



US005958763A

United States Patent [19]
Goffe

[11] **Patent Number:** **5,958,763**
[45] **Date of Patent:** **Sep. 28, 1999**

[54] **CELL CULTURE INCUBATOR**

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[21] Appl. No.: **09/128,577**

[22] Filed: **Aug. 4, 1998**

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[60] Division of application No. 08/740,729, Nov. 1, 1996, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 08/512,546, Aug. 8, 1995, Pat. No. 5,622,857, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. PCT/US94/02140, Feb. 9, 1994.

[51] **Int. Cl.**⁶ **C12M 1/02**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **435/303.1; 435/809; 312/31; 312/257.1; 312/108; 312/236; 220/4.28**

[58] **Field of Search** 435/286.6, 289.1, 435/303.1, 809; 422/104; 312/31, 107, 108, 111, 236, 257.1, 263, 264, 265.5, 265.6, 31.02; 220/4.01, 4.28, 4.31, 4.32, 500, 501, 553; 600/22; 219/400; 34/219, 225

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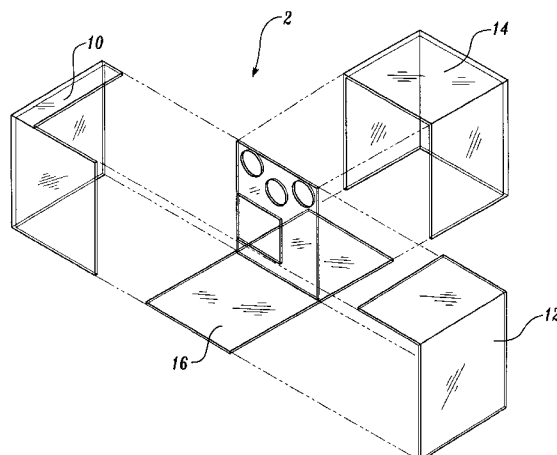
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[57]

ABSTRACT

A cell culture incubator has a chamber divided into an incubation portion and a control portion. The incubation portion is adapted to contain a cell culture receptacle. A cell culture receptacle agitator is located in the control portion of the incubator and linkage between the cell culture receptacle agitator and the incubation portion of the chamber causes agitation of the cell culture receptacle. A heater in the control portion of the chamber heats air from the external environment and transports the heated air to the incubation portion of the chamber. A wall divides the chamber into the incubation portion and the control portion. The heater may be a forced air heater that provides a positive pressure to the incubation portion of the chamber to reduce contamination in the incubation portion. A nutrient and gas circulation system communicates with the cell culture receptacle in the incubation portion of the chamber. The nutrient and gas circulation system includes a gas source external to the incubation portion of the chamber and tubing provides communication between the gas source, the cell culture receptacle in the incubation portion of the chamber, and nutrient media. A filter in an opening of the incubation portion of the chamber communicates with the tubing to remove contaminants from gas emanating from the cell culture receptacle prior to venting to the external environment.

4 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



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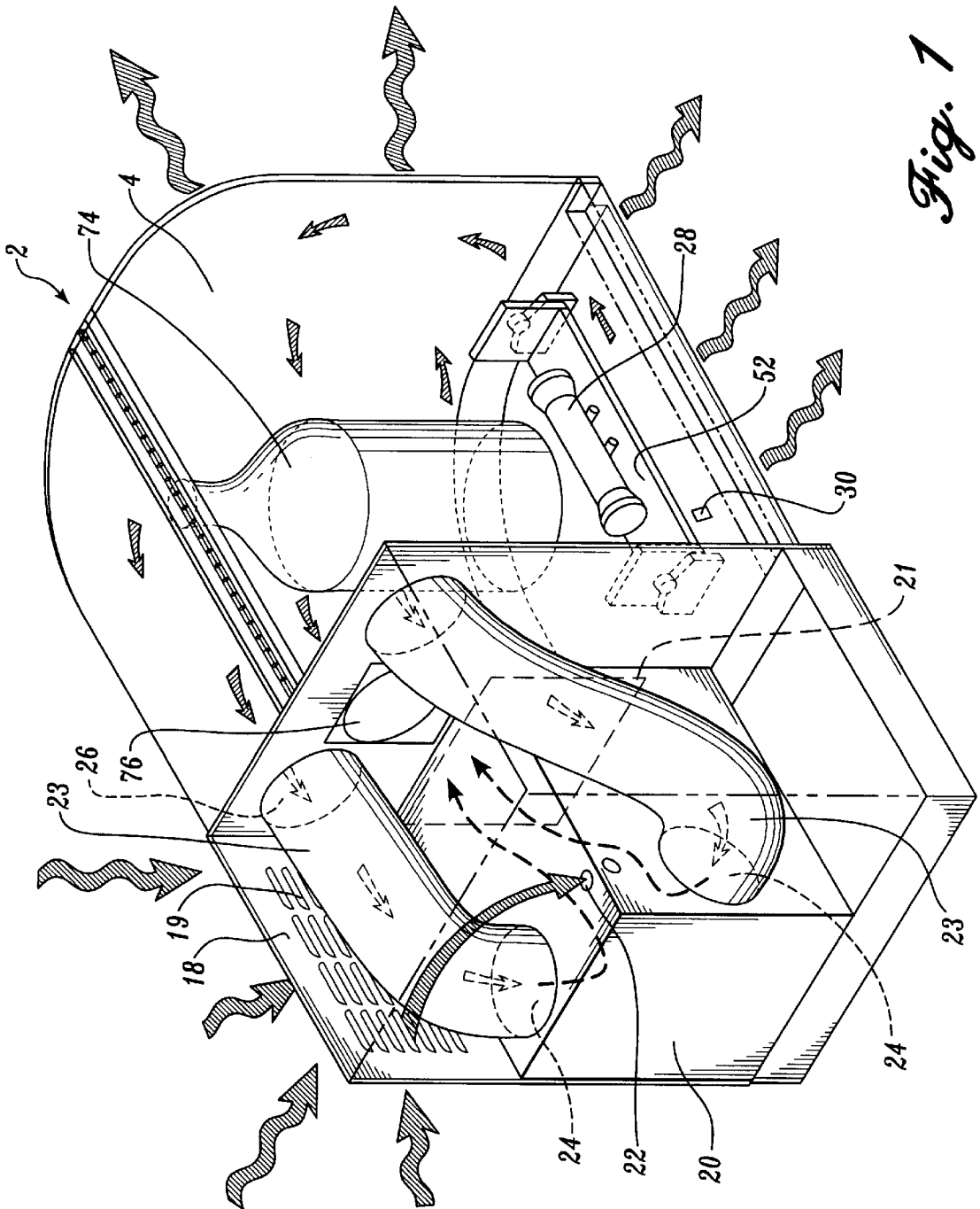


