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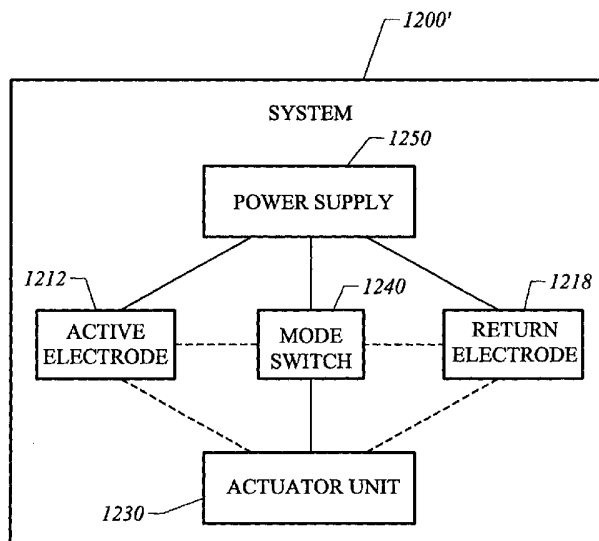
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(54) Title: ARTICULATED ELECTROSURGICAL PROBE



(57) Abstract: Systems, apparatus and methods for selectively applying electrical energy to body tissue in order to ablate, contract, coagulate, or otherwise modify a target tissue or organ of a patient. An electrosurgical apparatus of the invention includes a shaft (1202) having an articulated electrode support (1210) at a distal end of the shaft, the electrode support bearing an active electrode (1212) on an inferior surface of the electrode support, a return electrode (1218) in the form of a tube, and an electrically insulating return tube tray affixed to the tube, the tube adapted for delivering an electrically conductive fluid between the active electrode and the return electrode. The probe can adopt a closed configuration or an open configuration. The closed configuration is adapted for clamping, coagulating, and ablating a target tissue while the apparatus is operating in a sub-ablation mode, while the open configuration is adapted for severing the target tissue via molecular dissociation of tissue components.



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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 IPC(7) :A61B 18/14
 US CL :606/41, 48, 50, 51
 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED
 Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
 U.S. : 606/41, 48, 50, 51

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

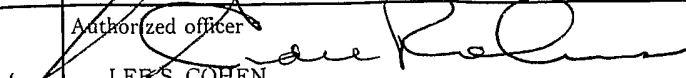
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,217,460 A (KNOEPFLER) 08 JUNE 1993, see Figure 5.	20-22,24, 37-40,51, 70,74,75, 78,80-86, 94,95,100, 101,104, 105,110, 112
X -- Y	US 5,702,390 A (AUSTIN et al) 30 DECEMBER 1997, see Figure 10.	58,62,63, 66,68,69, 80,82-87, 89,93,94, 100,101, 104-107, 110 ----- 6 4

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
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"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search 19 MARCH 2003	Date of mailing of the international search report 27 MAR 2003
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C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X -- Y	US 6,096,037 A (MULIER et al) 01 AUGUST 2000, see Figure 10.	1,2,4,5, 7,10, 12-14,16, 17,20-24, 26,37-40, 45,51-56, 70,73-75, 78,80-82, 85,86,89, 94-97, 99-102, 104,105, 110-117, 120 ----- 6,8,9,11, 18,19,25, 30-32, 90-92
X -- Y	US 6,217,575 A (DEVORE et al) 17 APRIL 2001, see Figure 8.	1,2,4,5, 7,10, 12-16, 113-117, 120 ----- 8,9,11,18, 19
X --P Y	US 6,273,887 A (YAMAUCHI et al) 14 AUGUST 2001, see entire document.	58,62,63, 66,68,69, 80,82-87, 89,93,94, 100,101, 104-107, 110 ----- 64