



US011918135B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Pham

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 11,918,135 B2**

(45) **Date of Patent:** ***Mar. 5, 2024**

(54) **BODY-MOUNTABLE CUSHION STRUCTURE FOR POST- SURGICAL SUPPORT AND PROTECTION AND METHOD OF USE**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC A47G 9/1036; A47G 9/1045; A41D 13/0518; B63C 9/13; B60R 21/055; A61F 2007/023

See application file for complete search history.

(71) Applicant: **Maelee Pham**, Greenwood, IN (US)

(72) Inventor: **Maelee Pham**, Greenwood, IN (US)

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

1,618,347	A	2/1927	McSherry
1,843,617	A	2/1932	Marshall
2,042,152	A	5/1936	Howland
2,056,767	A	10/1936	Blath
2,265,690	A	12/1941	Fiedler
3,065,476	A	11/1962	Brown
3,550,159	A	12/1970	Alarco
4,884,295	A	12/1989	Cox

(Continued)

Primary Examiner — Eric J Kurilla

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Reichel Stohry Dean LLP; Mark C. Reichel; Natalie J. Dean

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: **17/953,686**

(22) Filed: **Sep. 27, 2022**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2023/0225527 A1 Jul. 20, 2023

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 16/221,542, filed on Dec. 16, 2018, now Pat. No. 11,452,391.

(60) Provisional application No. 62/599,687, filed on Dec. 16, 2017.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

<i>A47G 9/10</i>	(2006.01)
<i>A41D 13/05</i>	(2006.01)
<i>A41D 13/12</i>	(2006.01)
<i>A61F 5/03</i>	(2006.01)
<i>A61F 7/02</i>	(2006.01)

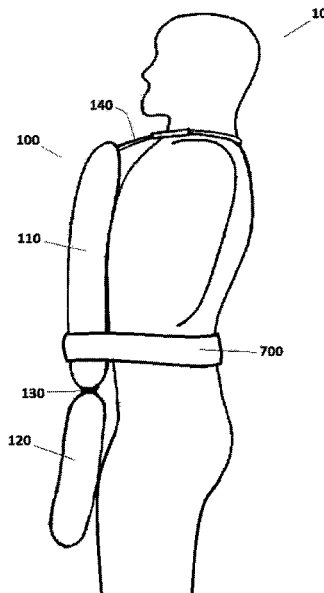
(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC *A47G 9/1036* (2013.01); *A41D 13/0518* (2013.01); *A41D 13/1236* (2013.01); *A47G 9/1045* (2013.01); *A61F 5/03* (2013.01); *A61F 2007/023* (2013.01)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Pivotably connected upper and lower cushions may be sized and shaped to protect chest and lower abdomen areas of a patient, respectively. The cushion structure may be held against the chest and/or abdomen areas of a patient by a combination of an adjustable and disconnectable neck strap attached to an upper portion of the upper cushion, and an adjustable length and resilient strap, such as an elastic belt binder, which may be positioned around the user's waist and the upper cushion. The lower cushion may pivotably move with the patient's legs, allowing the cushion structure to be comfortably used when moving between standing and seated positions, and providing improved protection from automotive seat belts. Pockets may be provided for positioning ice packs proximate the patient's body and for inconspicuously placing a negative-pressure wound therapy vacuum pump or other items.

19 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



(56)

References Cited

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

5,075,897	A	12/1991	Daniels	
5,199,124	A	4/1993	Klemis	
5,261,420	A	11/1993	Grillo	
5,692,246	A	12/1997	Benedick	
5,996,118	A	12/1999	Carlone	
6,708,354	B1	3/2004	Carter et al.	
8,578,526	B1	11/2013	Rosso	
11,452,391	B2*	9/2022	Pham	A41D 13/1236
2003/0052528	A1	3/2003	Huggins	
2004/0238583	A1	12/2004	Gordon	
2005/0120482	A1	6/2005	Robie	
2005/0273935	A1	12/2005	Cordova et al.	
2010/0170029	A1	7/2010	Kordecki	
2013/0312192	A1	11/2013	Lee	
2016/0128500	A1	5/2016	Yuyungyuen	
2018/0281910	A1	10/2018	Drohan	
2018/0292177	A1	10/2018	Roby et al.	
2019/0069686	A1	3/2019	Miller	
2019/0246819	A1	8/2019	Lemoine et al.	
2020/0107658	A1	4/2020	Emoff	
2020/0220248	A1	7/2020	Verlinden et al.	
2020/0405064	A1	12/2020	Jones	