Fig. 1

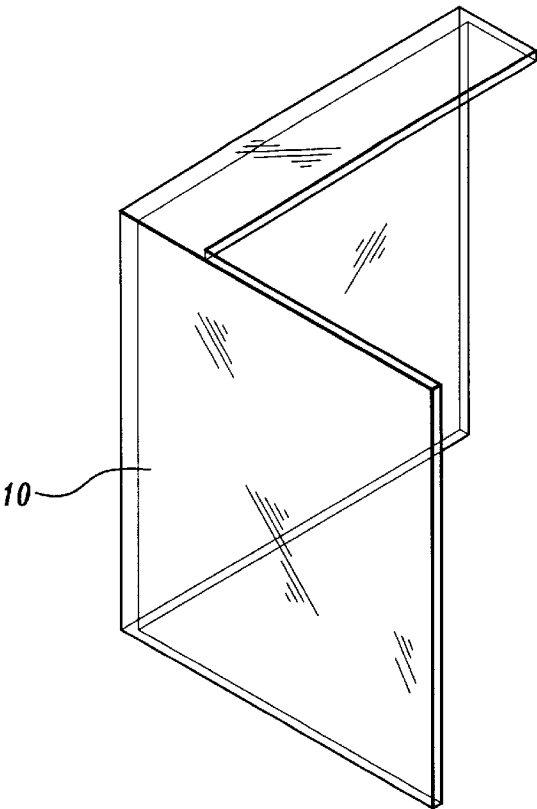


Fig. 2

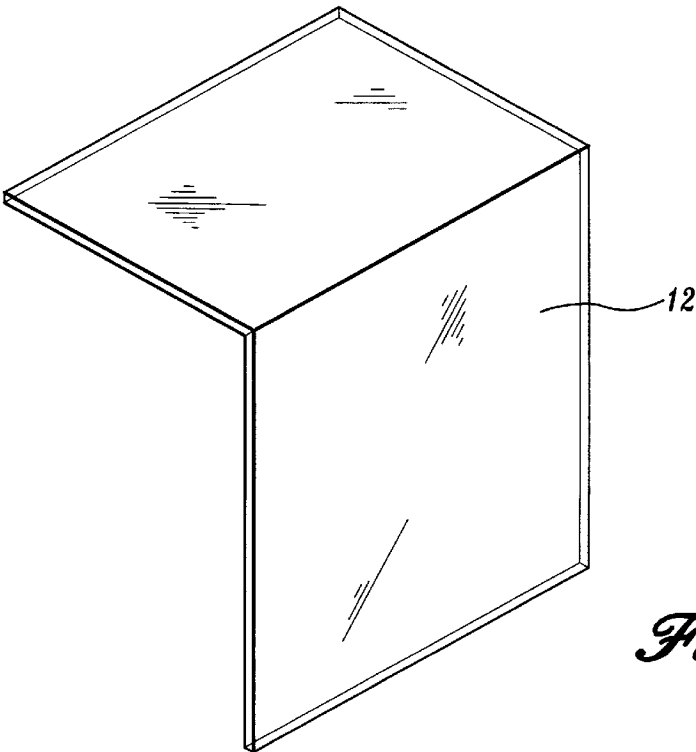


Fig. 3

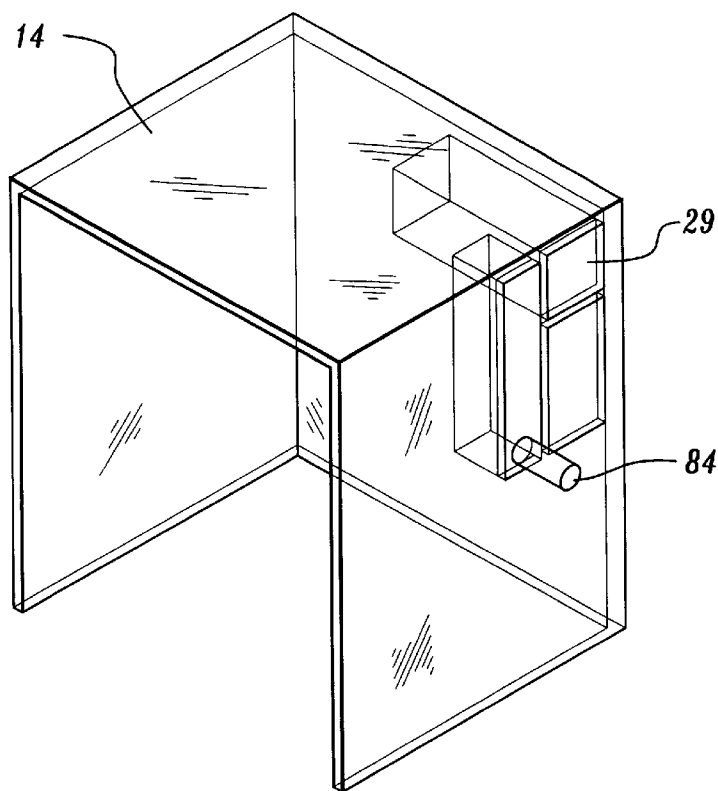


Fig. 4

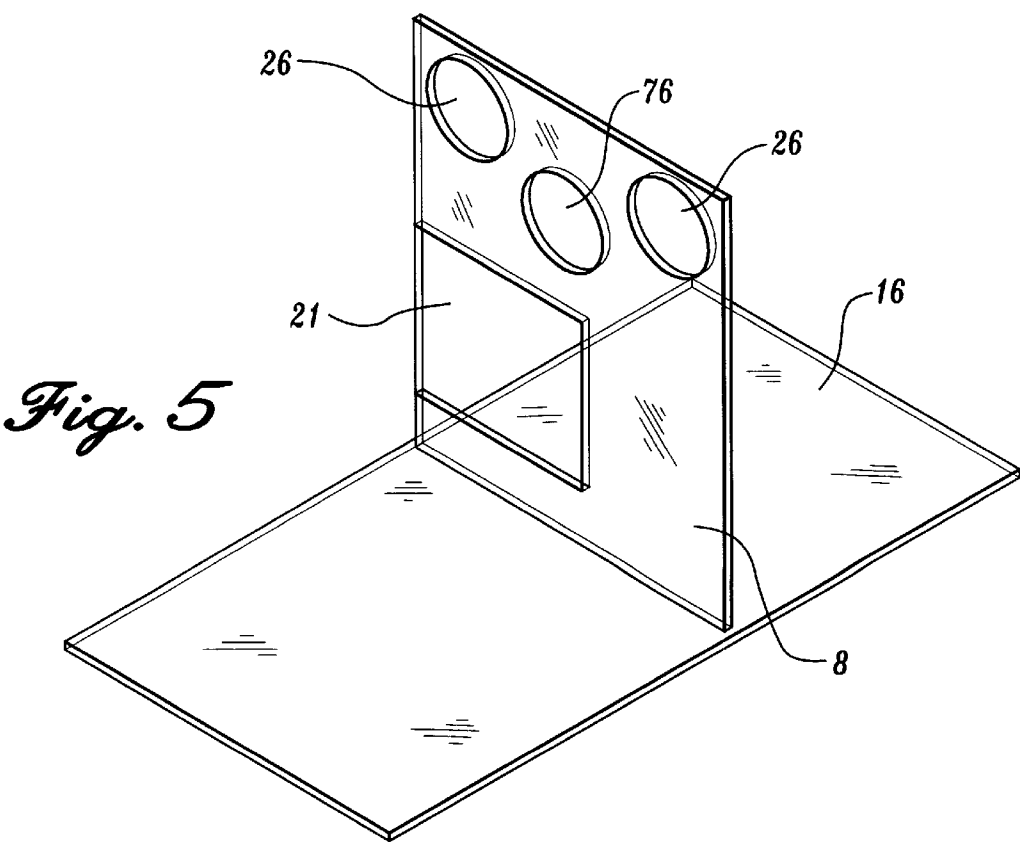
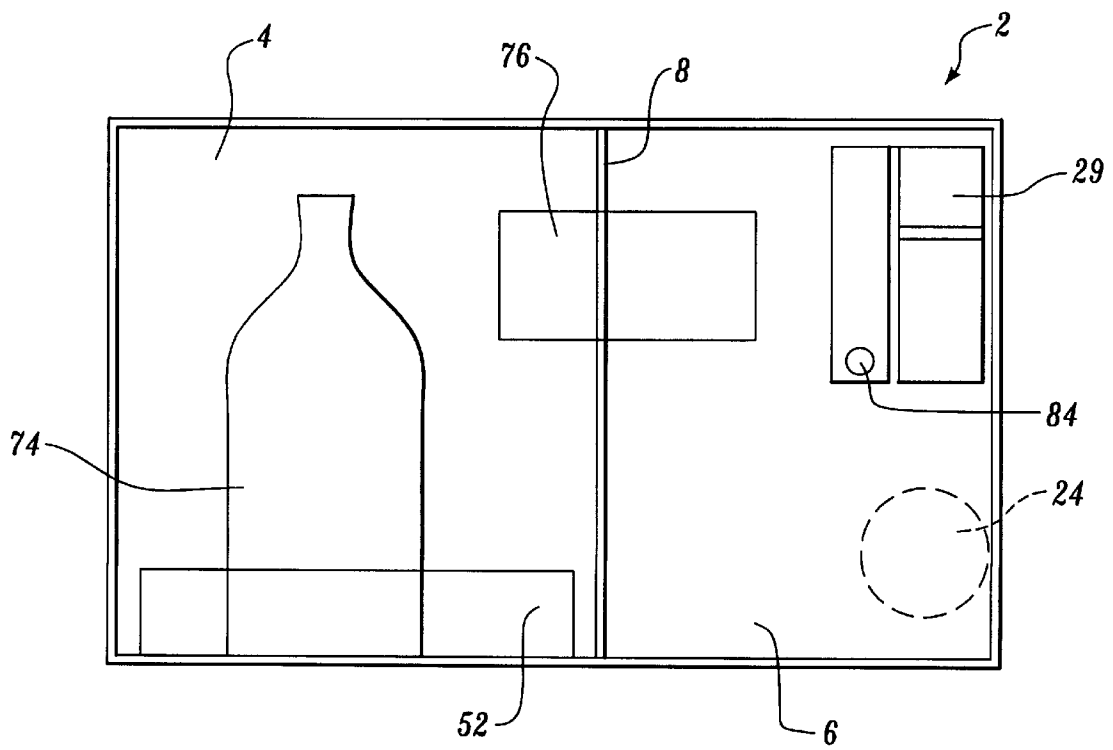
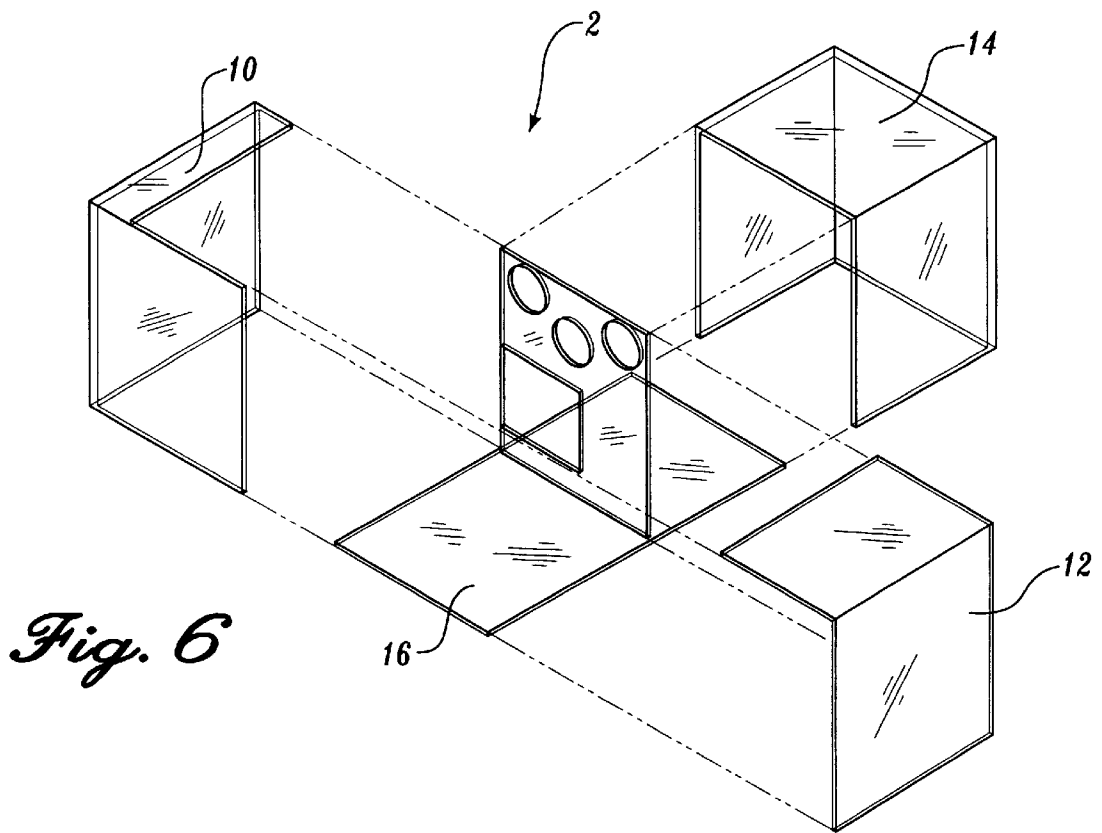


