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- (54) **IMPLANTABLE PROSTHESIS FOR SOFT TISSUE REPAIR**
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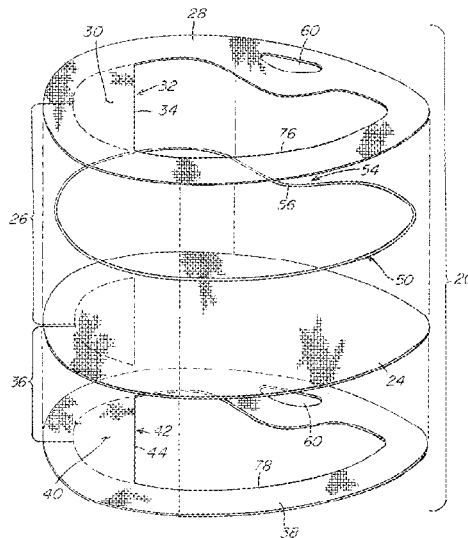
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(57) **ABSTRACT**
An implantable prosthesis for repairing or augmenting anatomical defects, including an inguinal hernia. The prosthesis may include a repair fabric having a body portion and a pocket on one side of the body portion to facilitate deployment and/or placement of the prosthesis at the defect site. For some applications, such as a reversible prosthesis, a second pocket may be provided on the opposite side of the body portion. Each pocket may be configured to receive a sufficient length of one or more fingers of an individual for deploying and/or positioning the prosthesis. A support member may be provided to help deploy the repair fabric at the surgical site and/or help inhibit folding or buckling of the repair fabric.

16 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



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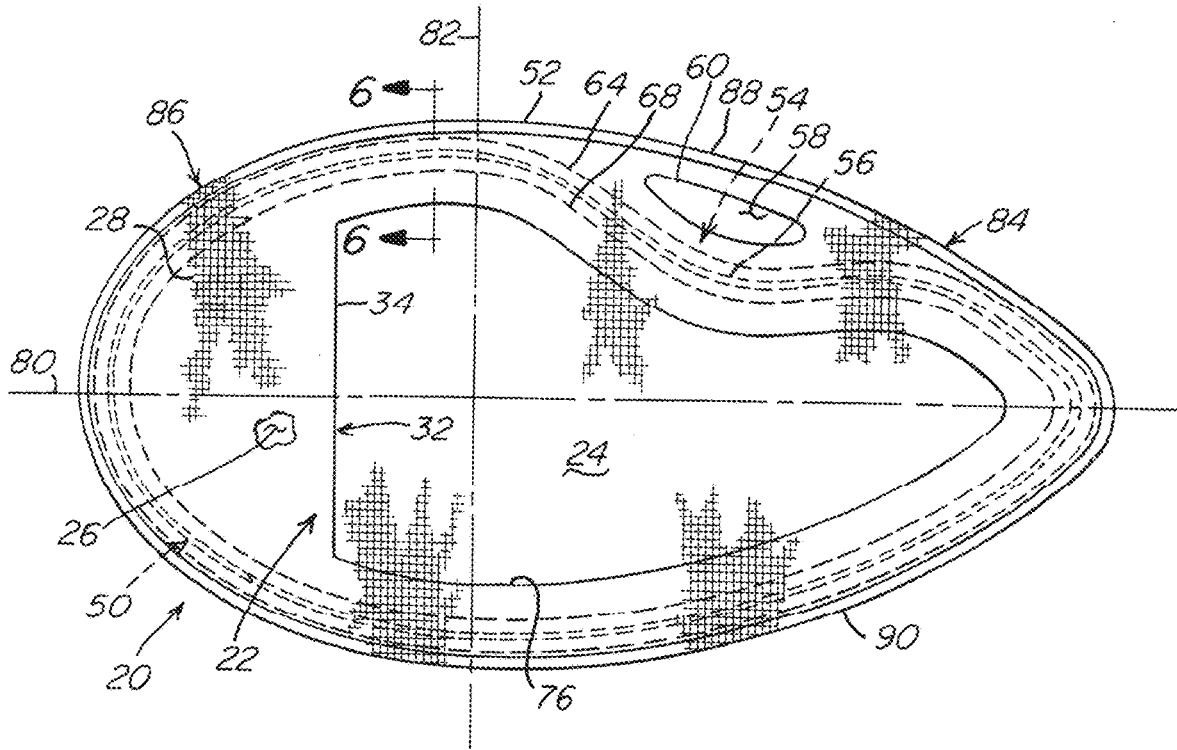