* cited by examiner

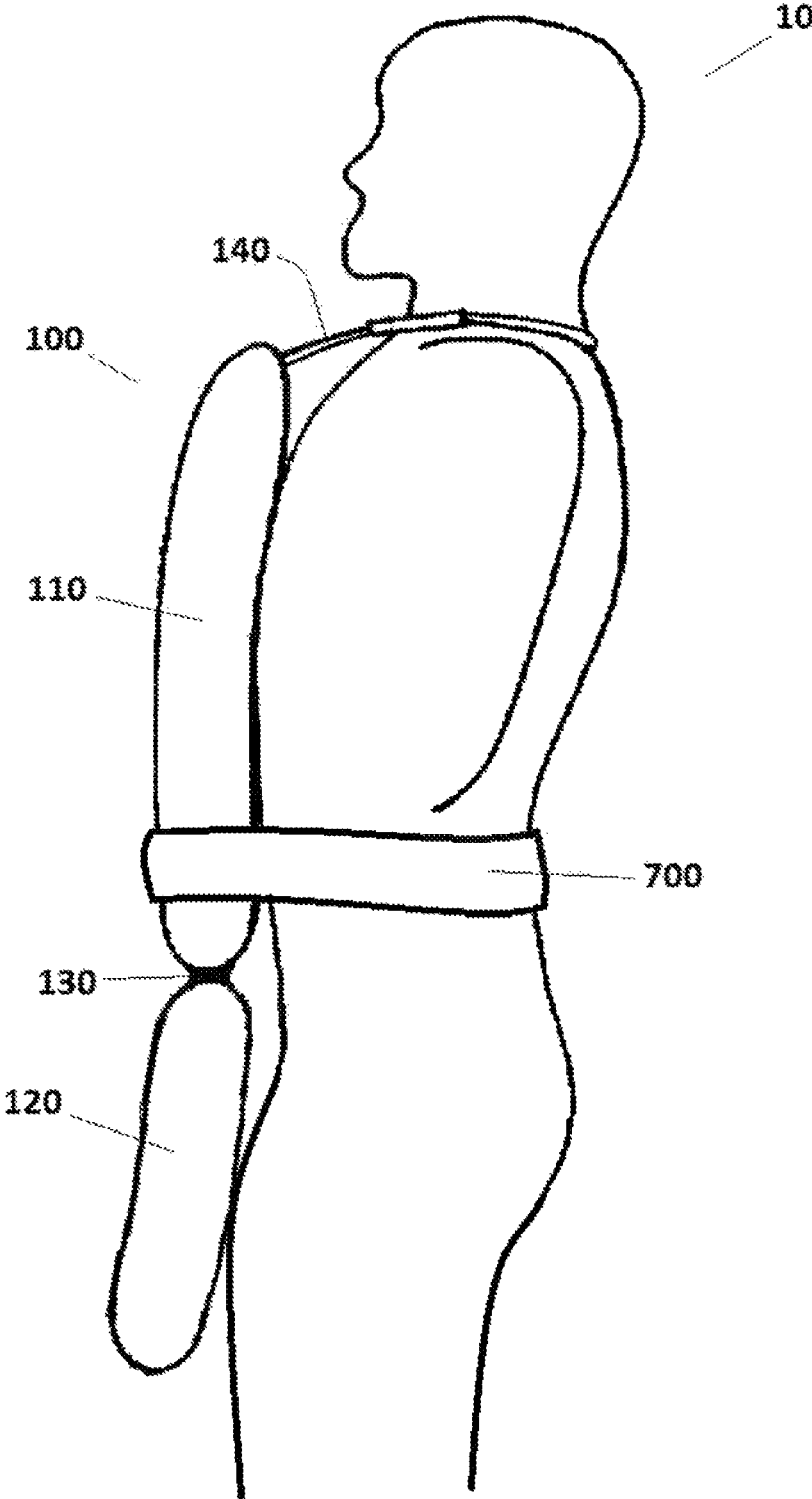


FIG. 1

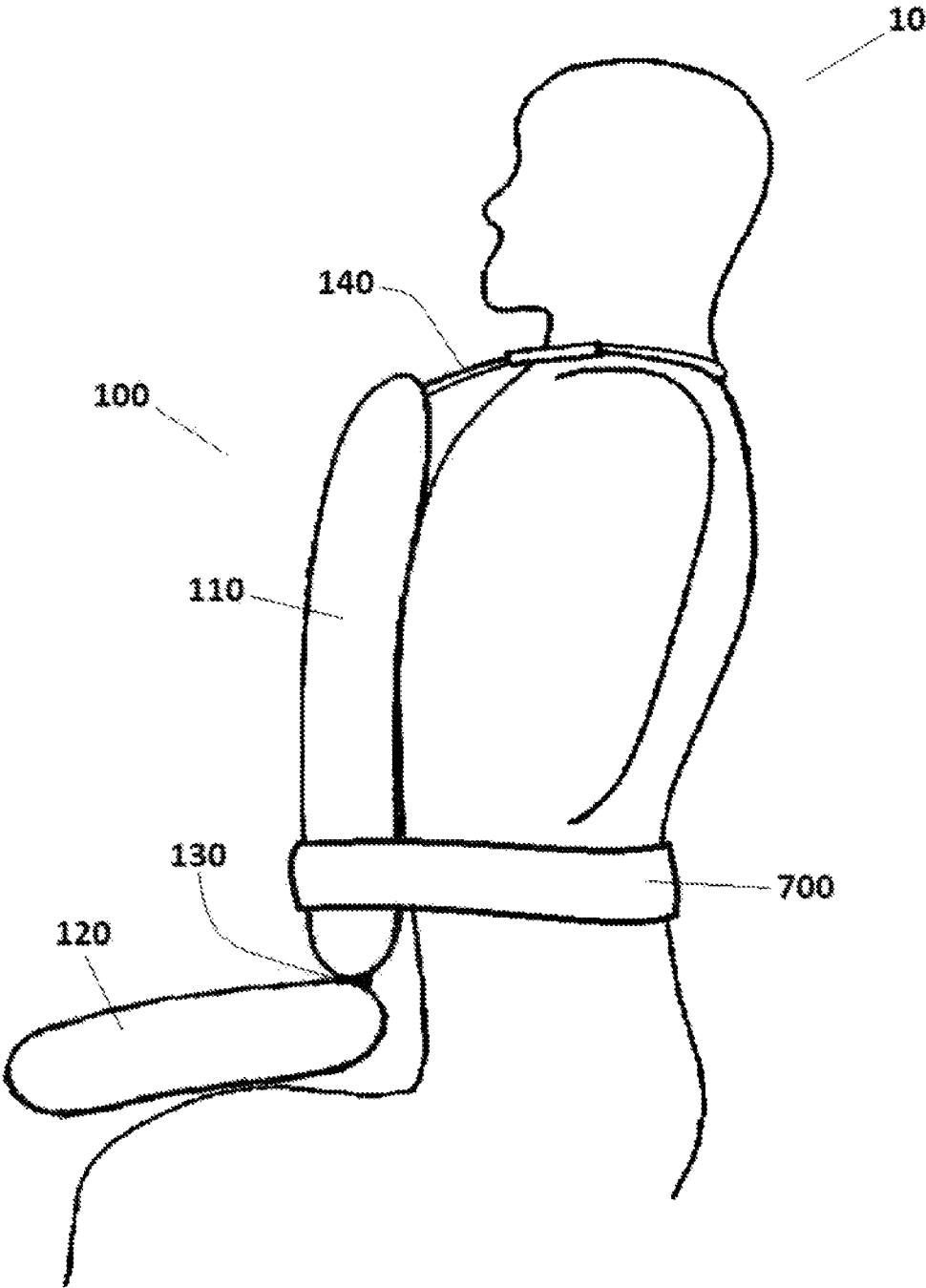


FIG. 2

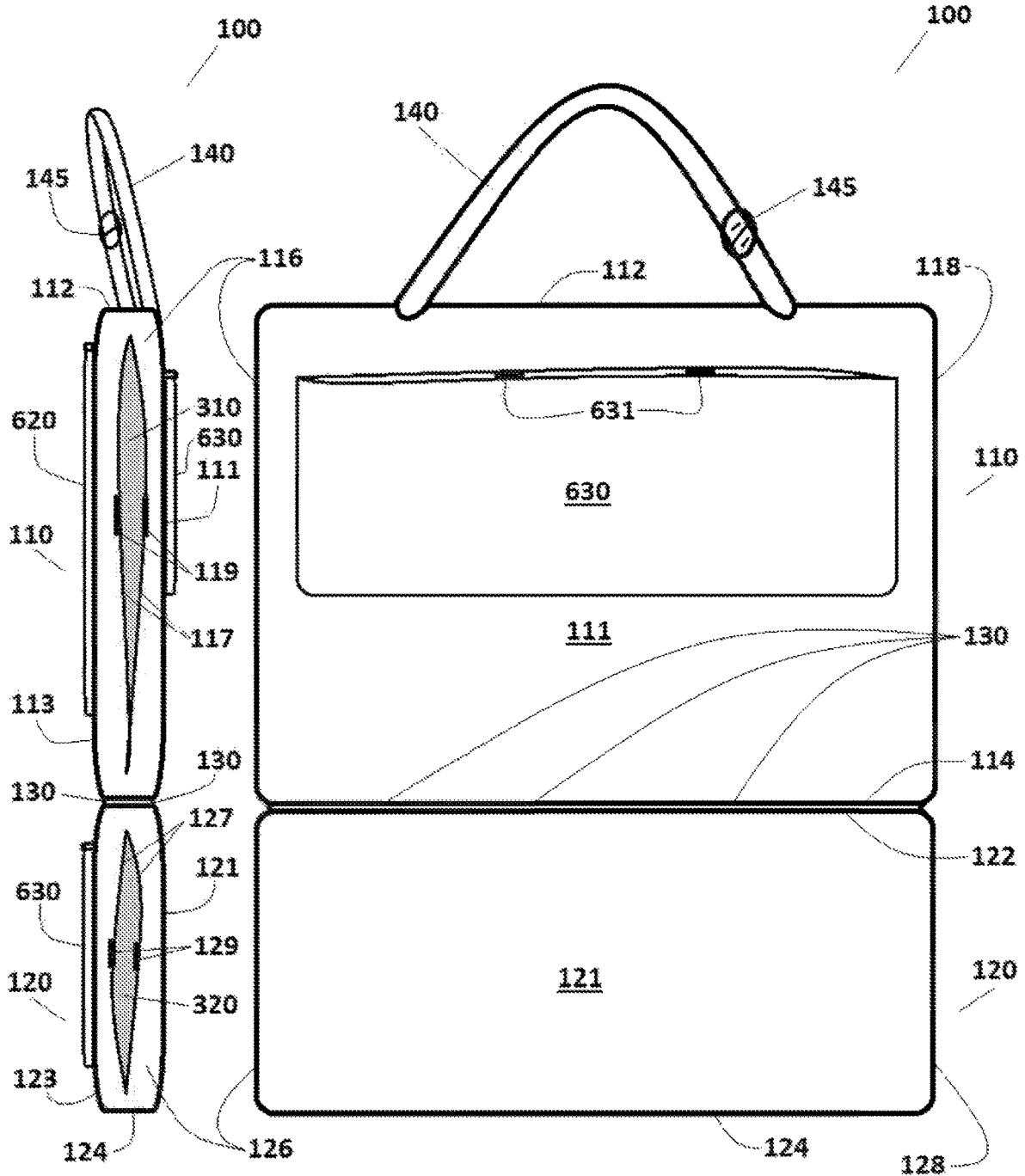


FIG. 3

FIG. 4

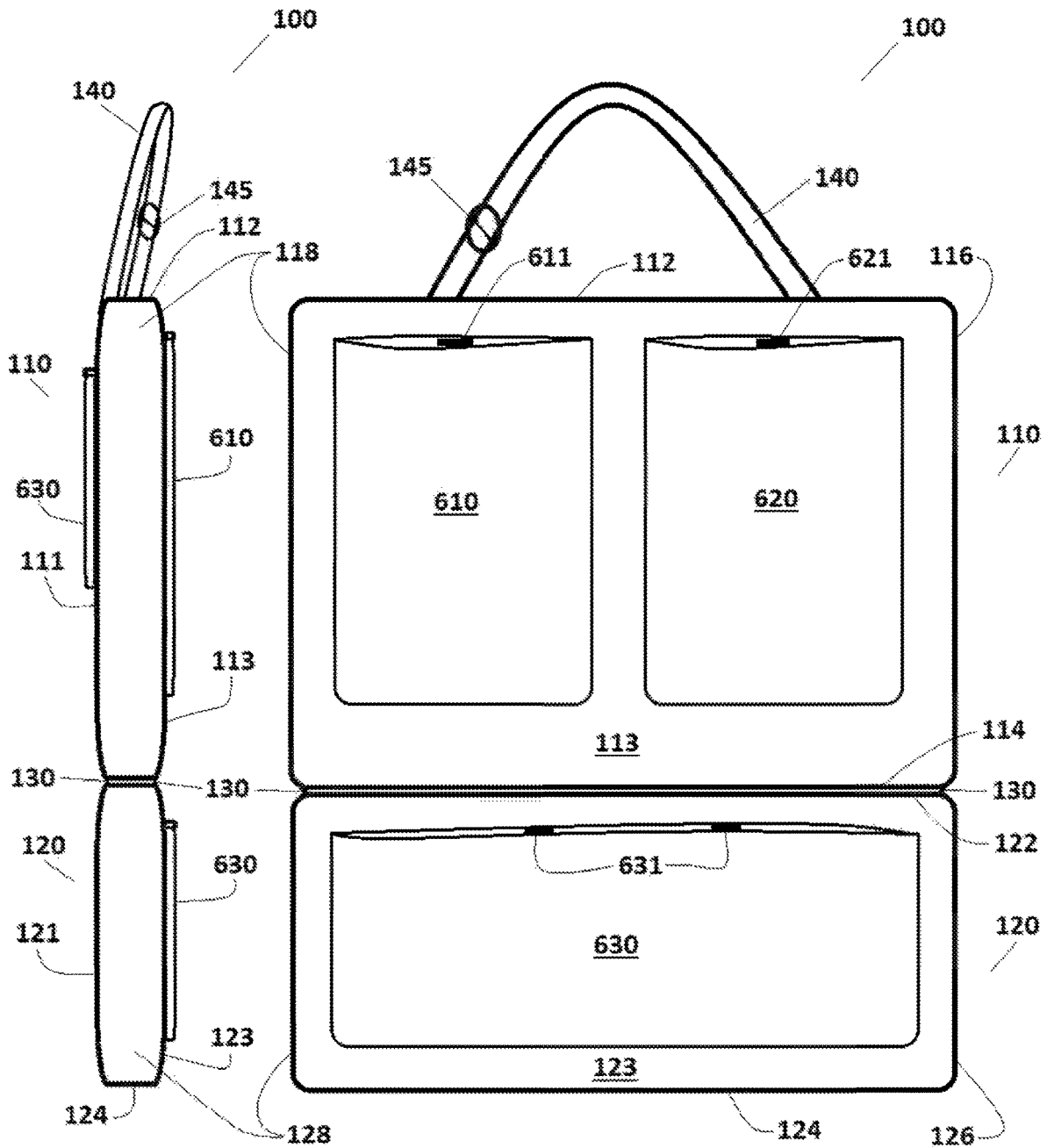


FIG. 5

FIG. 6

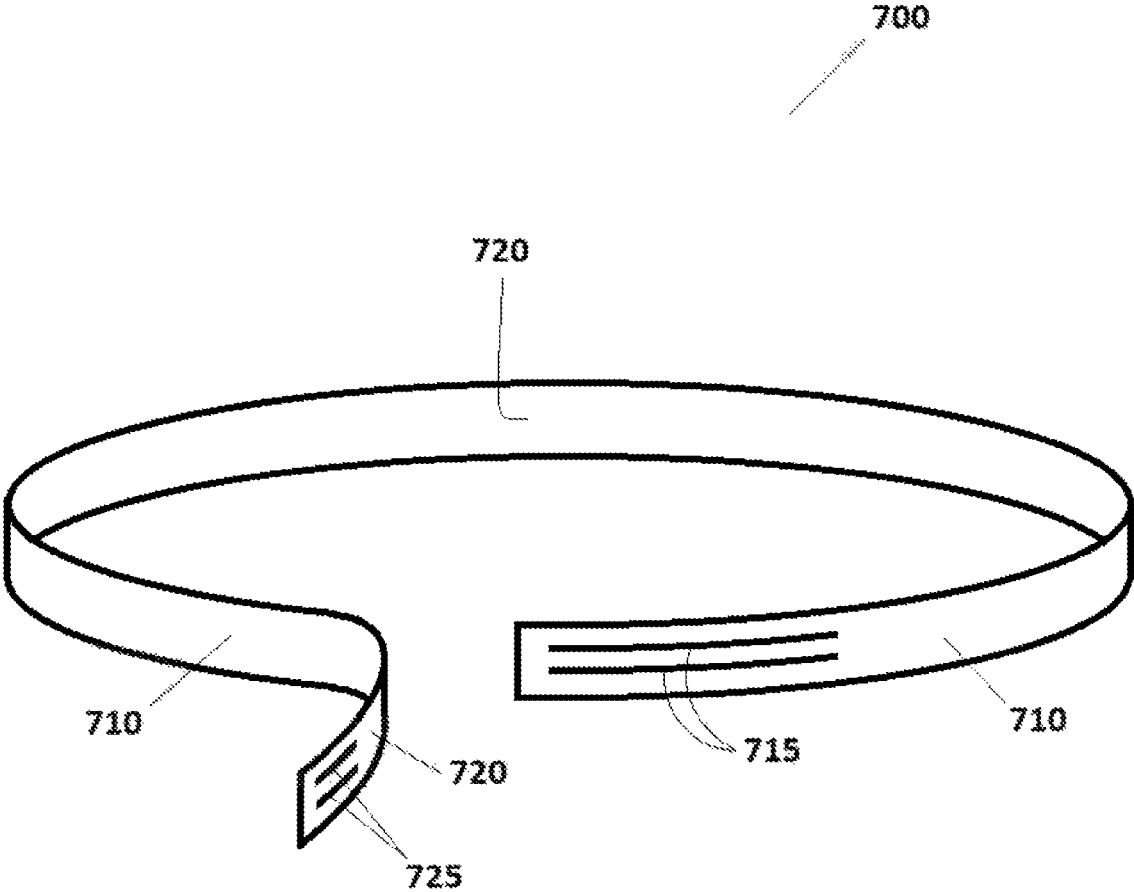


FIG. 7

**BODY-MOUNTABLE CUSHION STRUCTURE
FOR POST- SURGICAL SUPPORT AND
PROTECTION AND METHOD OF USE**

PRIORITY

This application is related to, claims the priority benefit of, incorporates herein by reference in its entirety, and is a U.S. continuation patent application of, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/221,542, filed Dec. 16, 2018 and issued as U.S. Pat. No. 11,452,391 on Sep. 27, 2022, which is related to, and claims the priority benefit of, and incorporates herein by reference in its entirety, U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/599,687, filed Dec. 16, 2017.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present disclosure relates generally to a body-mountable cushion structure for post-surgical support and protection, and related methods of use.

BACKGROUND

Travel pillows and the like are known for providing cushioning between an automotive seatbelt and a user's body. For example, incorporated herein by reference is United States Patent Application Publication US 2003/0052528 A1 to Huggins, entitled Detachable Protective Pad for Abdominal Area, published Mar. 20, 2003 ("Huggins"). Also provided in the art is a chest pad for protecting a post-chest-surgery patient from an automotive seatbelt. Incorporated herein by reference is U.S. Pat. No. 5,692,246 to Benedick, entitled Chest Pillow Chest Protector, issued Dec. 2, 1997 ("Benedick"). However, none of the art of which Applicant is aware suitably addresses the support, comfort, therapeutic, and protection needs of many post-surgical patients, especially those having abdominal surgeries.

BRIEF SUMMARY