Fig. 5



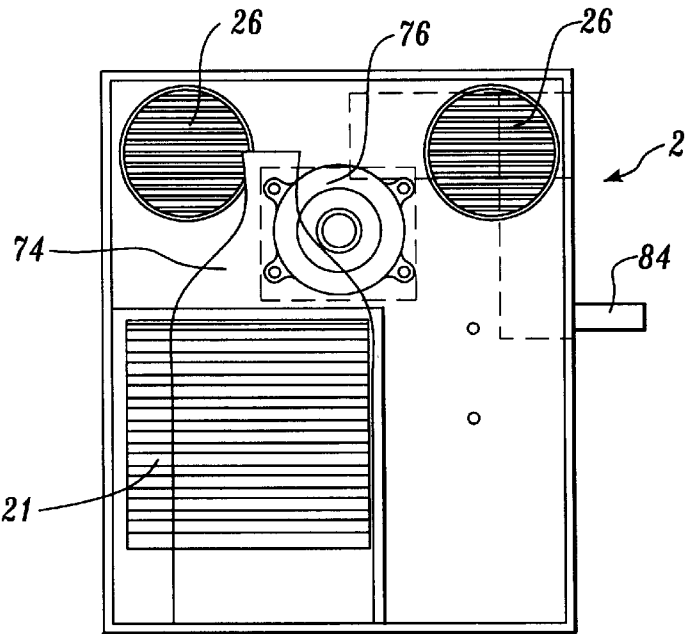


Fig. 8

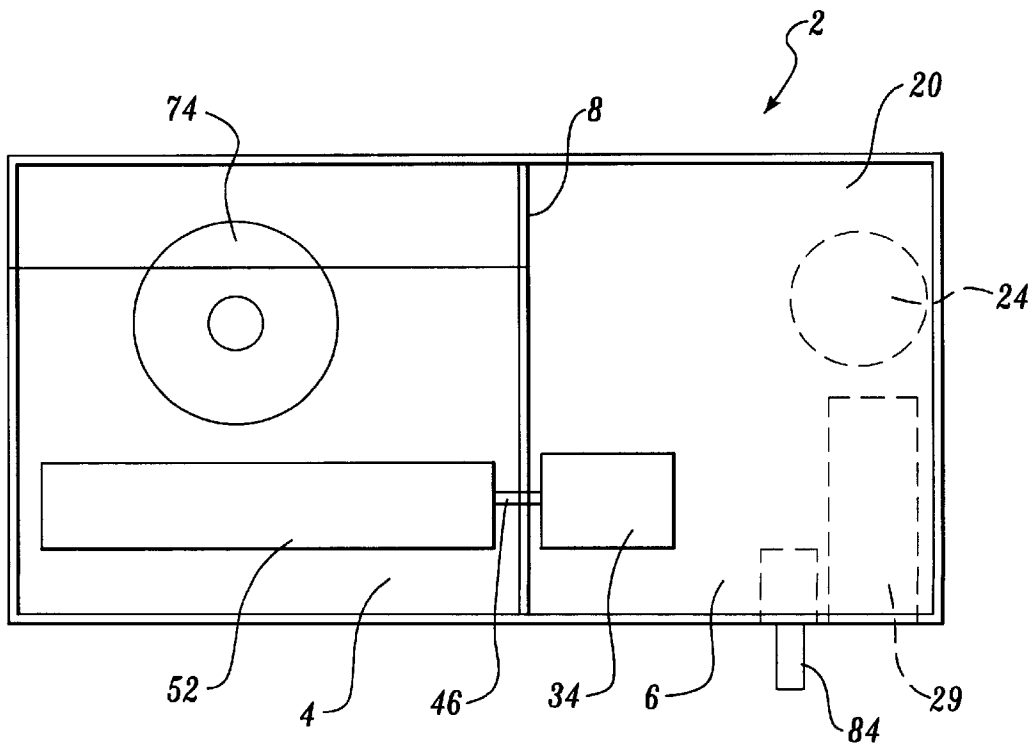


Fig. 9

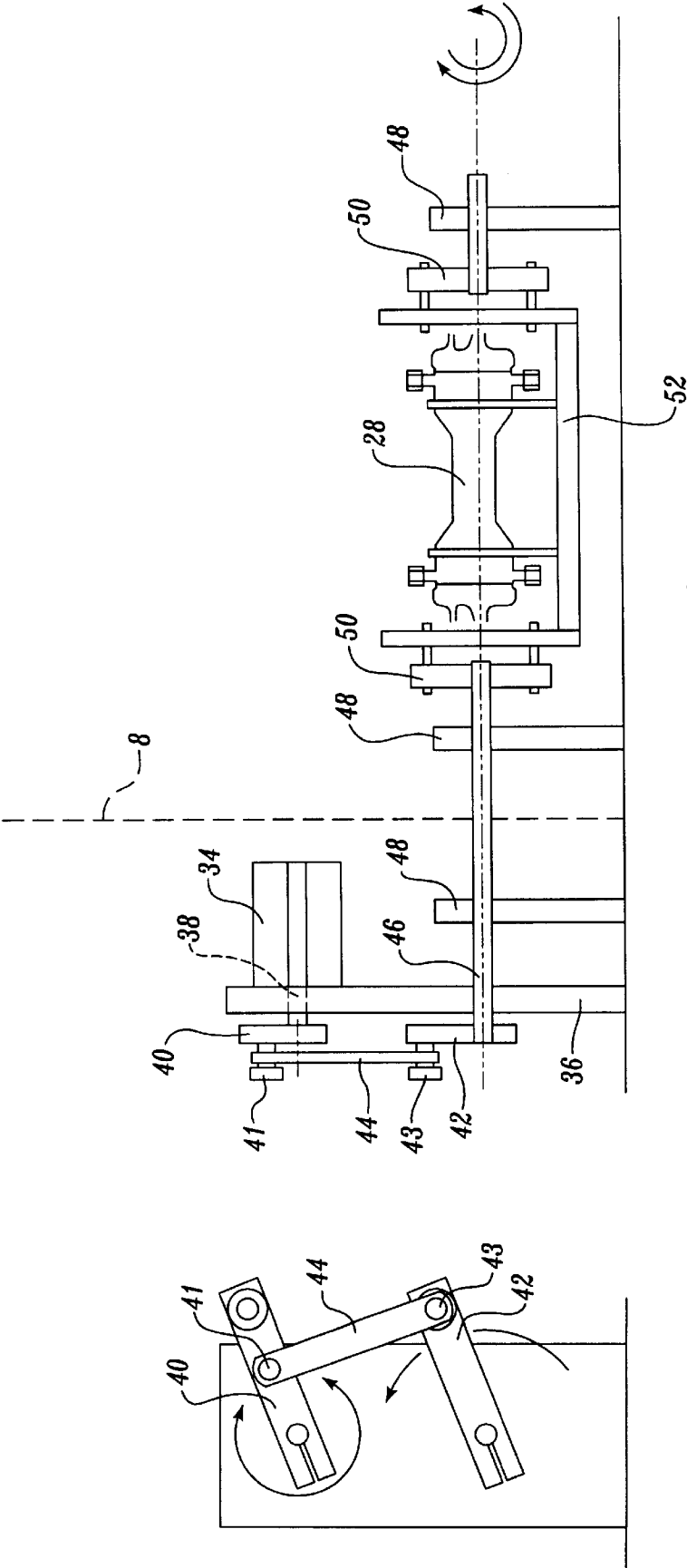
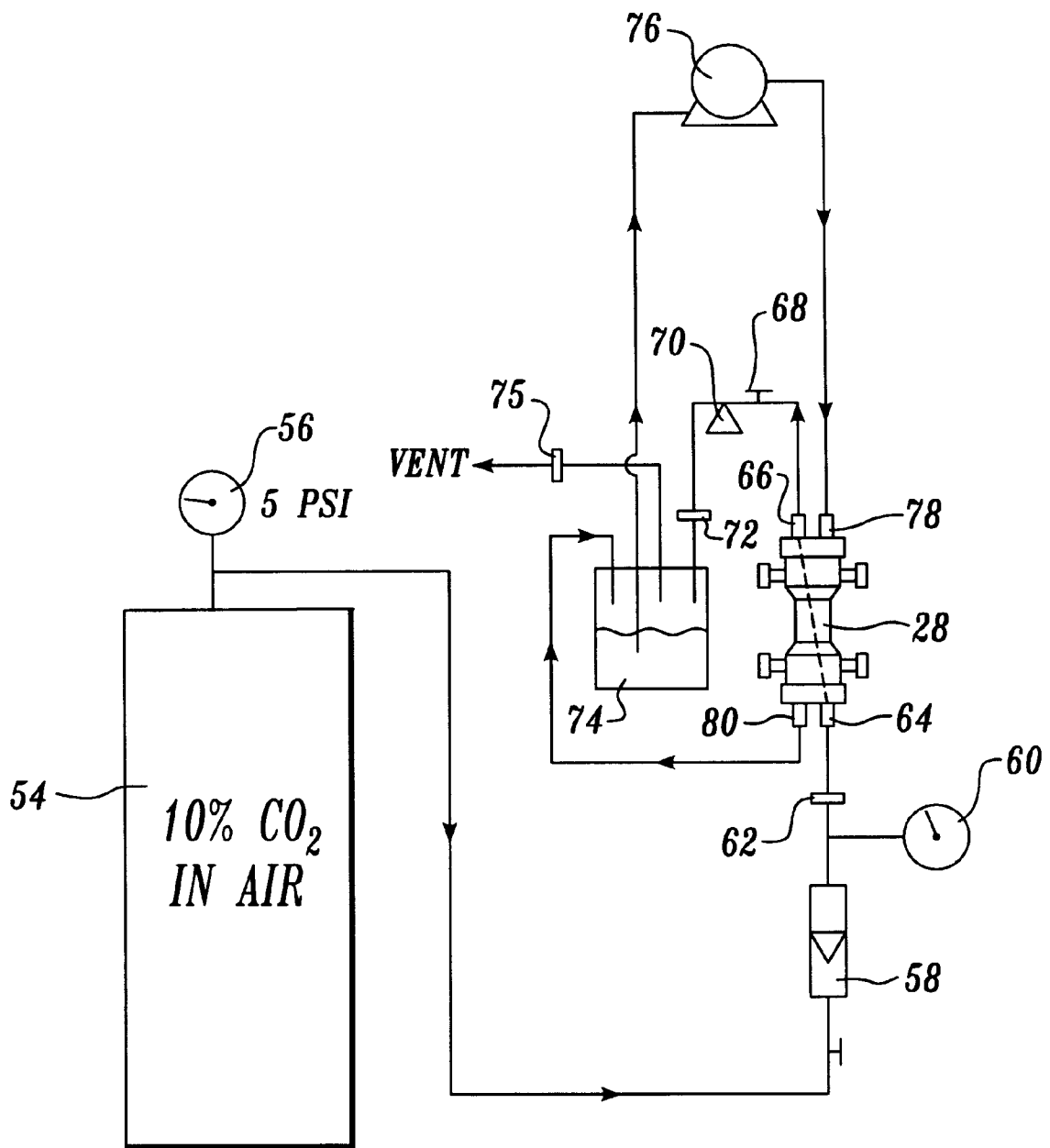