Fig. 1

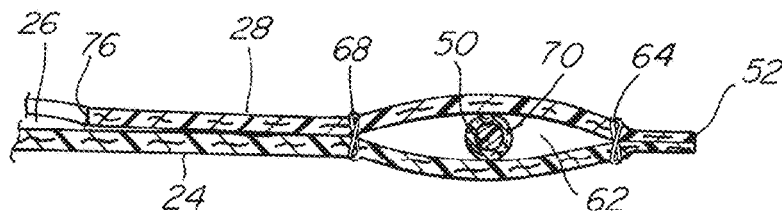


Fig. 6

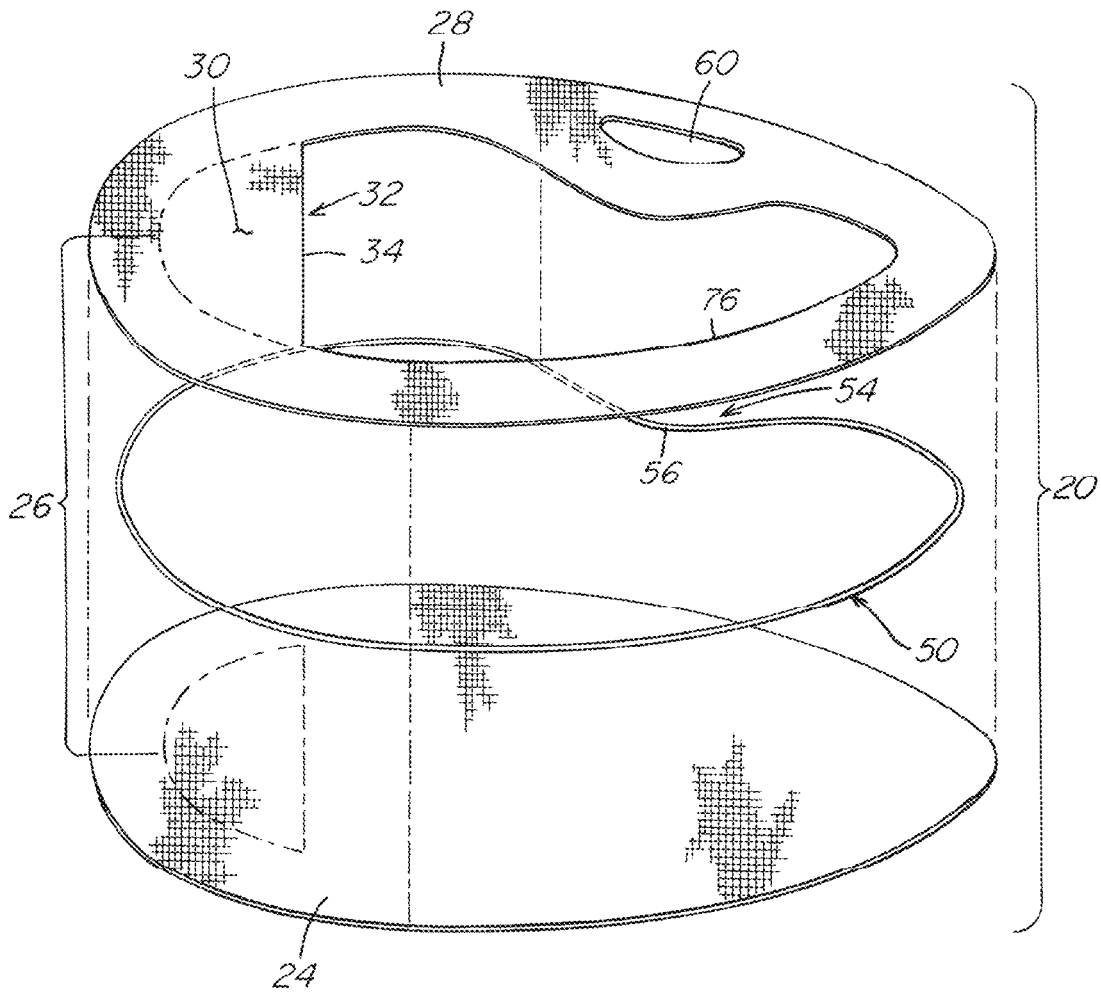


Fig. 2

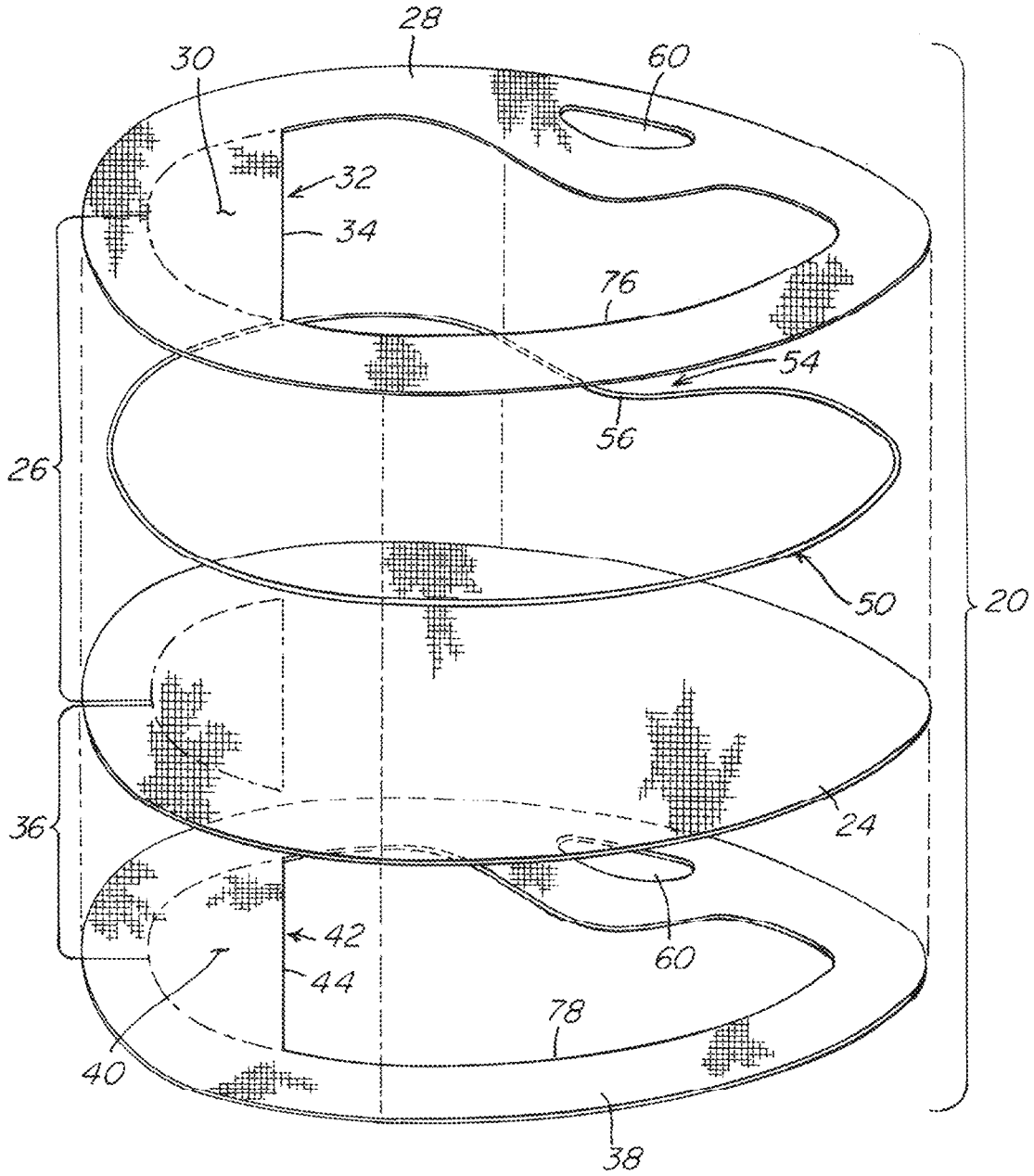


Fig. 4

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IMPLANTABLE PROSTHESIS FOR SOFT TISSUE REPAIR

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 14/387,073, filed Sep. 22, 2014, which is a 371 national stage of International Patent Application No. PCT/US2013/032241, filed Mar. 15, 2013, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/614,280, filed Mar. 22, 2012. The entire contents of these applications are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

The present invention relates to an implantable prosthesis, and more particularly, to a prosthesis for repairing or augmenting defects and/or weaknesses in a soft tissue or muscle wall.

2. Discussion of Related Art

Various prosthetic repair materials are known for repairing and reinforcing anatomical defects, such as soft tissue and muscle wall hernias. For example, ventral and inguinal hernias are commonly repaired using a sheet of biocompatible fabric, such as a knitted polypropylene mesh (e.g., BARD MESH). Once inserted into a patient, the fabric is typically sutured, stapled, tacked or otherwise provisionally anchored in place over, under or within the defect. Tissue integration with the fabric, such as by tissue ingrowth into the fabric, eventually completes the repair.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a method and prosthesis for repairing and/or reinforcing soft tissue and muscle walls.

SUMMARY

The present invention relates to an implantable prosthesis for repairing an anatomical defect, such as a tissue or muscle wall hernia, including an inguinal hernia.

In one embodiment, an implantable prosthesis is provided for repairing a tissue or muscle wall defect. The implantable prosthesis comprises a patch of repair fabric including a body portion that is constructed and arranged to cover the tissue or muscle wall defect, and first and second pockets to facilitate deployment and/or placement of the prosthesis at the tissue or muscle wall defect. The first pocket is located on a first side of the body portion and the second pocket is located on a second side of the body portion opposite the first side.

In another embodiment, an implantable prosthesis is provided for repairing a tissue or muscle wall defect. The implantable prosthesis comprises a patch of repair fabric including a body portion that is constructed and arranged to cover the tissue or muscle wall defect, and at least one pocket to facilitate deployment and/or placement of the prosthesis at the tissue or muscle wall defect. The patch has an oval shape with a major axis and a minor axis. The patch includes an obtuse end portion and an acute end portion with the obtuse end portion being larger than the acute end portion. The at least one pocket is located at the obtuse end portion of the patch.

Various embodiments of the present invention may provide certain advantages and may overcome certain draw-

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backs of prior prostheses. Embodiments of the invention may not share the same advantages, and those that do may not share them under all circumstances.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Various embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a plan view of an implantable prosthesis for soft tissue repair according to one illustrative embodiment;

FIG. 2 is an exploded perspective view of the implantable prosthesis of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a plan view of an implantable prosthesis for soft tissue repair according to another illustrative embodiment;