The present invention(s) elegantly overcome many of the drawbacks of prior systems and provide numerous additional improvements and benefits as will be apparent to persons of skill in the art. Included in certain example embodiments is an elongated planar resilient cushion structure that may be adapted to support and provide protection for any or all of a user's chest, abdomen, and torso, from automotive seat belts and the like. The cushion structure may be provided with one or more pockets on either or both sides of the cushion structure for removably containing one or more ice packs or other items for therapeutic treatment of the user, as well as other features.

For example, provided in various example embodiments is a cushion structure for a post-surgical patient to wear, comprising: an upper pillow portion, comprising: a first flexible and resilient cushion having a first thickness, a first width, and a first height, the first width and first height being perpendicular to the first thickness and to each other, the first width and first height approximating upper body width and rib cage height dimensions of a patient; a first fabric cover portion at least substantially surrounding and enclosing the first flexible and resilient cushion; a lower pillow portion, comprising: a second flexible and resilient cushion having a second thickness, a second width, and a second height, the second width and second height being perpendicular to the second thickness and to each other, the second width being

at least approximately the same as the first width and the second height being less than the first height; a second fabric cover portion at least substantially surrounding and enclosing the second flexible and resilient cushion; an upper part of the lower pillow portion flexibly connected with a lower part of the upper pillow portion so the lower pillow portion can readily pivot with respect to the upper pillow portion; and one or more straps configured to engage the upper pillow portion and an upper body area of the patient to removably hold the upper pillow portion of the cushion structure proximate a chest area of the patient. 100071 in various example embodiments the cushion structure may further comprise a patient-facing first side and a second side opposite the first side, the upper pillow portion comprising one or more first pockets located on the upper pillow portion on the patient-facing first side, each of the one or more first pockets oriented and configured to removably receive therein an ice pack and to position the ice pack proximate a body area of the patient when the cushion structure is worn by the patient. One or more ice packs may be provided within one or more of the first pockets.