Fig. 10

Fig. 10A

*Fig. 11*

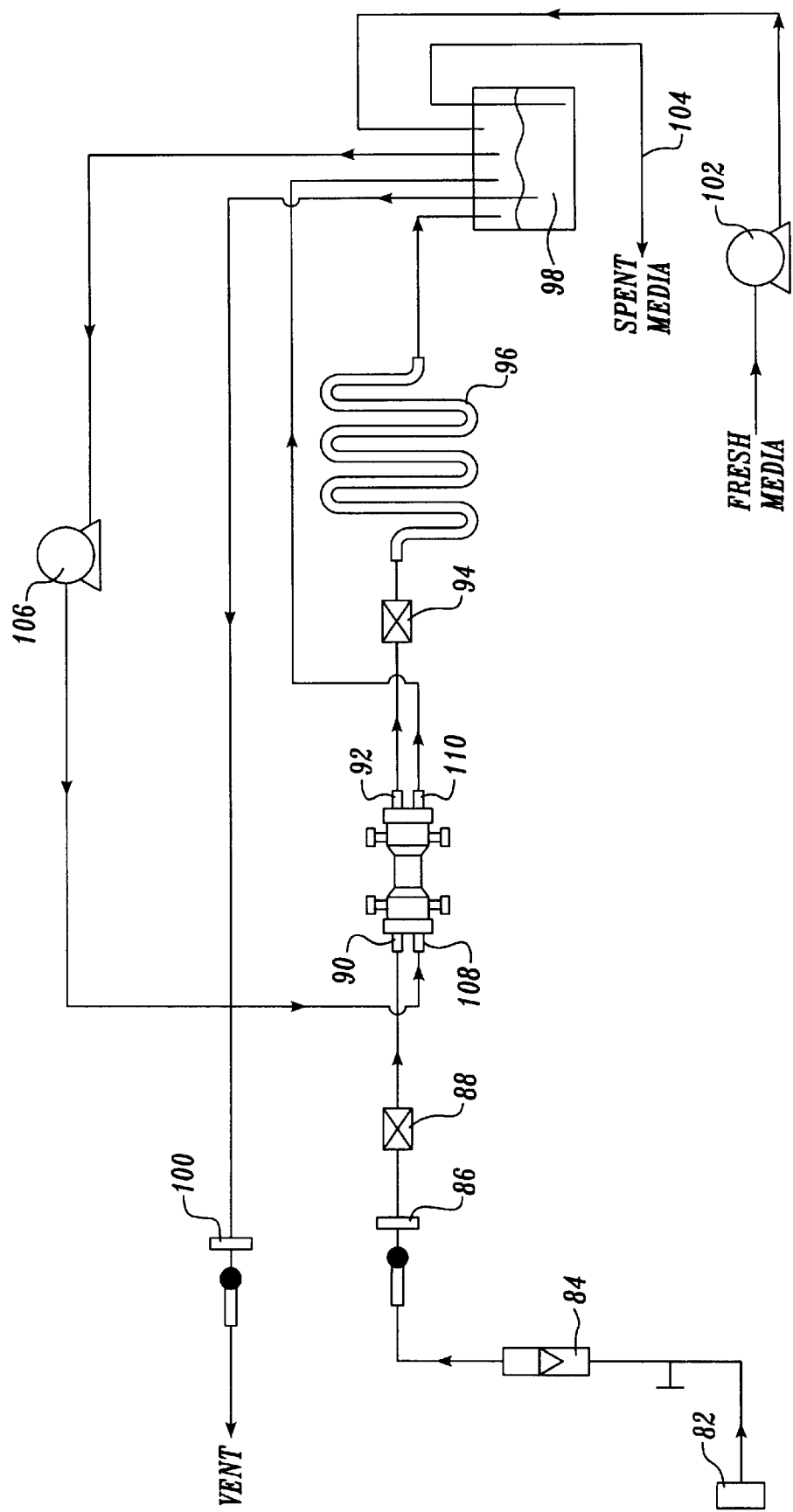


Fig. 12

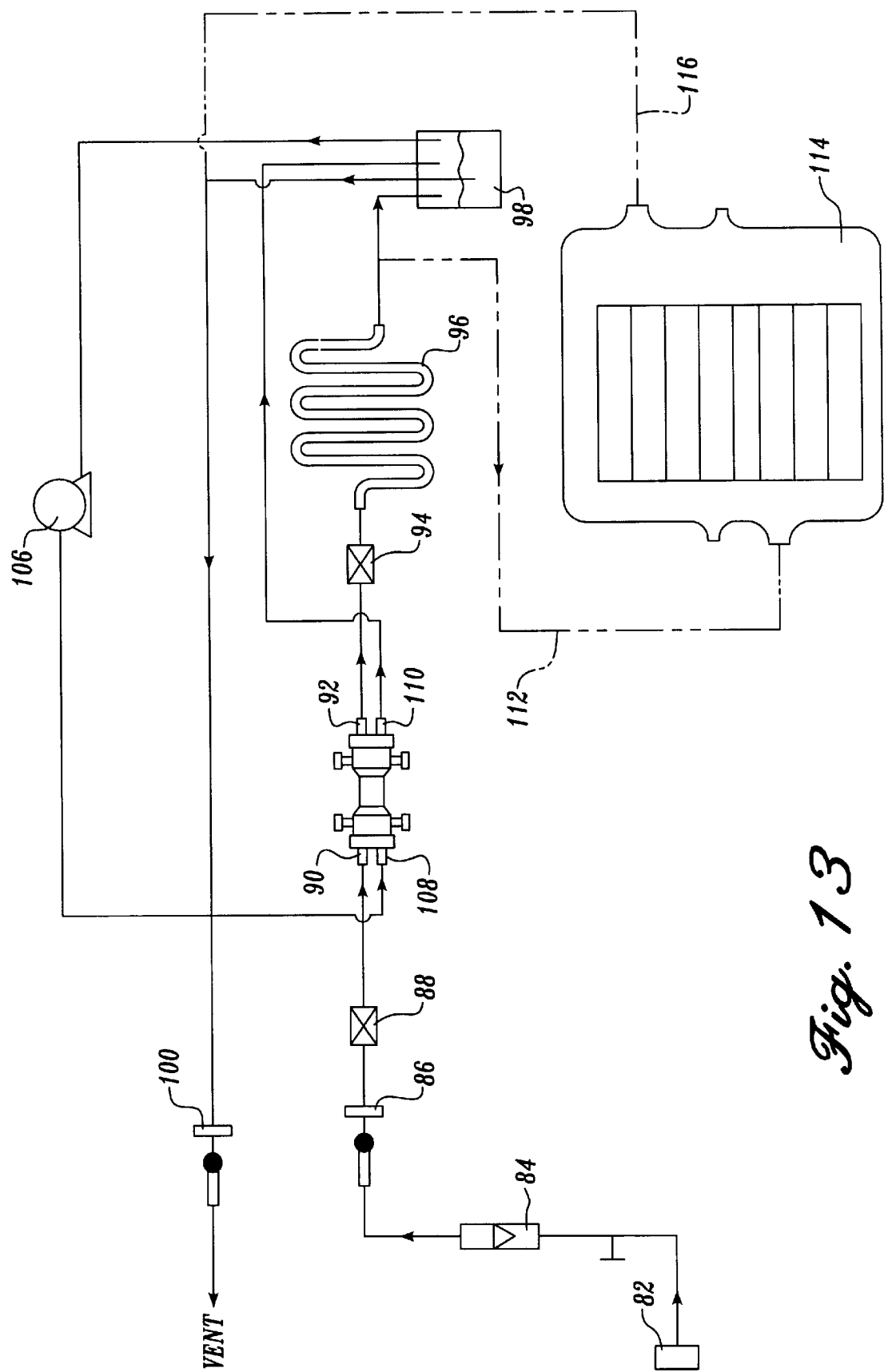


Fig. 13

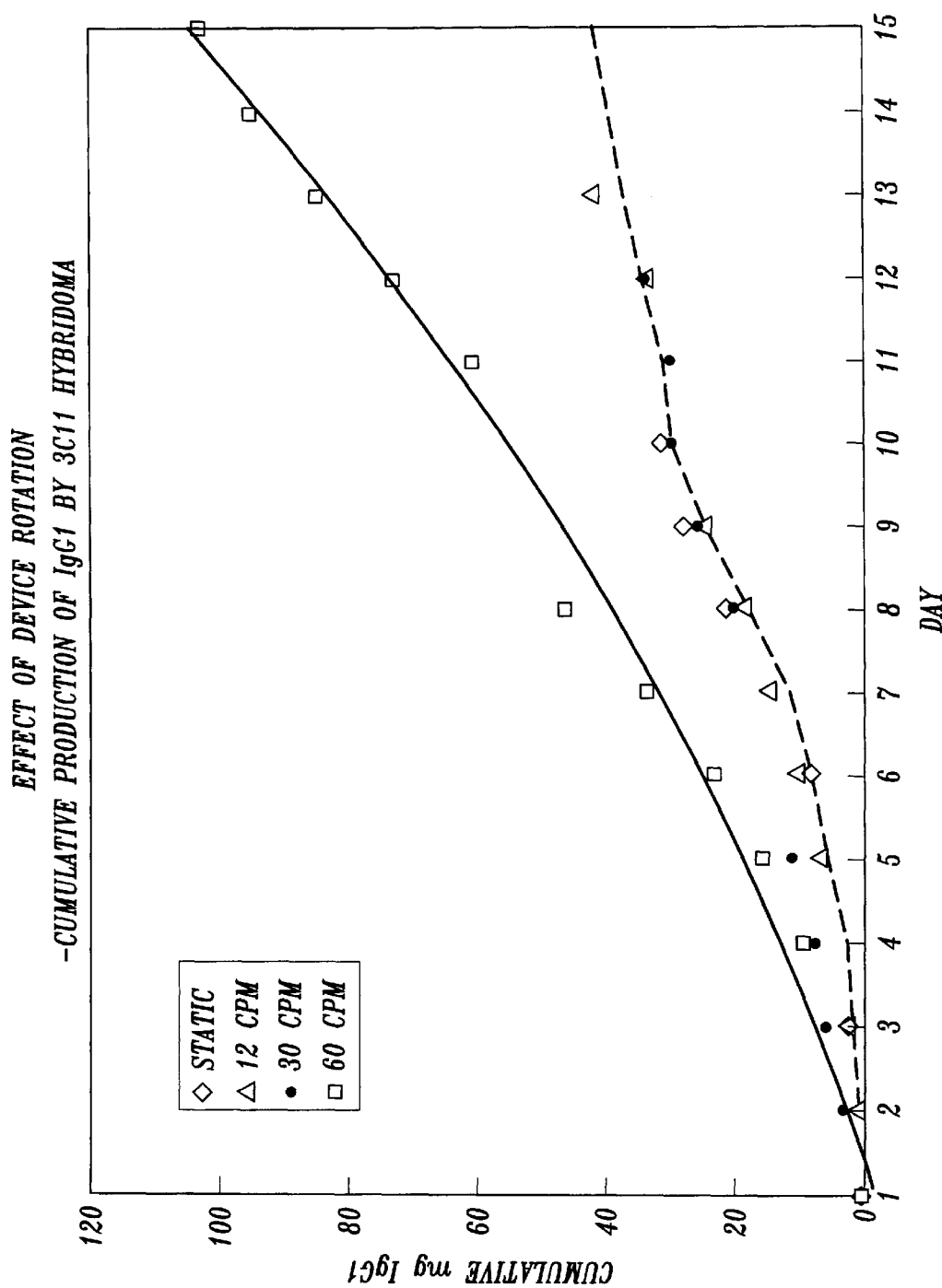


Fig. 14

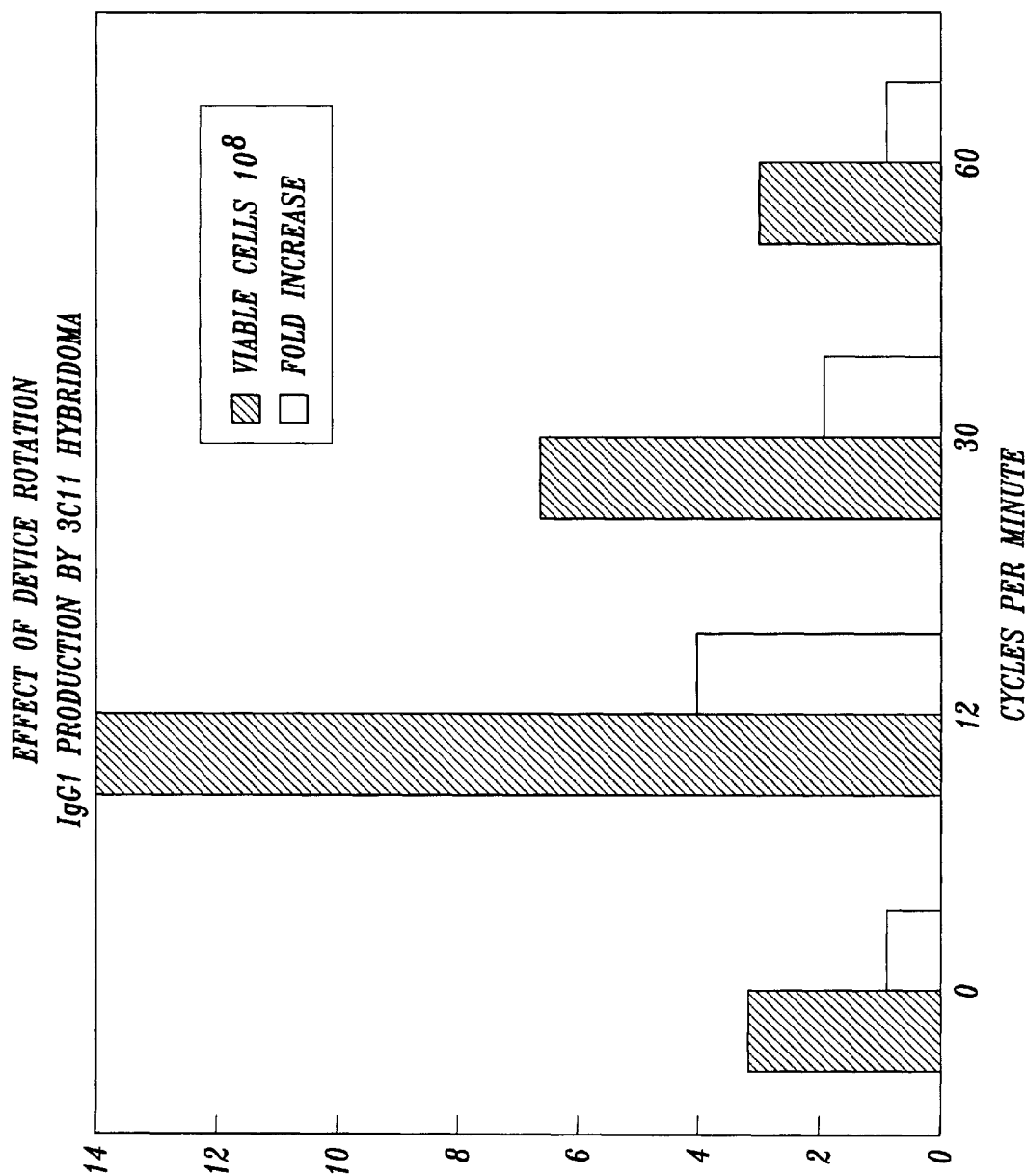


Fig. 15

CELL CULTURE INCUBATOR

STATEMENT OF RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a divisional of U.S. Ser. No. 08/740, 729 filed Nov. 1, 1996, which is in turn a continuation-in-part of U.S. Ser. No. 08/512,546 filed Aug. 8, 1995 now U.S. Pat. No. 5,622,857, which is in turn a continuation-in-part of PCT/US94/02140 filed Feb. 9, 1994.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to an incubator instrument for the operation of perfusion cell culture processes on the laboratory bench without any special sterility or biohazard features in the working environment. In addition, this invention provides the means for mixing both perfusion and non-perfusion based cell culture processes. Furthermore, the means for achieving a controlled CO₂ atmosphere and the required temperature (e.g., at 37° C.) is provided for perfusion, mixed and static cultures. Additionally, the invention relates to the use of poly anionic media additives which enhance attachment of adherent cells to microcarriers while mixing at relatively high speeds, and provide other benefits by facilitating in vivo-like conditions in perfusion culture systems.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The standard practice in cell culture is to employ a CO₂ incubator to provide the gaseous atmosphere and temperature control required in static culture processes. These processes include the use of multiwell plates, culture dishes, flasks and the like. The relatively large size of standard CO₂ incubators (with an inside working volume of about 19 in. wide×26 in. high×19 in. deep), has been used to accommodate small scale processes employing perfusion and mixing equipment, such as pumps and roller mills. Besides being highly inconvenient, such use of CO₂ incubators require substantial capital expenditures and space utilization.