FIG. 4 is an exploded perspective view of the implantable prosthesis of FIG. 3;

FIG. 5 is a cross sectional view taken along section line 5-5 of FIG. 3; and

FIG. 6 is a cross sectional view taken along section line 6-6 of FIG. 1.

It should be understood that aspects of the invention are described herein with reference to the figures, which show illustrative embodiments in accordance with aspects of the invention. The illustrative embodiments described herein are not necessarily intended to show all aspects of the invention, but rather are used to describe a few illustrative embodiments. Thus, aspects of the invention are not intended to be construed narrowly in view of the illustrative embodiments. It should be appreciated, then, that the various concepts and embodiments discussed herein may be implemented in any of numerous ways, as the disclosed concepts and embodiments are not limited to any particular manner of implementation. In addition, it should be understood that aspects of the invention may be used alone or in any suitable combination with other aspects of the invention.

The invention is directed to an implantable prosthesis for repairing or augmenting anatomical defects, and is particularly suitable for the repair of defects in, and weaknesses of, soft tissue and muscle walls or other anatomical regions. The prosthesis may promote tissue or muscle ingrowth thereto and subsequently strengthen the area of the defect. The prosthesis may be configured to provide a surgeon an ability to readily deploy and/or manipulate the prosthesis into position.

For ease of understanding, and without limiting the scope of the invention, the prosthesis is described below particularly in connection with the repair of an inguinal hernia. It should be understood, however, that the prosthesis is not so limited and may be employed in other anatomical procedures, as should be apparent to one of skill in the art. For example, and without limitation, the prosthesis may be employed for ventral hernias, chest or abdominal wall reconstruction, or large defects, such as those that may occur in obese patients. The prosthesis may include one or more features, each independently or in combination, contributing to such attributes.

The invention is more particularly directed to a prosthesis that includes a repair fabric having a body portion that is configured to cover or extend across the defect opening or weakness when the body portion is placed against the defect. The prosthesis may be in the form of a patch, although the prosthesis may employ other configurations as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

The prosthesis includes at least one pocket located on one side of the body portion to facilitate deployment and/or placement of the repair fabric. The pocket may be config-

ured to receive a sufficient length of one or more fingers of an individual's hand (or a suitable surgical instrument) for deploying and/or placing the prosthesis. The pocket may be located at an end portion of the prosthesis. However, the pocket may employ any suitable configuration and/or may be located at any suitable portion of the prosthesis as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

The pocket may be created with a layer of fabric that is attached to the body portion in a manner that forms the pocket therebetween. An opening may be provided for permitting access of an individual's fingers (or surgical instrument) therethrough and into the pocket. The opening may be located along an edge of the layer of fabric. Alternatively, the opening may be formed through the layer of fabric creating the pocket.