In various example embodiments the cushion structure may further comprise the lower pillow portion comprising one or more second pockets located on the lower pillow portion on the patient-facing first side, or on the second side opposite the patient-facing first side, or both, at least one of the one or more second pockets oriented and configured to removably and inconspicuously receive therein a negative-pressure wound therapy vacuum pump.

In various example embodiments the cushion structure may further comprise the first fabric cover portion comprising a first selectably openable access area located and sized so that the first flexible and resilient cushion can be removed and replaced through a first selectably openable access area. In various example embodiments the cushion structure may further comprise the second fabric cover portion comprising a second selectably openable access area located and sized so that the second flexible and resilient cushion can be removed and replaced through the second selectably openable access area.

In various example embodiments the cushion structure may further comprise the one or more straps comprising a first adjustable length strap attached at first end to a first location on an upper part of the upper pillow portion and attached at a second end to a second location on the upper part of the upper pillow portion, the first adjustable length strap configured to extend around, and be supported at least in part by, a neck area of the patient when the cushion structure is worn by the patient. In various example embodiments the cushion structure may further comprise the one or more straps comprising a second adjustable length strap configured to extend around, and be supported at least in part by, the upper pillow portion and a back area of the patient when the cushion structure is worn by the patient. In various example embodiments the second adjustable length strap may or may not be attached to the upper pillow portion.