From a process efficiency standpoint, perfusion cell culture processes in which O₂/CO₂ containing gases are provided to the cultured cells by a direct means are the methods of choice. Various costly, cumbersome, and complex instrument systems have been developed to operate perfusion and mix/stirred culture systems. While performance improvements can be achieved with such systems, they are invariably dedicated and rather inflexible instruments. Also, the failure rate of these stand alone instruments tend to be relatively high. The primary cause of failure is a malfunction of the hot plate which is typically employed for heating the media reservoir. Reports from users of the heater over shooting the set point and an inability to accurately control the temperature in long-term experiments are not uncommon. Most important of all, the instruments are extremely user unfriendly; often requiring years of experience in order to competently conduct a series of complete procedures without the intervention of a technical expert.

The creation of in vivo-like conditions in cell culture systems is a long-standing challenge. Perfusion and mixed/stirred systems are particularly problematic because cells are exposed to shared forces and other effects related to motion which are not normally experienced in vivo. While attachment factors and extracellular matrix components have become increasing employed in the last 20 years, they remain a research curiosity primarily due to economic reasons. An inexpensive cell culture media additive is required which has general applicability. Such a molecule should fulfill the following three requirements:

(i) enhance cell adhesion in a non-selective way, such that mixing/stirring can proceed efficiently in large scale culture systems;

(ii) manipulations of cells in culture (e.g., genetic transformations) must proceed unimpeded; and,

(iii) culture conditions approaching the cellular environment found in tissues must be advanced.

Definitions

CO₂—carbon dioxide gas for maintaining pH, in combination with bicarbonate buffer in the cell culture nutrient media.

Incubator—an instrument designed to provide the culture environment for cells.

O₂—oxygen gas, necessary for biological cells to respire.

HPBR—high performance (hollow fiber) bioreactor; a perfusion cell culture device having, for example, a central bi-directional hollow fiber bundle that supplies media, and an outer fiber bundle area that supplies oxygen needed for cell culture.

cpm—cycles per minute, which is the number of 120 degree (for example) complete bi-directional partial rotations of the device in the period of a minute.

Lipofection—introduction of foreign DNA into a host cell which is mediated by cationic lipids that form positively charged liposomes.

Transfection—a process whereby foreign DNA, which is not capable of integrating into the host cell's genome, is introduced into the host cell.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A cell culture incubator has a chamber divided into an incubation portion and a control portion. The incubation portion is adapted to contain a cell culture receptacle. A cell culture receptacle agitator is located in the control portion of the incubator and linkage between the cell culture receptacle agitator and the incubation portion of the chamber causes agitation of the cell culture receptacle. A heater in the control portion of the chamber heats air from the external environment and transports the heated air to the incubation portion of the chamber. A wall divides the chamber into the incubation portion and the control portion. The heater may be a forced air heater that provides a positive pressure to the incubation portion of the chamber to reduce contamination in the incubation portion. A nutrient and gas circulation system communicates with the cell culture receptacle in the incubation portion of the chamber. The nutrient and gas circulation system includes a gas source external to the incubation portion of the chamber and tubing provides communication between the gas source, the cell culture receptacle in the incubation portion of the chamber, and nutrient media. A filter in an opening of the incubation portion of the chamber communicates with the tubing to remove contaminants from gas emanating from the cell culture receptacle prior to venting to the external environment.

The invention provides a small footprint benchtop incubator instrument designed to accommodate perfusion mixed and static cell culture processes. To accommodate perfusion processes, the invention is equipped with a peristaltic pump for use with sterile disposable tubing sets of varying configurations. The tubing sets provide the means for circulate nutrient media from a reservoir. O₂/CO₂ containing gases are supplied from a premixed gas cylinder, and sterility/biohazard concerns are addressed by a series of strategically

placed 0.22 μm hydrophobic disc filters. The tubing set design enables a closed loop recirculation of gases and, optionally, an auxiliary supply of the defined gas mixture can be delivered to a disposable flow through chamber which can contain culture plates, flasks and the like. Alternatively, the gas flow tubing set can be modified to supply sterile defined O_2/CO_2 gas mixtures to roller bottle cultures and the like. Temperature is maintained in the working volume of the incubator by thermostatically controlled recirculating air, which is maintained at positive pressure relative to ambient conditions. The invention further provides a means for mixing either a perfusion or other batch culture vessels, such as a culture flask or bottle. Sufficient space is provided in the working volume of the incubator such that a reasonable number of culture dishes or flasks can be cultured under identical conditions, which may be critical in process development and scale-up activities. Thus, controls or even inoculum expansion can be cultured in parallel.

In addition, the invention provides for the use of chondroitin sulfate (type C) as a cell culture media additive to enhance adhesion of anchorage dependent cells to micro-carriers while mixing and stirring.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing aspects and many of the attendant advantages of this invention will become more readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description, when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view, partially exposed, showing the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a first modular component of the chamber of the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of a second modular component of the chamber of the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a third modular component of the chamber of the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of a fourth modular component of the chamber of the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is an exploded perspective view of the interrelationship between the four components of FIGS. 2 through 5 that form the chamber of the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 7 is an exposed front view of the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 8 is an exposed end view of the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 9 is an exposed view of the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 10 is a detailed side view of the agitator assembly of the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 10A is a detailed view of the crank, cam, and the rod of the agitator assembly of the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 11 is a schematic view of the nutrient and gas circulation system, continuous-batch process, for the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 12 is a schematic view of the nutrient and gas circulation system, continuous process, for the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 13 is a schematic view of the nutrient and gas circulation system, auxiliary gas supply, for the cell culture incubator of the present invention;

FIG. 14 is a graph of the effect of cell agitation in the cell culture incubator of the present invention on cumulative product of IgG₁ monoclonal antibody by 3C11 hybridoma cells; and

FIG. 15 is a bar graph of the effect of cell agitation in the cell culture incubator of the present invention on 3C11 hybridoma cell viability and fold increase.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

As shown in FIG. 1, the cell culture incubator of the present invention is comprised of a chamber 2 which is divided into an incubation portion 4 and a control portion 6 by wall 8. As best shown in FIGS. 2 through 6, chamber 2 is comprised of four modular components 10, 12, 14, and 16. Modular components 10, 12, 14, and 16 are preferably comprised of a synthetic polymer such as acrylic or the like and are preferably joined together by mating gaskets such that the bearing weight of modular components 10, 12, 14, and 16 joins them. As shown in FIG. 6, the joining of modular components 10, 12, 14, and 16 form chamber 2 of the cell culture incubator of the present invention in an economical and convenient manner.

Referring to FIGS. 1, 7, 8, and 9, chamber 2 of the cell culture incubator of the present invention includes four basic systems which optimally facilitate incubation of cell cultures: Temperature Regulation System, Media Circulation System, Gas Flow System, and Culture Agitation System.

The Temperature Regulation System includes air inlet 18 which allows air from the external environment to enter control portion 6 of chamber 2. Optimally, if improved sterility is desired, a filter 19 of, for example, 0.22 μm porosity can be placed adjacent air inlet 18 to ensure that ambient air entering control portion 6 of chamber 2 does not contain contaminants. Once air enters control portion 6 of chamber 2 through air inlet 18, it passes into hot box 20 through hot box inlets 22. Located within hot box 20 is a forced air heater 21 that increases the thermodynamic energy of the air in hot box 20. Heater 21, preferably mounted in wall 8, forces the heated air through wall 8, and then into incubation portion 4 where cell culture receptacle 28 (such as a HPBr hollow fiber device) is located. In order to maintain equilibrium, a portion of the now cooled air that was first heated and forced into incubation portion 4 from control portion 6 is recycled to hot box 20 in control portion 6 through conduits 23 that connect return openings 24 in hot box 20 to incubator portion air outlets 26 in wall 8. Heated air in incubation portion 4 that does not return to control portion 6 through incubation portion air outlet 26, is expelled into to the external environment through interstices between modular components 10, 12, 14, and 16. Thus, a substantially open, laminar flow system with minimal pressure build-up is provided. In this manner, rapid temperature responses combined with accurate and stable temperature control, relative to the set point, are achieved. Preferably, the slightly positive pressure in the incubation portion 4 of chamber 2 relative to ambient pressure reduces the possibility of contaminants from ambient air entering incubation portion 4 of chamber 2. In order to ensure the aforesaid accurate and stable temperature control, a temperature controller 29 such as Model No. CN76120 manufactured by Omega Engineering Incorporated of Stamford, Conn., which

is a one-pulse output microprocessor with an alarm, may be employed. Additionally, located within incubation portion 4 of chamber 2 there is preferably located a thermocouple 30, for example, Model No. 5TC-TT-T-24-36 manufactured by Omega Engineering Incorporated of Stamford, Conn., which provides feedback to the above temperature controller 29 and is preferably insulated with, for example, "TEFLON" or the like.

In summary, the above temperature regulation system allows the desired thermodynamic energy to be provided for incubation portion 6 while maintaining a cooler environment in control portion 4 such that the electrical and mechanical components therein are not subject to thermodynamic-based fatigue and damage.