For some applications, it may be desirable to employ a prosthesis that is reversible, such as for both left hand and right hand applications, in which the prosthesis may be flipped or turned over depending on the application. For such applications, the prosthesis may include pockets located on opposite sides of the body portion so that a pocket is available for deploying and/or positioning the prosthesis regardless of its orientation for the particular application. The pockets may be located on opposite sides of the same portion, such as end portions, of the prosthesis or at different portions of the prosthesis.

The prosthesis may have a non-circular shape, such as a generally oval, elliptical or egg shape, that is suitable for augmenting or repairing an inguinal hernia. The prosthesis may be configured with a generally oval shape (e.g., egg shape) having a narrower or acute end portion and a wider or obtuse end portion. Each pocket may be provided at the obtuse end portion of the prosthesis, although other pocket arrangements are contemplated as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

If desired, any pocket that will not be employed during the repair procedure may be removed by the user prior to insertion of the prosthesis into the patient to reduce the amount of material being implanted into the patient. For example, and without limitation, the layer of material forming an unused pocket may be trimmed or cut away from the prosthesis.

The repair fabric and pocket forming layers may be formed of a tissue infiltratable material, such as a knit fabric, or may be composed of a solid or substantially non-porous material. The repair fabric may be formed of one or more layers of the same or dissimilar material. The repair fabric and/or pocket layers may be formed with portions that are tissue infiltratable and other portions that are non-tissue infiltratable, providing selected areas of the repair device with different tissue ingrowth and adhesion resistant properties. The repair fabric and/or pocket layers may be formed of non-absorbable material, absorbable material or a combination of absorbable and non-absorbable materials.

The prosthesis may include a member, such as a support or stiffening member, or a support assembly that is attached to or integrated with the repair fabric to facilitate manipulation and deployment of the prosthesis at the surgical site and/or help inhibit folding or buckling of the repair fabric. The support member or support assembly may completely surround or substantially surround the body portion, such as in a ring-like manner, to help deploy and/or hold the body portion in an open or spread out configuration for covering the defect. The support member may have a resiliency or other property that allows the support member to deform from an initial shape and then return to the initial shape to return the body portion to the spread out configuration. For

example, and without limitation, the support member may be rollable, foldable or otherwise collapsible, when the repair fabric is reduced in size for delivery to the repair site, and may spring back, either automatically or upon the influence of a force (e.g., body heat where the support is formed of a shape memory material, such as NITINOL) to its initial expanded shape on deployment at the repair site, influencing the prosthesis to assume its unfurled or spread out configuration.

The support member may be formed of a monofilament that has been preformed into the desired shape or may be placed into the desired shape during assembly of the prosthesis. The support member may be comprised of a non-absorbable or an absorbable material.

A support assembly may include a support or stiffening member that is surrounded by material that separates the member from the layer of material. The support member may be located in a sleeve of material, such as a tube of fabric. The sleeve may include interstices or openings that allow tissue or muscle ingrowth and/or facilitate absorption of an absorbable support member.

The prosthesis may be placed at the defect site using an open surgical procedure, or by laparoscopically passing the device through a cannula to the defect. The repair fabric may be flexible, allowing reduction of the prosthesis, such as by folding, rolling or otherwise collapsing the repair fabric, into a slender configuration suitable for delivery to the defect site. Upon delivery, the repair fabric may automatically open to an unfurled or spread out configuration, or may be unfolded, unrolled or otherwise deployed by the surgeon to an unfurled or spread out configuration suitable to repair the weakness or defect. The surgeon may insert one or more fingers (or surgical instrument) into a pocket to deploy and/or place the prosthesis in the desired position at the defect site.

FIGS. 1-2 illustrate one embodiment of an implantable prosthesis **20** for repairing or augmenting soft tissue and muscle wall defects, such as an inguinal hernia. The prosthesis **20** includes a repair fabric of implantable, biologically compatible material with a body portion **22** that is configured to cover or extend across a defect. As shown, the prosthesis is configured as a patch that may be used as an underlay or an overlay. The prosthesis may be configured with any desired strength, flexibility, tissue integration, adhesion resistance and/or other characteristics suitable for the repair as should be apparent to one of skill. Although the prosthesis is described in connection with a patch-type embodiment, the prosthesis may include a plug, a combination plug and patch, and other suitable arrangements for mending the defect.

The repair fabric includes at least one layer of tissue infiltratable material that permits or is otherwise susceptible to tissue ingrowth. In one embodiment, the repair fabric includes a first layer **24** of a biologically compatible, flexible material that includes a plurality of interstices or openings which allow sufficient tissue or muscle ingrowth to secure the prosthesis to host tissue or muscle after implantation.

To facilitate deployment and/or placement of the prosthesis at the defect site, the prosthesis may include at least one pocket **26** located on one side of the body portion. In this manner, a surgeon may use the pocket to locate the prosthesis in the desired position at the defect site. In one embodiment, the pocket **26** may be configured to receive a length of one or more fingers that extends from the fingertip to a portion of the finger extending from about the first

knuckle to about the second knuckle, although other suitably sized pockets may be employed, as the present invention is not limited in this respect.

In one embodiment, a first pocket **26** is created by attaching a second layer **28** of material to the first layer **24** in a manner to form the pocket therebetween. As shown, a portion **30** of the second layer **28** extends across a portion of the first layer **24** to create the pocket. The layers of fabric may be attached using any suitable technique as should be apparent to one of skill in the art. For example, and without limitation, the layers may be attached together with one or more stitch lines; the layers may be bonded together by melting the layers at specific locations or in a specified pattern; sonic, induction, vibration or infrared/laser welding the layers; or using a suitable bonding agent.