Also provided in various example embodiments is a method of using a cushion structure, comprising the steps of: providing a cushion structure as described herein for a post-surgical patient to wear, and removably engaging the upper pillow portion with an upper body area of the patient with the one or more straps so that the upper pillow portion is proximate a chest area of the patient.

In various example embodiments the method of using a cushion structure may further comprise the steps of removably engaging the upper pillow portion with an upper body area of the patient with the one or more straps so that the

3

lower pillow portion is proximate either a lower abdomen area of the patient, or an upper leg area of the patient, or both, when the upper pillow portion is proximate a chest area of the patient.

In various example embodiments the method of using a cushion structure may further comprise the steps of the patient moving between a standing position and a sitting position and moving an upper leg area of the patient relative to the chest area of the patient, the movement of the upper leg area of the patient causing the lower pillow portion to pivot with respect to the upper pillow portion. In various example embodiments the steps of moving an upper leg area of the patient relative to the chest area of the patient and causing the lower pillow portion to pivot with respect to the upper pillow portion, may further comprise the steps of: the patient moving between a first position outside of a vehicle and a second position seated inside a vehicle while wearing a vehicle seatbelt over the cushion structure.

Further provided in various example embodiments is a method of using a cushion structure, comprising the steps of: providing a cushion structure as described herein for a post-surgical patient to wear; placing at least one ice pack in the one or more first pockets; removably engaging the upper pillow portion with an upper body area of the patient with the one or more straps so that the upper pillow portion is proximate a chest area of the patient, the one or more ice packs are proximate a body area of the patient, and the lower pillow portion is proximate either a lower abdomen area of the patient, or an upper leg area of the patient, or both; the patient moving between a standing position and a sitting position and moving an upper leg area of the patient relative to the chest area of the patient, the movement of the upper leg area of the patient causing the lower pillow portion to pivot with respect to the upper pillow portion; and the patient moving between a first position outside of a vehicle and a second position seated inside a vehicle while wearing a vehicle seatbelt over the cushion structure.

Additional aspects, alternatives and variations as would be apparent to persons of skill in the art are also disclosed herein and are specifically contemplated as included as part of the invention. The invention is set forth only in the claims as allowed by the patent office in this or related applications, and the following summary descriptions of certain examples are not in any way to limit, define or otherwise establish the scope of legal protection.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Various example embodiments are depicted in the accompanying drawings for illustrative purposes, and should in no way be interpreted as limiting the scope of the embodiments. Furthermore, various features of different disclosed embodiments can be combined to form additional embodiments, which are also part of this disclosure. It will be understood that certain components and details may not appear in the Figure(s) to assist in more clearly describing the invention. Additionally, it will be appreciated that the drawings may be not to scale and that portions of certain features or elements may be exaggerated for purpose of clarity and ease of understanding.

FIG. 1 is a side elevation view of a user wearing an example body-mountable cushion structure for post-surgical support and protection according to various example embodiments, depicting the user in a non-sitting position, such as in the standing position or lying in a prone or supine position.

4

FIG. 2 is a side elevation view of a user wearing the example body-mountable cushion structure for post-surgical support and protection of FIG. 1, depicting the user in a sitting position.

FIG. 3 is a left side elevation view of an example body-mountable cushion structure for post-surgical support and protection according to various example embodiments, shown with side openings partially open to reveal cushioning pads therein.

FIG. 4 is a front side elevation view of the example body-mountable cushion structure for post-surgical support and protection of FIG. 3, shown optionally without pockets on the front side.

FIG. 5 is a right side elevation view of the example body-mountable cushion structure for post-surgical support and protection of FIG. 3.

FIG. 6 is a rear side elevation view of the example body-mountable cushion structure for post-surgical support and protection of FIG. 3, shown optionally with example pockets on the rear side.

FIG. 7 is top perspective view of an example adjustable length and resilient strap, such as an elastic belt binder, configured for optional use with various example embodiments of body-mountable cushion structures for post-surgical support and protection.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Reference is made herein to some specific examples of the present invention, including any best modes contemplated by the inventor for carrying out the invention. Examples of these specific embodiments are illustrated in the accompanying figures. While the invention is described in conjunction with these specific embodiments, it will be understood that it is not intended to limit the invention to the described or illustrated embodiments. To the contrary, it is intended to cover alternatives, modifications, and equivalents as may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

In the following description, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of certain example embodiments. Particular example embodiments may be implemented without some or all of these specific details. In other instances, process operations well known to persons of skill in the art have not been described in detail in order not to obscure unnecessarily the present invention. Various techniques and mechanisms of the present invention will sometimes be described in singular form for clarity. However, it should be noted that some embodiments include multiple iterations of a technique or multiple mechanisms unless noted otherwise. Similarly, various steps of any methods shown and described herein are not necessarily performed in the order indicated, or performed at all in certain embodiments. Accordingly, some implementations of methods discussed herein may include more or fewer steps than those shown or described. Further, the techniques and mechanisms of the present invention will sometimes describe a connection, relationship or communication between two or more entities. It should be noted that a connection or relationship between entities does not necessarily mean a direct, unimpeded connection, as a variety of other entities or processes may reside or occur between any two entities. Consequently, an indicated connection does not necessarily mean a direct, unimpeded connection unless otherwise noted.

Turning to FIGS. 1-7, provided in various example embodiments is a body-mountable cushion structure for

post-surgical support and protection, comprising an elongated planar resilient cushion structure **100**, comprising an upper pillow **110** pivotably connected with a lower pillow **120**, that may be adapted to support and provide protection for any or all of the chest, abdomen, torso, and upper legs of a user **10** from automotive seat belts and the like, and to address the support, comfort, therapeutic, and protection needs of a post-surgical patient **10**, in a manner improved from that shown or described in the art such as Huggins and Benedick, which are incorporated herein. For example, in prior devices designed for the present purposes the user **10** would not be well protected, if protected at all, from the lap belt portion of an automotive seatbelt, without the additional complexity and difficulty of perhaps attaching the seatbelt to the cushion so that it does not slide down onto the user's lap. In addition to protecting the user's chest area, in various example embodiments the present cushion structure **100** protects the user's lap area from the lap belt portion of an automotive seatbelt without having to attach the seatbelt to the structure **100**. Additionally, the cushion structure **100** may be provided with one or more pockets **620**, **630** for removably containing one or more ice packs, vacuum pumps, other medical devices, and other items for therapeutic treatment of the user. It is understood that any number of pockets **620**, **630**, or other pockets, including optionally no pockets at all, may be provided in any suitable location on either or both sides of cushion structure **100**, on either the upper or lower pillow portions **110**, **120**.

