back straight, the extension changes its position by shifting along the wearer's back and towards the wearer's front. If the wearer is further slouching against the seat being occupying, the wearer will be able to feel the beads against his or her back, which can immediately remind the wearer to resume a postured stance.

[0035] It is therefore submitted that the instant invention has been shown and described in what is considered to be the most practical and preferred embodiments. It is recognized, however, that departures may be made within the scope of the invention and that obvious modifications will occur to a person skilled in the art. With respect to the above description then, it is to be realized that the optimum dimensional relationships for the parts of the invention, to include variations in size, materials, shape, form, function and manner of operation, assembly and use, are deemed readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art, and all equivalent relationships to those illustrated in the drawings and described in the specification are intended to be encompassed by the present invention.

[0036] Therefore, the foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown and described, and accordingly, all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.

I claim:

1) A posture training and tactile feedback device, comprising:

an article of neckwear having a frontal necklace portion and a rear extension portion;

said frontal necklace portion comprising an elongated length or plurality of lengths forming a path around a wearer's neck and comprising a weighted frontal pendant;

said rear extension portion connecting to said frontal necklace portion and positioned opposite of said frontal pendant and midway along said necklace length, said connection adapted to be positioned along said user's neck posterior;

said rear extension portion comprising an elongated length adapted to hang along the centerline of a wearer's back from said neck posterior;

said rear extension portion having a plurality of objects along its length for providing tactile feedback to said wearer upon movement or deviation from said centerline, wherein said objects contact said wearer's back for alerting of improper posturing or movement.

2) The device of claim **1**, wherein said rear extension objects further comprise beads of various size and shape.

3) The device of claim **1**, wherein said rear extension objects further comprise smooth stones of various size and shape.

4) The device of claim **1**, wherein said rear extension further comprises a weighted object along its terminal end for increasing said extension movement and thus posture deviation sensitivity.

5) The device of claim **1**, wherein said rear extension connection point further comprises a means of removable connection for said rear extension member.

6) A method of maintain and training proper posture, comprising the steps of:

supporting an elongated and freely hanging extension member along the centerline of a wearer's back from a necklace, wherein said extension connection to said necklace is positioned at said wearer's neck posterior;

providing a weighted pendant along said necklace forward portion to maintain said connection along said neck posterior and counteract said extension member movement;

utilizing a plurality of shaped objects along said extension member length for providing tactile feedback to said wearer;

utilizing movement of said extension member and said tactile feedback as a means to monitor body position and posture while seated, standing or bending over.

7) The method of claim **6**, further comprising the steps of:

utilizing the sensation of said extension member bearing into said wearer while seated in a chair as a means to monitor posture, wherein said extension member bears into said user upon slouching and said member compressing into said chair seatback.

8) The method of claim **6**, further comprising the steps of:

placing a weighted object at said extension member terminal end to increase said member movement sensitivity.

9) The method of claim **6**, further comprising the steps of:

utilizing the tactile feedback means of the extension and the weighted front portion as both a functional and decorative article of neckwear.

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