To gain access to the interior of the pocket, an opening **32** may be provided for receiving an individual's fingers or an instrument therethrough and into the pocket. The opening **32** may be located along an edge **34** of the second layer **28** of fabric. For example, and without limitation, an unattached length or segment of an edge of the second layer extends across a portion of the body portion to form the opening to the pocket. If desired, the opening may be formed through the layer of fabric creating the pocket. However, it is to be appreciated that the prosthesis may include any suitable opening that allows access to the pocket as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

As illustrated, the pocket **26** may be located at an end portion of the prosthesis. However, it is to be appreciated that the pocket may be located on any portion of the prosthesis suitable for deploying and/or positioning the prosthesis as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

For some applications, it may be desirable to employ a prosthesis that is reversible, such as for both left hand and right hand applications, in which the prosthesis is turned over from one side to the opposite side depending on the repair procedure. For such applications, the prosthesis may include pockets located on opposite sides of the body portion so that a pocket is available for deploying and/or positioning the prosthesis regardless of its orientation for the particular application. The pockets may be located on opposite sides of the same end portion of the prosthesis or at opposite end portions of the prosthesis.

In one illustrative embodiment shown in FIGS. **3-5**, a second pocket **36** is created by attaching a third layer **38** of material to the first layer **24** in a manner to form the second pocket therebetween. As shown, a portion **40** of the third layer **38** is configured to extend across a portion of the second surface of the first layer **24** to create the pocket. The layers of fabric may be attached using any suitable technique, such as those described above, as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

An opening **42** may be provided to gain access to the second pocket. Similar to the first pocket, the opening **42** may be located along an edge **44** of the third layer in a manner as described above.

If desired, any pocket that is not to be employed during the repair procedure may be removed by the user prior to insertion into the patient to reduce the amount of material being implanted into the patient. For example, and without limitation, the layer of material forming an unused pocket may be trimmed or cut away from the prosthesis. The layer of fabric creating a pocket may be formed of an absorbable or non-absorbable material or a combination of absorbable and non-absorbable materials as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

To help deploy the patch into a spread out configuration for covering a defect or weakness, it may be desirable to employ a patch that is sufficiently rigid so that it can be easily and effectively manipulated and positioned in the desired area, yet sufficiently flexible so that the patch may be adequately handled by the physician implanting the patch and tolerated by the patient receiving the patch.

In one illustrative embodiment as shown in FIGS. **1-4**, to balance the stiffness and flexibility characteristics, the prosthesis **20** may include a support member **50** to reinforce portions of the patch and to help deploy and/or hold the patch in a spread out configuration. The support member **50** may be coupled to the patch in any suitable manner, as the present invention is not limited in this respect. Suitable attachment methods include, but are not limited to, stitching, bonding, adhesive, and integral formation with the repair fabric of the patch, as will be discussed further below.

The support member **50** contributes to the stability of the patch, allowing it to deploy into and remain in a desired shape. For example, the support member may aid in returning the patch to a substantially unfurled or spread out configuration after the folded up or otherwise reduced prosthesis has been delivered to the repair site through either an open incision or a cannula. This stability facilitates deployment and placement of the patch by making it easy to handle. Also, this stability minimizes the tendency of the patch to fold, bend, or otherwise be dislocated. Difficulty in handling, dislocation or bending could require additional operative procedures and/or additional anchoring during implantation.

In one embodiment, the support member includes a continuous loop or ring positioned adjacent the outer margin of the patch. In the illustrative embodiment, the support member **50** is spaced inwardly from the outer peripheral edge **52** of the repair fabric. However, it should be appreciated that the present invention is not limited in this respect, as the support member **50** may be disposed at the peripheral edge and/or at discrete locations throughout the body of the patch.

As shown, the support member **50** may be configured to completely surround the body portion so as to help deploy and/or hold the body portion **22** in the spread out configuration for covering the defect. Alternatively, the support member may include one or more interruptions formed by spacing ends of the member apart. An interruption may be located at any suitable region of the prosthesis as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

In certain repair procedures, it may be desirable to configure the support member so as to accommodate a particular body structure at the repair site. In one embodiment, the support member may be configured to avoid the femoral vessels or cord structures during an inguinal hernia repair.

In one illustrative embodiment shown in FIGS. **1-4**, the support member **50** may include an indentation or notch **54** that is configured to accommodate the particular body structure. As shown, a portion **56** of the support member **50** may deviate inwardly away from the outer periphery **52** of the patch to form the indentation. The overall support member **50** may have a generally convex curvature as it extends about the body portion **22** while the portion **56** of the support member forming the indentation **54** may have a generally concave curvature. In this manner, the indentation **54** may have a curved shape that extends about the body structure when the prosthesis is implanted at the defect site.

In the illustrative embodiments shown in FIGS. **1** and **3**, a segment **58** of repair fabric may occupy the region of the patch at the indentation **54** between the support member **50** and the outer periphery **52**. In some instances, a surgeon may

wish to retain this segment **58** of repair fabric on the prosthesis for the repair procedure. For example, a surgeon may find it desirable to enhance tissue ingrowth in the vicinity of the femoral vessels in an inguinal hernia repair. In other instances, a surgeon may find it desirable to remove this segment of the repair fabric from the prosthesis.

As illustrated, one or both of the second and third layers of material may include a cutout **60** in the region of the indentation to reduce the amount of material that is implanted in a patient. Alternatively, the prosthesis **20** may be constructed so that the outer periphery **52** of the patch follows the contour of the support member **50** at the indentation **54** so that excess fabric material would not need to be removed by the surgeon.