In various example embodiments as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**, the patient **10** may wear the cushion structure **100** with an adjustable length and resilient strap **700**, such as an elastic belt binder, for example, binding the cushion structure **100** to the patient's chest or abdominal area. The patient or user **10** may wear the cushion structure **100** in a car, truck, bus, or other vehicle when discharged from a hospital, for example. The cushion structure **100** may cover both the chest and abdominal areas with ice-packs (not shown) placed inside pockets **620**, **630**, positioned proximate the patient's sites of surgery. The cushion structure **100** may be sized, shaped, and constructed to support, protect, and cushion the patient's surgical incisions, drains, wounds, dressings, and any other indicated procedures when wearing a seatbelt for the duration of their ride home, for example. The cushion structure **100** may provide comfort when wearing a seatbelt by absorbing the seatbelt's pressure so it does not rub into the surgical sites. The seat belt pressure could potentially be harmful and alter the surgical sites during sudden stops or during an automobile collision. The cushion structure **100** may also be used for therapeutic purposes by placing ice-packs inside one or more pockets **620**, **630**, or otherwise, to reduce swelling and bleeding during both travel, and extended home use of the cushion structure **100**. The cushion structure **100** may comprise one or more elastic or otherwise resilient and adjustable length and resilient strap **700**, such as an elastic belt binder, that wraps around the chest or abdominal areas (or both) of the cushion structure **100** to function as a binder to bind the cushion structure **100** to the patient **10**. The adjustable length and resilient strap **700**, such as an elastic belt binder, provides more support and comfort for the patient **10**, and helps keep the cushion structure **100** in position during entry and exit from a vehicle, for example. The cushioned cushion structure **100** is readily bendable, for instance at the waist as shown in FIG. **2**. This may be accomplished in certain example embodiments by providing two planar pieces of cushioning foam **310**, **320** (FIG. **3**), separated by a foldable region **130**, such as a seam. Combining ice packs inside one

or more pockets **620**, **630**, and an adjustable length and resilient strap **700**, such as an elastic belt binder, with the disclosed structure **100** helps the patient **10** cough, sneeze, or to bear down while pushing the cushion structure **100** onto the chest or abdominal area of the patient **10**. This action helps reinforce or splint together incisions in the patient **10**. In various example embodiments the cushion structure **100** may have multiple uses: it may support, protect, cushion, comfort, and cool with ice packs or similar heating or cooling devices, regardless whether they actually contain ice (herein broadly referred to as "ice packs"). For example, a surgeon may recommend the cushion structure **100** for a patient **10** who had breast reconstruction surgery, heart surgery, cesarean section, any type of laparoscopic procedure, and any type of plastic surgery that involved the chest or abdominal area. It may be adapted to last for travel and extended home use as long as the patient **10** needs, depending on the progress of their postoperative recovery phase. The patient **10** may continue using the cushion structure **100** for follow-up doctor's appointments, daily travel, and home use per physician's recommendations.

Characteristics of the cushion structure **100** in various example embodiments may optionally include a substantially rectangular one-piece design as best shown in FIGS. **4** and **6**, constructed to cover the chest and abdominal area of the patient, an adjustable head or neck strap **140**, utilitarian fabric construction surrounding a high-density foam core **310**, **320** (FIG. **3**), resistance to soiling, multiple pockets **610**, **630**, or otherwise, one or more adjustable length and resilient straps **700**, such as an elastic belt binder, and a variety of sizes configured to protect the torso of a variety of users, for example as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2** (for instance, extending from mid-thigh to upper chest).

Various example materials, dimensions, and other details are provided in U.S. provisional patent application Ser. No. 62/599,687, all of which is incorporated herein by reference. Additionally and by way of further non-limiting example, the outer fabric used for the structure **100** may comprise any suitable fabric(s), such as any nylon fabric, whether or not rip-stop fabric, and the first and second flexible and resilient cushions **310**, **320** may be formed from high density foam or polyurethane foam, for example, which may be one inch thick, or between three-quarters of an inch thick and two inches thick, for example, or any suitable thickness.

The example shown in FIGS. **1-7** will now be described in detail. Provided in various example embodiments is a cushion structure **100** for a post-surgical patient **10** to wear, comprising: an upper pillow portion **110**, comprising: a first flexible and resilient cushion **310** having a first thickness between sides **111** and **113**, a first width between sides **116** and **118**, and a first height between top area **112** and bottom area **114**, the first width and first height being perpendicular to the first thickness and to each other, the first width and first height approximating upper body width and rib cage height dimensions of a patient **10**, for instance using dimensions as shown in U.S. provisional patent application Ser. No. 62/599,687, or any other suitable dimensions. A first fabric cover portion at least substantially surrounds and encloses the first flexible and resilient cushion **310**, as depicted by opening **117** in the first fabric cover that can be opened and shut with a fastener such as hook and loop fasteners **119**, for example.

Also provided is a lower pillow portion **120**, comprising: a second flexible and resilient cushion **320** having a second thickness between sides **121** and **123**, a second width between sides **126** and **128**, and a second height between top area **122** and bottom area **124**, the second width and second

height being perpendicular to the second thickness and to each other, the second width between sides **126** and **128** being at least approximately the same as the first width between sides **116** and **118**, and the second height between top area **122** and bottom area **124**, being less than the first height between top area **112** and bottom area **114**, for instance using dimensions as shown in U.S. provisional patent application Ser. No. 62/599,687, or any other suitable dimensions. A second fabric cover portion at least substantially surrounds and encloses the second flexible and resilient cushion **320**, as depicted by opening **127** in the second fabric cover that can be opened and shut with a fastener such as hook and loop fasteners **129**, for example.

The upper part **122** of the lower pillow portion **120** may be flexibly connected with a lower part **114** of the upper pillow portion **110** so that the lower pillow portion **120** can readily pivot with respect to the upper pillow portion **110**, for instance between the positions shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**. This can be accomplished in any suitable manner, for instance by providing a foldable region **130**, such as a seam. For example, the first and second fabric cover portions can be formed from one or more single pieces of fabric that extend from the upper pillow portion **110** to the lower pillow portion **120**, through which a seam is sewn at foldable region **130**. Additionally or alternatively, the first and second flexible and resilient cushions **310**, **320** may be formed from a single cushion that is notched, thinned, or otherwise made pivotably flexible at foldable region **130**.

One or more straps **140** may be configured to engage the upper pillow portion **110** and an upper body area of the patient **100** (FIGS. **1** and **2**) to removably hold the upper pillow portion **110** of the cushion structure proximate a chest area of the patient **10**, for instance as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**. One or more straps **140** may comprise thirty-six inch long one-inch wide nylon strap or polypropylene belting, for example. One or more adjustment and/or disconnect means **145** may be provided in strap **140**, such as a double-ring buckle, or a side release buckle, also sometimes known as a break-away buckle or parachute buckle.