Culture Agitation System

The Culture Agitation System of the present invention, as best shown in FIGS. 1, 7, 9, 10, and 10A includes motor 34 located on motor mount 36 and having drive rod 38 passing through motor mount 36. Drive rod 38 is fixedly connected to crank 40, and crank 40 is connected to cam 42 by tie rod 44, as shown in FIG. 10A. It is to be noted that tie rod 44 is pivotally connected to both crank 40 and cam 42 at pivot points 41 and 43 that are offset from the axes of rotation of crank 40 and cam 42, respectively, such that 360 degree rotation of drive rod 38 and crank 40 causes a bi-directional partial rotation of about, for example, 120 degree of cam 42. Cam 42 is fixedly attached to axle 46, which is supported by axle mounts 48. It is important to note that all of the above elements are entirely located within the relatively cooler control portion 6 of chamber 2, with the exception of axle 46 which spans both control portion 6 of chamber 2 and incubation portion 4 of chamber 2, and some of axle mounts 48 which are located within incubation portion 4 of chamber 2. Also located within incubation portion 4 of chamber 2 are cradle supports 50 which connect cradle 52 to axle 46. In cradle 52' is located cell culture receptacle 28. In operation, the 360 degree rotation of drive rod 38 and crank 40, which is translated to approximately 120 degree bi-directional partial rotation of cam 42 and axle 46 by the interconnection of cam 42 and crank 40 by tie rod 44, causes approximately 120 degree bi-directional partial rotation of cradle 52 and cell culture receptacle 28 to effectuate the appropriate cell culture agitation within the cell culture receptacle 28. Motor 34 preferably has four settings; static, low (12 ± 3 cpm), medium (30 ± 3 cpm), and high (60 ± 3 cpm).

While the above embodiment employs translation of 360 degree rotation to 120 degree bi-directional partial rotation, partial rotations of other degree components could be employed, as well as total 360 degree rotation, axial reciprocation, vertical reciprocation, or a combination of the above.

During cell culture agitation, it is often desirable to employ proactive media components in the cell culture. Preferably, chondroitin sulfate (Type C) is employed as a media component when anchorage dependent cells are cultured in order to enhance attachment to the carrier surface (e.g., microcarriers) during agitation. The preferred concentration range of chondroitin sulfate (Type C) is molecular weight dependent. However, at a mean molecular weight of about 4,000 daltons, the preferred concentration is in the range of about 0.005 mM to 0.5 mM.

Media Circulation System and Gas Flow System

The Media Circulation System and the Gas Flow System are two separate and discrete systems of the present invention, however they will be discussed in tandem for the sake of clarity with the divisions being based upon the type of process being employed or the presence of auxiliary

functions as shown in FIGS. 11, 12, and 13. For example, FIG. 11 shows both the Media Circulation System and Gas Flow System used in a continuous-batch process, FIG. 12 shows the Media Circulation System and Gas Flow System in a continuous process and FIG. 13 shows the Media Circulation System and Gas Flow System employing an auxiliary gas supply.

First, referring to FIG. 11, which shows the Media Circulation System and Gas Flow System for the present invention employing a continuous-batch process, the Gas Flow System includes a gas source 54, for example about 10% CO₂ in air having a pressure valve 56 and supplying the pressurized gas at about 5 pounds per square inch, for example. Next, in the Gas Flow System, the pressurized gas passes through flow meter 58 which may be, for example, Model No. H-32013-01, a 50 milliliter per minute aluminum and stainless steel flow meter manufactured by Cole Parmer Instrument Company, Vernon Hills, Ill. An optional check valve and an optional flow restrictor (as shown in FIG. 12) set the back pressure of gas in cell culture receptacle 28 in conjunction with flow meter 58. When employed, the check valve is selected to prevent a maximum pressure of, for example, about 0.5 to 1.0 psi. from being exceeded. Prior to entering cell culture receptacle 28, the gas passes through pressure gauge 60 to measure the back pressure in the cell culture receptacle 28, and then flows through hydrophobic filter 62, which is preferably a filter having a porosity of about 0.22 μ m. After entering inlet 64 and infusing cell culture receptacle 28, the gas flows out of outlet 66 and through back pressure valve 68 and condenser 70. Condenser 70 is preferably a coiled section of the plastic tubing which preferably forms the lines of the Gas Flow System and the Media Circulation System. Most preferably, condenser 70 contains glass or plastic beads or particles to maximize the condensation of water vapor entrained by the gas in the cell culture receptacle 28. Next, the gas passes through another hydrophobic filter 72 having a preferred porosity of about 0.22 μ m and then enters the head space of media reservoir 74; in this manner the preferably CO₂ containing gas maintains the required pH of the media. The gas is then expelled from the incubation portion 4 of chamber 2 through a gas vent orifice therein and into the external environment after passing through hydrophobic filter 75, preferably having a porosity of about 0.22 μ m.

In the Media Circulation System of the continuous-batch process, media from media reservoir 74 passes through pump 76, which is preferably a peristaltic pump Model No. 15PB with a 200 cycle per minute motor manufactured by Barnat Company, Gilmont Instrument, Barrington, Ill. After passing through pump 76, the media enters inlet 78 of cell culture receptacle 28 where nutrients are provided to the culture. The spent media then passes through outlet 80 of cell culture receptacle 28 where it returns to media reservoir 74. Periodic changes of media reservoir 74 in a long-term cell culture procedure defines this process as a continuous-batch process.

Referring to FIG. 12, which shows the Media Circulation System and Gas Flow System for the present invention employing a continuous process, the gas flow system includes gas source 82 (for example, about 10% CO₂ in air at about 5 pounds per square inch), which communicates with flow meter 84 (for example, Model No. H-32013-01, a 50 milliliter per minute aluminum and stainless steel flow meter manufactured by Cole Parmer Instrument Company, Vernon Hills, Ill.). Hydrophobic filter 86, which preferably has a porosity of about 0.22 μ m receives the gas from flow meter 84. Next, the gas flows through check valve 88 which,

in conjunction with flow meter **84** and gas flow restrictor **94** (described later) sets the back pressure of gas in cell culture receptacle **28** to the predetermined level. Check valve **88** is selected to prevent a maximum pressure of, for example, about 0.5 to 1.0 psi from being exceeded. After entering inlet **90** and infusing cell culture receptacle **28**, the gas flows out of outlet **92**, through flow restrictor **94**, and into condenser **96**. Condenser **96** is preferably a coiled section of the plastic tubing, preferably made from the same material as the plastic tubing, which preferably forms the lines of the Gas Flow System and the Media Circulation System. Most preferably, condenser **96** contains glass or plastic beads or particles to maximize the condensation of water vapor entrained by the gas in the cell culture receptacle **28**. The gas then flows into the head space of media reservoir **98**; in this manner, the preferably CO₂-containing gas maintains the required pH of the media. The gas is then expelled from the incubation portion **4** of chamber **2** through a gas vent orifice therein and into the external environment after passing through hydrophobic filter **100**, preferably having a porosity of about 0.22 μ m.

In the Media Circulation System of the continuous process, fresh media is infused into media reservoir **98** from pump **102** while spent media from media reservoir **98** is discharged into the external environment through line **104**. The amount of spent media passing through line **104** is directly proportional to the amount of fresh media being pumped into the closed system of media reservoir **98** by pump **102**. Pump **102** is preferably a peristaltic pump Model No. 15PB with a 200 cycle per minute motor manufactured by Barnat Company, Gilmont Instrument, Barrington, Ill. Of like manufacture is pump **106** which takes up media from media reservoir **98** such that the media then enters inlet **108** of cell culture receptacle **28** where nutrients are provided to the culture. The spent media then passes through outlet **110** of cell culture receptacle **28** where it returns to media reservoir **98** to then pass through line **104** for discharge into the external environment.

Referring to FIG. **13**, which shows the Media Circulation System and Gas Flow System for the present invention employing an auxiliary gas supply, like reference numbers used in FIG. **13** that are the same reference numbers used in FIG. **12** refer to the same elements as shown in FIG. **12**. The embodiment of FIG. **13**, in which an auxiliary gas supply is employed, differs from the continuous process embodiment in FIG. **12** in that pump **102**, which supplies fresh media, and line **104**, which discharges spent media to the external environment, and which are interconnected to media reservoir **98** in the continuous process embodiment of FIG. **12**, are not present in the auxiliary gas supply embodiment of FIG. **13**. Instead, in the auxiliary gas supply embodiment of FIG. **13**, shunt **112** diverts a portion of the gas flow from condenser **96** that would enter media reservoir **98** and, instead, directs this portion of gas into flow through chamber **114**, which is designed to contain static culture vessels such as culture plates, for example. After the gas has infused the cultures in flow through chamber **114**, it exits chamber **114** through shunt **116** which joins the gas flow line from media reservoir **98** that ultimately vents to the external environment after first passing through hydrophobic filter **100**.

Culture Examples

A sterile tubing set consisting of the Gas Flow System lines and Media Circulation System lines is assembled and integrated with the nutrient media reservoir **74**, **98**, employing standard sterile procedures in a biological hood. Alcohol swabs are placed over all fittings which will be connected to corresponding instrument fittings on the laboratory bench

under ambient conditions. The entire assembly is transported to the cell culture incubator of the present invention. Alcohol swabs are employed to sterilize the instrument fittings before expeditiously removing the alcohol swabs from the tubing set fittings and completing the connections in a logical sequence.

Instrument settings (i.e., media circulation rate and gas flow rates) are selected and the tubing set leak tested for a period of time (e.g., 8–24 hours). To minimize cost, phosphate buffered saline (PBS) is recommended instead of media at this stage. However, this decision dictates that the instrument must be disassembled and the content of the media reservoir bottle changed before repeating the above steps and proceeding. Due to the relatively user friendly operational procedure, the cost savings will often more than justify the effort, with no significant risk of contamination. The gas source **54**, **82** can be changed at any time. The recommended compositional range for most cell culture procedures is between 5–10% CO₂/air. The media circulation should be discontinued when gas flow is turned off to avoid flooding the oxygenator fibers in the cell culture receptacle **28**, if an HPBr device. The present invention will maintain long-term culture with only periodic operator intervention (e.g., to take samples or to change spent media).