In the illustrative embodiments shown in FIGS. **1-4**, the support member **50** includes a single indentation **54** for accommodating a body structure during a repair procedure. However, it is to be appreciated that two or more indentations may be provided so as to accommodate multiple structures in the repair site. Additionally, the support member may include a pair of indentations that are symmetrically positioned on the patch so that the prosthesis may be readily employed for various repairs, such as left and right side inguinal hernia repairs. However, it is to be understood that multiple indentations are not required to employ the prosthesis for repairing both left side and right side inguinal hernias. As one of ordinary skill in the art should appreciate, a prosthesis with a single indentation **54**, such as the prosthesis **20** shown in FIGS. **1-4**, may be employed for both left side and right side inguinal hernia repairs by turning over the prosthesis.

The support member **50** may be disposed on the patch in any suitable manner as the present invention is not limited in this respect. In one embodiment, as shown in FIGS. **2** and **4-6**, the support member **50** is sandwiched between the first and second layers **24**, **28** of material and may or may not be physically attached thereto. The support member **50** may be tightly or loosely held within a channel **62** between the first and second layers and formed by a pair of seams **64**, **68** joining the first and second layers.

In the illustrative embodiment, the channel **62** is formed by a pair of seams that follow the contour of the support member **50**. The seams may be formed by a series of stitches extending along the outside and inside edge of the support member **50** to keep it from moving with respect to the first and second layers **24**, **28**. Because of the rigidity of the support member **50**, one seam extending along one side of the support member may be sufficient.

It should be appreciated that the invention is not limited to any particular attachment method, as the first and second layers **24**, **28** may be attached along the seams **64**, **68** or other desired locations using other suitable techniques. For example, the layers may be bonded together by melting the layers at specific locations or in a specific pattern; sonic, induction, vibration, or infrared/laser welding the layers; or using a suitable bonding agent. The point or points of attachment may comprise any suitable pattern as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

Alternatively, rather than being sandwiched between the first and second layers, the support member **50** may overlie or underlie the repair fabric and may be attached, regardless of location, with stitches or a bonding agent, or fused with ultrasonic, induction, vibration, infrared/laser welding and the like. Alternatively, the support member **24** may be woven through at least one of the layers or integrally formed with one or both layers during fabrication of the layer itself.

In one illustrative embodiment shown in FIGS. **5** and **6**, the support or stiffening member **50** may be surrounded with material that separates the support member from the first and second layers **24**, **28**. In one embodiment, the stiffening member **50** may be located in a sleeve of material **70**. However, it is to be understood that the support assembly may employ other suitable arrangements apparent to one of skill in the art to surround the support member with material that separates the support member **50** from the first and second layers.

In one illustrative embodiment shown in FIGS. **1-4**, the first layer **24** may be configured as a full layer of fabric material that is sized and shaped to cover the defect. The second and third layers **28**, **38** have a generally annular configuration that overlies and generally follows the contour of the support member to reduce the overall amount of material for the prosthesis. As described above, an end portion **30**, **40** of the second and third layers **28**, **38** is configured to extend across and cover a corresponding portion of the first layer to form the first and second pockets. As shown, the second and third layers may have an inner edge **76**, **78** that is configured to follow the contour of the support member other than at the end portions of the layers forming the pocket.

The prosthesis may be configured to have any suitable shape or size that is conducive to facilitating the correction or repair of a particular defect, such as an inguinal hernia. In the embodiments shown in FIGS. **1-4**, the patch has a relatively flat configuration. However, the patch need not be flat, and convex, concave, convex/concave, and more complex three-dimensional shapes also are contemplated. The patch may be pliable to facilitate manipulation and/or reduction of the patch during delivery to the defect and/or to conform the patch to the anatomical site of interest.

In the illustrative embodiments shown in FIGS. **1-4**, the prosthesis has a generally oval, elliptical or egg shape suitable for augmenting or repairing an inguinal hernia in the inguinal canal. The geometry of the prosthesis **20** is generally oval with a major axis **80** extending along the longest portion of the prosthesis and a minor axis **82** extending across the widest portion of the prosthesis in a direction perpendicular to the major axis. As illustrated in FIGS. **1** and **3**, the outer periphery **52** of the prosthesis is substantially symmetric about the major axis **80** and is substantially symmetric about the minor axis **82**, providing a generally oval shape (e.g., egg shape) with a narrower or acute end **84**, a wider or obtuse end **86**, and opposing sides **88**, **90** that converge towards each other in a direction from the obtuse end **86** toward the acute end **88**. It is to be appreciated that the prosthesis may be configured with any suitable shape, such as a shape that is symmetric about both axes, asymmetric about both axes, or asymmetric about the major axis and symmetric about the minor axis. Examples of other shapes include, but are not limited to, circular, square, rectangular, and irregular configurations. The repair fabric may be sized to cover part or, preferably, all of the defect.

The obtuse end **86** has a rounded configuration that generally conforms to the shape of the repair site, such as the medial corner of the inguinal canal. The obtuse end **86** is configured to overlie and cover the defect. The acute end **84** of the prosthesis is configured to generally be positioned at the repair site away from the defect. Therefore, the acute end may have a smaller configuration relative to the obtuse end to reduce the overall amount of material introduced by the prosthesis during a repair procedure. As shown, the acute end portion may have a relatively narrow configuration as compared to an obtuse end portion with a relatively wide

configuration. However, it is to be understood that the obtuse end and the acute end may have any suitable configurations apparent to one of skill in the art.

