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- (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US):
MYNOSYS CELLULAR DEVICES, INC. [US/US];
1061 Eastshore Highway, Suite 201, Albany, CA 94710 (US).
- (72) Inventor; and
- (75) Inventor/Applicant (for US only): KELLER, Christo-
pher, Guild [US/US]; 905 Pomona Avenue, El Cerrito, CA
94530 (US).
- (74) Agents: HULSE, Robert, A. et al.; Fenwick & West LLP,
Silicon Valley Center, 801 California Street, Mountain
View, CA 94041 (US).

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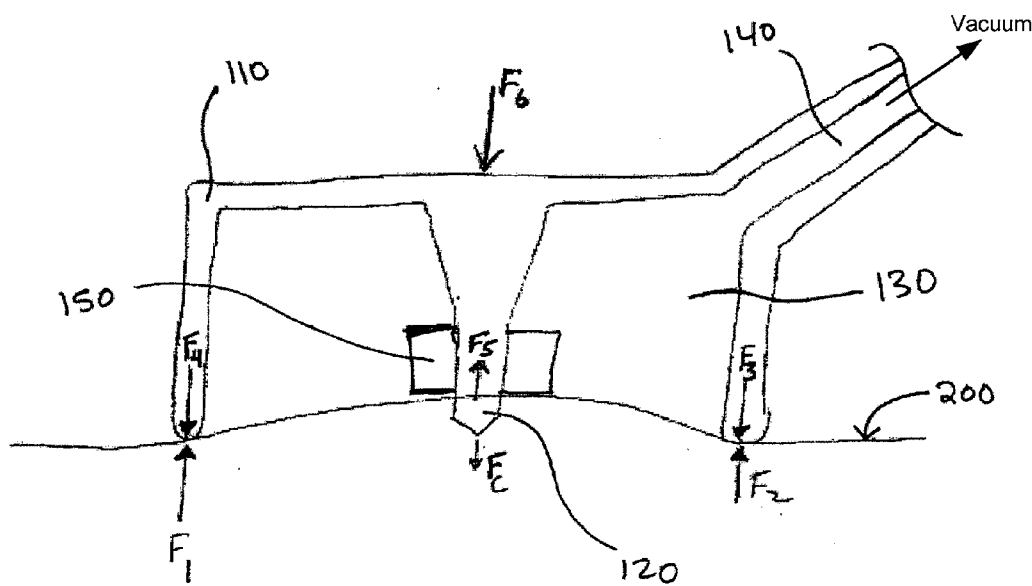


Fig. 1B

(57) Abstract: A vacuum-assisted microscale cutting instrument applies a vacuum pressure to pull an area of tissue towards a microknife. The cutting instrument can be configured to make one or more stabbing cuts or a slicing cut, and the housing of the instrument is shaped to address any of a variety of tissue geometries to allow a vacuum seal to be created therewith. To achieve a consistent cut depth in the tissue, a depth stop may be used to prevent the knife from cutting deeper than a predetermined depth.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
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 USPC: 606/167,170,181,184
 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. : 606/167,170,181,184;600/583

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

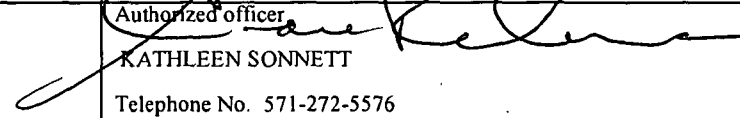
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X --- Y	US 6,210,420 B1 (MAUZE et al) 3 April 2001 (03.04.2001), column 5 lines 35- column 6 line 21 and figures 7, 8.	1,3-10,12,13,16,17,19-21,29,31-36,39,41,43,45,46 ----- 2,11,14,18,22-28,30,37,38,40,42,44,47
Y	US 6,306,104 B1 (CUNNINGHAM et al) 23 October 2001 (23.10.2001), column 12 line 41- column 13 line 18 and figures 23, 24.	2,14,22,30,42,44,47
Y	US 5,413,564 A (SILVER et al) 9 May 1995 (09.05.1995), abstract.	23-28

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

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Name and mailing address of the ISA/US:
 Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US
 Commissioner for Patents
 P.O. Box 1450
 Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
 Facsimile No. (571) 273-3201

Authorized officer:

 KATHLEEN SONNETT
 Telephone No. 571-272-5576