In various example embodiments the cushion structure **100** may further comprise a patient-facing first side **113**, **123**, and a second side **111**, **121**, opposite the first side **113**, **123**, and the upper pillow portion **110** may comprise one or more first pockets **610**, **620** located on the upper pillow portion **110** on the patient-facing first side **113**, each of the one or more first pockets **610**, **620** oriented and configured to removably receive therein an ice pack (as depicted in at least one of the figures in U.S. provisional patent application Ser. No. 62/599,687, all of which is incorporated herein by reference). The one or more ice packs may be hospital standard-issue white pouch with strings 6.5 inch by 14 inch, for example. The apparatus can be configured to hold gel ice packs too. Any such devices may be used, and are considered "ice packs". An entire ice pack need not fit entirely within pocket **610** or **620** to be considered being within pockets **610** or **620**. The cushion structure **100** may be designed to position the ice pack(s) in the pockets **610**, **620** proximate a body area of the patient **10**, such as an incision area, for example, when the cushion structure **100** is worn by the patient **10**, for instance as depicted in FIGS. **1** and **2**. In various example embodiments, pockets **610**, **620** can be opened and shut with fasteners such as hook and loop fasteners **611**, **621**, for example, as depicted in FIG. **6**. In alternative embodiments, one or more pockets **610**, **620** can also or alternatively be placed on the second side **111** opposite the patient-facing first side **113**.

In various example embodiments the cushion structure **100** may further comprise one or more second pockets **630** located on the upper and/or lower pillow portions **110**, **120** on the patient-facing first side **113**, **123**, or on the second side **111**, **121** opposite the patient-facing first side **113**, **123**, or both on the patient-facing first side **113**, **123** and on the second side **111**, **121**, wherein at least one of the one or more second pockets **630** may oriented and configured to removably receive therein either one or more ice packs, or to inconspicuously hold a typical negative-pressure wound therapy vacuum pump of the type known in the medical field (not shown), such as those manufactured by Devon Medical Products, for example. In various example embodiments, second pockets **630** can be opened and shut with fasteners such as hook and loop fasteners **631**, for example, as depicted in FIG. **6**. To avoid prolixity, separate figures are not provided showing all possible combinations and permutations of placement of pockets **610**, **620**, **630**, as they are sufficiently described herein as any number of each type of pocket **610**, **620**, **630**, including optionally no pockets at all, can be located on either the patient-facing first side **113**, **123**, and on the second side **111**, **121**, opposite the patient-facing first side **113**, **123**, on the upper pillow portion **110** and/or the lower pillow portion **120**. In various example embodiments, second pockets **630** may extend all the way from a first side **116** or **126** to a second side **118** or **128** of the cushion structure **100**. In various example embodiments no second pockets **630** may be provided on the cushion structure **100**.

As depicted in FIG. **3**, in various example embodiments the cushion structure **100** may comprise the first fabric cover portion comprising a first selectably openable access area **117** located and sized so that the first flexible and resilient cushion **310** can be removed and replaced through the first selectably openable access area **117**. In various example embodiments the cushion structure **100** may further comprise the second fabric cover portion comprising a second selectably openable access area **127** located and sized so that the second flexible and resilient cushion **320** can be removed and replaced through the second selectably openable access area **127**. Alternatively, areas **117**, **127** may be sewn shut so that the cushion(s) **310**, **320** cannot be removed from the fabric covering.

As best shown in FIG. **4**, in various example embodiments the cushion structure **100** may further comprise a first adjustable length strap **140** attached at a first end to a first location on an upper part **112** of the upper pillow portion **110** and attached at a second end to a second location on the upper part **112** of the upper pillow portion **110**, the first adjustable length strap **140** configured to extend around, and be supported at least in part by, a neck area of the patient **10** when the cushion structure **100** is worn by the patient **10**, for example as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**. As shown in FIGS. **1**, **2**, and **7**, in various example embodiments the cushion structure **100** may further comprise an adjustable length and resilient strap **700**, such as an elastic belt binder, configured to extend around, and be supported at least in part by, the upper pillow portion **110** and a back area of the patient **10** when the cushion structure **100** is worn by the patient **10**. The adjustable length and resilient strap **700**, such as an elastic belt binder, may comprise a relatively wide elastic strap, such as about three inches wide, for example, of appropriate length having complimentary hook and loop fastener material, **715**, **725**, affixed to outer and inner surfaces, **710**, **720**, respectively, of the ends of strap **700** as shown in FIG. **7**. As used herein the term "adjustable length" is meant in the same way that a belt for one's pants is adjustable length, i.e., while the overall length of such a belt

remains the same, one of its ends can be hooked to the other end of the belt at different points to give it effectively different lengths to fit larger or smaller waist sizes, for example. Thus, in a similar way here, “adjustable length” means adjustable effective length when used as a strap or belt as shown and described herein. In various example embodiments the adjustable length and resilient strap **700** may or may not be attached to the upper pillow portion **110** (shown unattached).

Also provided in various example embodiments is a method of using a cushion structure, comprising the steps of: providing a cushion structure **100** as described herein for a post-surgical patient **10** to wear, and removably engaging the upper pillow portion **110** with an upper body area (FIGS. **1**, **2**) of the patient **10** with the one or more straps **140**, **700**, so that the upper pillow portion **110** is proximate a chest area of the patient **10**. In various example embodiments the method of using a cushion structure **100** may further comprise the steps of removably engaging the upper pillow portion **110** with an upper body area of the patient **10** with the one or more straps **140**, **700**, so that the lower pillow portion **120** is proximate either a lower abdomen area of the patient **10**, or an upper leg area of the patient **10**, or both (see FIG. **2**), when the upper pillow portion **110** is proximate a chest area of the patient **10**.

With continuing reference to FIGS. **1** and **2**, in various example embodiments the method of using a cushion structure **100** may further comprise the steps of the patient **10** moving between a standing position (FIG. **1**) and a sitting position (FIG. **2**) and moving an upper leg area of the patient **10** relative to the chest area of the patient **10**, the movement of the upper leg area of the patient causing the lower pillow portion **120** to pivot with respect to the upper pillow portion **110** about the foldable region **130**. In various example embodiments the steps of moving an upper leg area of the patient **10** relative to the chest area of the patient **10** and causing the lower pillow portion **120** to pivot with respect to the upper pillow portion **110**, may further comprise the steps of: the patient **10** moving between a first position outside of a vehicle (as in FIG. **1**) and a second position seated inside a vehicle (as in FIG. **2**) while wearing a vehicle seatbelt over the cushion structure **100**, for instance as described in Huggins and Benedick and as shown in at least one of the figures in U.S. provisional patent application Ser. No. 62/599,687, all of which is incorporated herein by reference.