The pockets **26**, **36** and pocket openings **32**, **42** may be positioned in any desirable location, relative to the body portion **22**, that is suitable for a particular repair. In the illustrative embodiments, the pockets are located at the obtuse end portion of the patch with the openings located away from the minor axis **82** toward the obtuse end portion **86** of the prosthesis. However, it is to be appreciated that the prosthesis is not so limited and the locations of the pockets and/or openings may be varied for other repairs as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

The indentation **54** may be positioned in any desirable location, relative to the body portion **22**, that is suitable for a particular repair. In the illustrative embodiment, the indentation **54** is positioned offset from the minor axis **82** toward the acute end **84** of the prosthesis. As shown, the indentation **54** may be located entirely to one side of the minor axis toward the acute end. The illustrated embodiment of the indentation is particularly suited for repair of an inguinal hernia. However, it is to be appreciated that the prosthesis is not so limited and the location of the indentation may be varied for other repairs as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

As indicated above, the prosthesis **20** may be used in the repair of an inguinal hernia. More particularly, the prosthesis illustrated in FIGS. 1-4 is particularly suited for a direct inguinal hernia. The obtuse end of the body portion **22** is configured to be placed over the hernia defect and the indentation **54** is configured to be positioned adjacent the femoral vessels or cord structures. As indicated above, the segment **58** of repair fabric (FIG. 1) may be retained for the repair or removed as desired by a surgeon.

The repair fabric may include at least one layer of tissue infiltratable material that permits or is otherwise susceptible to tissue or muscle ingrowth to enhance the repair of the defect. In one embodiment, each of the layers **24**, **28**, **38** is formed of a biologically compatible, flexible repair material that includes a plurality of interstices or openings which allow sufficient tissue or muscle ingrowth to integrate the prosthesis with host tissue or muscle after implantation. Multiple layers of tissue infiltratable fabric may enhance the strength of the patch and/or the amount of tissue ingrowth to the patch. Preferably, the first and second layers are formed of the same tissue infiltratable material. However, the invention is not limited in this respect, and any one or each layer may be formed of any biologically compatible material, suitable for repairing a tissue or muscle wall defect as should be apparent to one of skill.

In one embodiment, the first, second and third layers **24**, **28**, **38** of the prosthesis **20** are each formed from a sheet of knitted mesh fabric. When implanted, the polypropylene mesh promotes rapid tissue or muscle ingrowth into and around the mesh structure. Examples of surgical materials which may be utilized for the layers and are suitable for tissue or muscle reinforcement and defect correction include BARD MESH (available from C.R. Bard, Inc.), BARD SOFT MESH (available from C.R. Bard, Inc.), SOFT TISSUE PATCH (microporous ePTFE—available from W.L. Gore & Associates, Inc.); SURGIPRO (available from US Surgical, Inc.); TRELEX (available from Meadox Medical); PROLENE and MERSILENE (available from Ethicon, Inc.); and other mesh materials (e.g., available from Atrium Medical Corporation). Absorbable or resorbable materials, including polyglactin (VICRYL—available from Ethicon, Inc.) and polyglycolic acid (DEXON—available from US

Surgical, Inc.), may be suitable for applications involving temporary correction of tissue or muscle defects. Collagen materials such as COOK SURGISIS, available from Cook Biomedical, Inc. may also be used. It also is contemplated that the mesh fabric may be formed from multifilament yarns and that any suitable method, such as knitting, weaving, braiding, molding and the like, may be employed to form the mesh material.

In the embodiments shown, the support member **50** includes a monofilament of a desired thickness and cross-sectional shape to provide a desired degree of resilience or rigidity. It should be appreciated that the support member may have any cross-sectional shape, such as circular, square, rectangular, triangular, elliptical, etc. The support member may be configured on the patch in any pattern, such as a spiral pattern, a square pattern, an elliptical pattern, a circular pattern, crisscross pattern or the like.

In one embodiment, the support member **50** is formed of an absorbable material. The absorbable support member facilitates initial handling and deployment of the prosthesis. Thereafter, the support member will gradually degrade until it is completely absorbed by the body. Such an arrangement may be advantageous in that the support member is eventually absorbed by the body after it is no longer needed to facilitate the handling and deployment of the prosthesis.

In one embodiment, the support member **50** is formed from a polydioxanone (PDO) monofilament that may have a diameter of approximately 0.038 inches. However, it is contemplated that the support member may be formed of any biocompatible, absorbable or non-absorbable material, including monofilaments, multifilaments or molded shapes, provided suitable stiffness and handling properties are maintained. It should be appreciated that the support member (or the individual filaments or bands collectively forming the support member) may have any suitable cross-sectional size and shape, such as circular, square, rectangular, triangular, elliptical, etc.

The sleeve **70** may be formed of a porous material that allows passage or infiltration of fluid and/or tissue to promote degradation and/or absorption of the support member **50**. In one embodiment, the material includes interstices or pores having a size from approximately 0.00035 in² to approximately 0.00085 in². It may be desirable to employ a sleeve having an interstice or pore size of approximately 0.00085 in² when the support assembly is used with an ingrowth layer **22** formed of material having a similar pore or interstice size of approximately 0.00085 in². A sleeve having a smaller interstice or pore size, such as approximately 0.00035 in², may be desired when the support assembly is used with an ingrowth layer **22** formed of material having a larger pore or interstice size, such as greater than 0.00085 in². However, it is to be understood that the sleeve may employ material having other suitable interstice or pore sizes as would be apparent to one of skill in the art.

In one embodiment, the sleeve **70** is formed from a mesh fabric that includes interstices or pores that allow tissue infiltration or ingrowth into the support assembly to eventually surround and absorb the support member **50**. In one embodiment, the sleeve is formed from a knitted polypropylene mesh. The mesh may be knitted with monofilament having a diameter of approximately 0.006 inches. The mesh may employ any suitable fabric pattern that provides desired properties. It is to be understood that the sleeve may be formed of any suitable mesh material including, but not limited to, the material used for the ingrowth layer or other biocompatible materials having suitable properties. It also is

contemplated that the sleeve may be formed from multifilament yarns and that any suitable method, such as knitting, weaving, braiding, molding and the like, may be employed to form the sleeve.