Further provided in various example embodiments is a method of using a cushion structure **100**, comprising the steps of: providing a cushion structure **100** as described herein for a post-surgical patient **10** to wear; placing at least one ice pack (shown in at least one of the figures in U.S. provisional patent application Ser. No. 62/599,687) in the one or more first pockets **610**, **620**; removably engaging the upper pillow portion **110** with an upper body area of the patient **10** with the one or more straps **140**, **700** so that the upper pillow portion **110** is proximate a chest area of the patient **10** and the one or more ice packs are proximate a body area of the patient **10**, and so the lower pillow portion **120** is proximate either a lower abdomen area of the patient **10**, or an upper leg area of the patient **10**, or both (see, e.g., FIG. **2**); the patient **10** moving between a standing position (FIG. **1**) and a sitting position (FIG. **2**) and moving an upper leg area of the patient **10** relative to the chest area of the patient **10**, the movement of the upper leg area of the patient **10** causing the lower pillow portion **120** to pivot with respect to the upper pillow portion **110** about the foldable region **130**; and the patient **10** moving between a first position outside of a vehicle (FIG. **1**) and a second position seated

inside a vehicle (FIG. **2**) while wearing a vehicle seatbelt over the cushion structure **100**, for instance as described in Huggins and Benedick and as shown in at least one of the figures in U.S. provisional patent application Ser. No. 62/599,687, all of which is incorporated herein by reference

Multiple sets of example dimensional drawings are provided in U.S. provisional patent application Ser. No. 62/599,687 to demonstrate example alternative designs. Many other designs are possible within the scope of the intended invention. The materials of the apparatus are not limited to the shown size, color, and shape; other designs are contemplated that provide the same improved functionality.

It will be recognized that numerous different features or components may be presented in the embodiments shown and described herein, and that no one embodiment may be specifically shown and described as including all such features and components. Accordingly, it is understood that the subject matter of the present disclosure may be intended to encompass any and all combinations of the different features and components that may be shown and described herein, and, without limitation, that any suitable arrangement of features and components, in any combination, may be used. Thus, it is distinctly understood that claims directed to any such combination of features or components, whether or not specifically embodied herein, may be intended to find support in the present disclosure.

Thus, while the subject matter of the present disclosure has been described with reference to the foregoing embodiments and considerable emphasis has been placed herein on the structures and structural interrelationships between the component parts of the embodiments disclosed, it will be appreciated that other embodiments may be made and that many changes may be made in the embodiments illustrated and described without departing from the principles hereof. Obviously, modifications and alterations will occur to others upon reading and understanding the preceding detailed description. Accordingly, it is distinctly understood that the foregoing descriptive matter should be interpreted merely as illustrative of the subject matter of the present disclosure and not as a limitation. As such, it is intended that the subject matter of the present disclosure be construed as including all such modifications and alterations.

The invention claimed is:

1. A cushion structure for a post-surgical patient to wear, comprising:
 - a upper pillow portion, comprising a first flexible and resilient cushion having a first width and a first height approximating upper body width and rib cage height dimensions of a patient;
 - a lower pillow portion, comprising a second flexible and resilient cushion having a second width and a second height, the second width being at least approximately the same as the first width and the second height being less than the first height, the lower pillow portion pivotally coupled to the upper pillow portion;
 - a strap configured to engage the upper pillow portion and an upper body area of the patient to removably hold the upper pillow portion of the cushion structure proximate a chest area of the patient; and
 wherein the upper pillow portion comprises one or more first pockets located on the upper pillow portion on a patient-facing first side, each of the one or more first pockets oriented and configured to receive an ice pack and to position the ice pack proximate a body area of the patient.
2. The cushion structure of claim 1, wherein the lower pillow portion comprises one or more second pockets

11

located on the patient-facing first side, at least one of the one or more second pockets oriented and configured to receive a negative-pressure wound therapy vacuum pump.

3. The cushion structure of claim 1, wherein the lower pillow portion comprises one or more second pockets located on a second side opposite a patient-facing first side, at least one of the one or more second pockets oriented and configured to receive therein a negative-pressure wound therapy vacuum pump.

4. The cushion structure of claim 1, further comprising: an ice pack within at least one of the one or more first pockets.

5. The cushion structure of claim 1, further comprising: an ice pack within each of the one or more first pockets.

6. The cushion structure of claim 2, further comprising: a negative-pressure wound therapy vacuum pump within one of the one or more second pockets.

7. The cushion structure of claim 3, further comprising: a negative-pressure wound therapy vacuum pump within one of the one or more second pockets.

8. The cushion structure of claim 2, further comprising: an ice pack within at least one of the one or more first pockets; and

a negative-pressure wound therapy vacuum pump within one of the one or more second pockets.

9. The cushion structure of claim 3, further comprising: an ice pack within at least one of the one or more first pockets; and

a negative-pressure wound therapy vacuum pump within one of the one or more second pockets.

10. The cushion structure of claim 1, further comprising: a first fabric cover portion at least substantially surrounding and enclosing the first flexible and resilient cushion; and

a second fabric cover portion at least substantially surrounding and enclosing the second flexible and resilient cushion.

11. The cushion structure of claim 10, wherein the first fabric cover portion comprises a selectably openable access area located and sized so that the first flexible and resilient cushion can be removed and replaced through the selectably openable access area.

12. The cushion structure of claim 11, wherein the second fabric cover portion comprises a selectably openable access area located and sized so that the second flexible and resilient cushion can be removed and replaced through the selectably openable access area.

13. The cushion structure of claim 10, wherein the first fabric cover portion comprises a first selectably openable access area located and sized so that the first flexible and resilient cushion can be removed and replaced through the first selectably openable access area, and wherein the second fabric cover portion comprises a second selectably openable access area located and sized so that the second flexible and

12

resilient cushion can be removed and replaced through the second selectably openable access area.

14. The cushion structure of claim 1, wherein the strap has an adjustable length and is resiliently elastic and configured to extend around, and be supported at least in part by, the upper pillow portion and a back area of the patient.

15. A method of using a cushion structure, comprising the steps of:

providing a cushion structure according to claim 1 for a post-surgical patient to wear; and

engaging the upper pillow portion with an upper body area of the patient with the strap so that the upper pillow portion is proximate a chest area of the patient.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the step of engaging the upper pillow portion further comprises positioning the lower pillow portion proximate either a lower abdomen area of the patient, or an upper leg area of the patient, or both.

17. The method of claim 15, further comprising the steps of:

the patient moving between a standing position and a sitting position and moving an upper leg area of the patient relative to the chest area of the patient, the movement of the upper leg area of the patient causing the lower pillow portion to pivot with respect to the upper pillow portion.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the step of moving the upper leg area relative to the chest area is performed while the patient is moving between a first position outside of a vehicle and a second position seated inside the vehicle and wearing a vehicle seatbelt over the cushion structure.

19. A method of using a cushion structure, comprising the steps of:

providing a cushion structure according to claim 1 for a post-surgical patient to wear;

placing at least one ice pack in the one or more first pockets;

removably engaging the upper pillow portion with an upper body area of the patient with the strap so that the upper pillow portion is proximate a chest area of the patient and so that the one or more ice packs are proximate a body area of the patient and so that the lower pillow portion is proximate either a lower abdomen area of the patient, or an upper leg area of the patient, or both;

the patient moving between a standing position and a sitting position and moving an upper leg area of the patient relative to the chest area of the patient, the movement of the upper leg area of the patient causing the lower pillow portion to pivot with respect to the upper pillow portion; and

the patient moving between a first position outside of a vehicle and a second position seated inside the vehicle while wearing a vehicle seatbelt over the cushion structure.

* * * * *