In one illustrative embodiment, the sleeve may be configured as a unitary member that is formed with a single piece of material. In one illustrative embodiment shown in FIGS. 5-6, the support assembly may employ a sleeve 70 configured as a tubular or sock-like member that receives the support member 50 therein. In one embodiment, the sleeve is a tubular mesh fabric material. Alternatively, the sleeve may be formed with two rings of mesh that are attached to form the sleeve. In this alternate arrangement, the support member may be sandwiched between the mesh rings which are attached to each along the inner and outer sides of the support member to surround the support member in a sleeve of material. A suitable support assembly is described in more detail in U.S. application Ser. No. 13/122,257, assigned to C.R. Bard, which is incorporated herein by reference.

Although several illustrative embodiments have been provided for the support assembly, it is to be understood that the support assembly may employ other structural arrangements as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

Although the support member 50 is described as being formed of a monofilament, other suitable constructions may be employed. For example, the support member may be molded elements that are subsequently attached to the patch or molded onto the patch. As another example, the support member may be formed from the repair fabric. In this respect, the support member may be formed by melting a portion of the repair fabric in any desired shape. In another example, the support member may be formed by multiple stitches passing through one or more layers, such as, for example, an embroidered section. Alternatively, the support member may be formed by altering the weave pattern in a zone of desired reinforcement. In this manner, the area of the repair fabric where tissue ingrowth may be desired may be formed with a relatively loose open weave, whereas the area or zone of reinforcement may be formed with a relatively tight weave, to provide the desired rigidity. Other suitable methods or mechanisms to form the support member may be employed, as the present invention is not limited in this respect.

For some applications, the prosthesis may include an adhesion resistant barrier overlying at least a portion, and preferably all, of one side of the repair fabric and/or pocket layers and/or an edge barrier to isolate one or more edges of the patch from adjacent tissue, muscle or organs. The barrier layer and/or edge barrier may be formed of a material and/or with a structure that does not substantially stimulate and, in certain embodiments, may resist tissue, muscle or organ ingrowth and adhesion formation when implanted, thereby reducing the incidence of undesired postoperative adhesions between the ingrowth layer and adjacent tissue, muscle or organs. If desired, such a barrier layer and/or edge barrier may be formed from any suitable material or structure as should be apparent to one of skill in the art, including, but not limited to, a sheet of expanded polytetrafluoroethylene (ePTFE) having a microporous pore structure that inhibits tissue ingrowth. Alternatively, a barrier layer may be formed of an absorbable material as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

The illustrative embodiments of the prosthesis may be particularly suited for inguinal hernia repair. In one embodiment, it is contemplated that the prosthesis may be placed in the pre-peritoneal space via an open repair to strengthen the myopectineal orifice. The defect may be repaired using an

anterior approach (similar to a mesh plug technique) or a posterior approach (similar to the known Kugel technique). Deployment and proper placement of the prosthesis in the pre-peritoneal space may be facilitated with the pocket. The prosthesis may provide a surgeon the benefit of laparoscopic mesh placement through an open repair, eliminating the need for costly equipment or general anesthesia. The contemplated technique does not require dissection or fixation in the subaponeurotic plane. It is to be understood that the prosthesis may have other applications and be used with for other repair procedures as should be apparent to one of skill in the art.

It should be understood that the foregoing description of various embodiments of the invention are intended merely to be illustrative thereof and that other embodiments, modifications, and equivalents of the invention are within the scope of the invention recited in the claims appended hereto.

What is claimed is:

1. An implantable prosthesis for repairing a tissue or muscle wall defect, the implantable prosthesis comprising:
 - a patch of repair fabric including a body portion that is constructed and arranged to cover the tissue or muscle wall defect, the patch having an oval shape with a major axis and a minor axis, the patch including an obtuse end portion located on a first side of the minor axis and an acute end portion located on a second side of the minor axis, the obtuse end portion being wider than the acute end portion; and
 - one or more accessible pockets provided on the patch to facilitate deployment and/or placement of the prosthesis at the tissue or muscle wall defect, all of the accessible pockets provided on the patch to facilitate deployment and/or placement of the prosthesis being located only on the first side of the minor axis and at the obtuse end portion of the patch; wherein the one or more accessible pockets includes first and second pockets located on opposite sides of the body portion.
2. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 1, wherein the patch includes at least first, second and third layers of fabric attached together to create the first and second pockets therebetween.
3. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 2, wherein the second layer of fabric is positioned over at least a portion of a first side of the first layer of fabric and the third layer of fabric is positioned over at least a portion of a second side of the first layer of fabric, the first pocket being located between the first and second layers and the second pocket being located between the first and third layers.
4. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 3, wherein the second layer includes an edge extending across the portion of the first surface of the first layer and the third layer includes an edge extending across the portion of the second surface of the first layer.
5. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 4, wherein the patch includes a first opening to provide access to the first pocket and a second opening to provide access to the second pocket.
6. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 5, wherein the first opening is located along the edge of the second layer and the second opening is located along the edge of the third layer.
7. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 1, further comprising a member to help deploy and/or hold the body portion in a spread out configuration.
8. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 7, wherein the member surrounds the body portion of the patch.

9. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 8, wherein the member includes an indentation that is adapted to be positioned adjacent a body structure, the indentation formed by a portion of the member deviating inwardly toward the body portion. 5

10. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 9, wherein the indentation has a curved shape.

11. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 10, wherein the member has a convex shape along a substantial portion thereof and the indentation has a concave shape. 10

12. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 9, wherein the indentation is offset from the minor axis of the patch toward the acute end portion.

13. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 7, wherein the member has a resiliency that allows the member to deform from an initial shape and then return to the initial shape to return the body portion of the patch to the spread out configuration. 15

14. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 1, wherein the repair fabric is susceptible to the formation of adhesions with tissue and organs. 20

15. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 1, wherein the repair fabric has a plurality of interstices that are constructed and arranged to allow tissue ingrowth.

16. The implantable prosthesis according to claim 1, wherein the obtuse end portion is configured to overlie and cover the tissue or muscle wall defect and the acute end portion is configured to be positioned away from the tissue or muscle wall defect. 25

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