Both cells and microcarriers (for attachment of anchorage dependent cells) are introduced into the cell culture receptacle **28** by a hypodermic needle syringe. Similarly, cells and supernatant (i.e., used media) samples can be removed periodically from the cell culture receptacle **28** by displacement into an empty syringe with fresh media from a second syringe. While sampling with the door of the incubation portion **4** of chamber **2** open, the temperature controller **29** is switched off.

In order to periodically change spent media, the tubing set is disconnected and alcohol swabs placed over all fittings which have been disconnected. Under a biological hood, the media is exchanged and the long-term cell culture process resumed without delay.

EXAMPLE I

The invention employed an HPBr device as cell culture receptacle **28** and was assembled according to the configuration in FIG. **11**. The cell culture receptacle **28** was inoculated with 3.5×10^8 viable 3C11 hybridoma cells and cultured for between 12–15 days in the following cell culture media: DMEM containing 4 mM L-glutamine, 1 mM glutamic acid, 2.5 mM benzoate buffer (comprised of equimolar ratio of benzoic acid and sodium benzoate), and 20% fetal bovine serum. Two liters of this media was used between day 1–7, which was replaced with fresh media on day 7. A pH of between about 7.0–7.4 was maintained through out the experiment and media was recirculated at 100 mL/min. A 10% CO₂/air gas mixture was used at a flow rate of 63 mL(stp)/min and a back pressure of <1.0 psi was maintained for the duration of the experiment.

Four cell culture receptacles **28** were assemble in this manner, each using the following constant rotational speed through out the 12–15 day period: 1) static; 2) 12 \pm 3 cpm; 3) 30 \pm 3 cpm; and 4) 60 \pm 3 cpm. After allowing the cells to settle for 1 hour (every week day), 10 mL of supernatant was collected from the 17 mL volume within which the cells were cultured under perfusion conditions. The supernatant samples were stored at –20° C. until they were required for IgG₁, monoclonal antibody concentration determination by an ELISA method. On completion of the 12–15 day culture period all the cells were recovered from the cell culture receptacle **28** (i.e. >95%) by expelling the cell/supernatant

mixture with sterile air. Finally, the cell culture receptacle 28 was flushed twice with fresh media. The recovered cells were counted and viabilities were determined.

FIGS. 14 and 15 demonstrate the effect of rotation speed on both antibody production and cell viability. It is evident that 60 cpm results in a dramatic increase in productivity (i.e. in the range of about 100%), with no net increase in viable cells during the course of the experiment. In the case of biomolecule production 60 cpm is preferred. Where the goal of a cell culture process is to expend and harvest viable cells, lower cpm values (i.e., 30 cpm, 12 cpm or even static) would be preferred.

EXAMPLE II

A series of four lipofection-based gene transfection experiments were conducted in the cell culture incubator of the present invention with an HPBr device being the cell culture receptacle. The control experiment was carried out in parallel with its own control which was done in multiwell plates in an incubator. The following experimental procedures were employed.

Plate Experiment

SW480 P3 (ATCC # CCL228) colon carcinoma cells were plated in 6-well (i.e., 1×10⁶ viable cells per well). Thirteen wells were plated in this manner. Each well contained 3 mL of a stock solution comprised of 26.4 mL RPMI media, 4 mM L-glutamine 3.0 mL Fetal bovine serum, and 10 μg/mL gentamicin to make a total of 30 mL. Cells were cultured at 37° C. in a CO₂ incubator with 10% CO₂ for 24 hours prior to transfection. The cells were able to adhere to the plates during this period.

The transfection procedure was done by replacing the previous media in 1 mL OPTI-MEM media and adding a mixture of cationic lipid (DMRIE/DOPE) plasmid DNA (VR1412), both by Vical, Inc., San Diego, Calif. A molar ratio of 0.99 (i.e., 40 μL lipid: 10 μg DNA) diluted in 2.0 mL OPTI-MEM was applied to each well. These plates were incubated for 4 hours.

After 4 hours, heat deactivated fetal bovine serum plus 12.0 μL gentamicin were added to each well. For the following 13 days all of the cells from one well were trypsinized, counted, and 2×10⁴ retained as a lysed sample for β-galactosidase reporter gene determination. The remaining wells were feed with 1 mL of the previously defined RPMI media every other day (starting 24 hours after transfection), without removing the DNA containing OPTI-MEM.

At the end of the 13 day period the lysate samples were assayed for β-galactosidase via a chlorophenol red-based procedure, which were quantitated with a UV-visible spectrophotometer.

HPBr Device Experiments

Four β-galatosidase reporter gene transfection experiments were conducted in four cell culture receptacles 28 that

were HPBr-type devices with an equivalent protocol to that previously described to 6-well plates, except for the differences documented below. All features of the procedure were adjusted on a “per cell” basis. However, due to the perfusion mode of cell culture which is characteristic of the HPBr device (i.e., continuous feeding), there was no requirement for periodic feeding by hand.

Sufficient Cytodex 1 microcarriers (by Sigma, St. Louis, Mo.) were introduced into the side ports of the cell culture receptacle 28 after pre-swelling in phosphate buffered saline to have about 10 cells per microcarrier bead. 1×10⁷ SW480 viable cells injected.

Table I lists the different media conditions for the first 24 hours after inoculation and post-transfection. It also identifies the rotation parameter employed in this study. 0.1 mM chondroitin sulfate (type C) was included in the OPTI-MEM transfection media for run Nos. 2, 3, and 4. While the recirculating OPTI-MEM media was replaced by transfection, the media in the compartment containing the cells was not.

Daily samples (about 1.5 mL) of cell/supernatant were taken from each cell culture receptacle 28 and an equal amount of fresh media was used to replace it. Cell count and viability was determined and 2×10⁷ viable cells were lysed and retained for β-galactosidase determination.

TABLE I

RUN	TYPE	CONDITION	MEDIA COMPOSITION
1.	Plate	CO ₂ Incubator [control]	1 L RPMI (see above for composition)
2.	HPBr	30 cpm	839 mL RPMI; 10% fetal bovine serum; 4 mM L-glutamine; 10 g/mL gentamicin; 2.5 mM benzoate buffer; 0.1 mM chondroitin sulfate (also present in OPTI-MEM transfection media).
3.	HPBr	Static	Same as run #2.
4.	HPBr	30 cpm for first 48 hr., then static	Same as run #2.
5.	HPBr	Static [control]	1 L RPMI (see above for composition).

Table II contains data comparing the four perfusion device experiments with the plate control. It is evident that an HPBr-type cell culture receptacle 28 operated in the cell culture incubator of the present invention can be employed to scale-up gene transfection and harvesting of cells, which may have therapeutic applications. This system can also be utilized as any artificial organ so that the long-term expression of the foreign gene can be easily and realistically studied; in a way equivalent to taking a biopsy from an intact organ in vivo. In this specific instance, the device is employed as a solid tumor model.

TABLE II

Run	Experimental Conditions	TOTAL # CELLS (13 DAYS)	% VIABILITY	AREA UNDER CURVE (cm ²)	% INCREASED EXPRESSION PER 2 × 10 ⁴ CELLS	ng/mL PER 2 × 10 ⁴ CELLS AT DAY 13	TOTAL EXPRESSION BASED ON VIABLE CELLS AT DAY 13
1	Plate Control	6.5 × 10 ⁶	97%	70	—	0.084	33
2	30 cpm	1 × 10 ⁷	86%	84	20%	0.120	65
3	Static	2.3 × 10 ⁷	42%	105	50%	0.602	364

TABLE II-continued

Run	Experimental Conditions	TOTAL # CELLS (13 DAYS)	% VIABILITY	AREA UNDER CURVE (cm ²)	% INCREASED EXPRESSION PER 2 × 10 ⁴ CELLS	ng/mL PER 2 × 10 ⁴ CELLS AT DAY 13	TOTAL EXPRESSION BASED ON VIABLE CELLS AT DAY 13
4	30 cpm/48 hr then static	7.3 × 10 ⁷	77%	180	157%	0.357	1254
5	Bioreactor Control (Static)	29.3 × 10 ⁷	34%	76	9%	0.040	249

While the preferred embodiment of the invention has been illustrated and described, it will be appreciated that various changes can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. A modular cell culture incubator comprising, in interlocking relationship:
- (a) a planar rectangular base;
 - (b) a dividing planar rectangular wall extending vertically from the base with a lower edge sized to extend transverse across the base;
 - (c) a first corner segment comprising a pair of rectangular walls connecting at right angles, and a rectangular partial ceiling portion extending between the pair of walls, with a longer edge of the ceiling portion connecting to an upper end of one of the pair of walls, and a shorter edge of the ceiling portion connecting to an upper edge of another of the pair of walls;
 - (d) a second corner segment comprising a second pair of planar rectangular walls connecting at right angles, one of said walls having a smaller surface area than the other; and

- (e) a rectangular cage comprising two spaced planar rectangular side walls connected by a rectangular planar roof piece, and a rectangular planar backing piece; whereby the base, dividing wall, first corner segment, second corner segment and cage cooperate to form a rectangular cell culture incubator comprising two compartments separated by the dividing wall.
2. The modular cell culture incubator of claim 1, wherein connections between the base, first corner segment, second corner segment and cage permit attainment of a pressure above surrounding ambient pressure within the modular cell culture incubator.
3. The modular cell culture incubator of claim 1, wherein the base, first corner segment, second corner segment, and cage are comprised of a transparent plastic material.
4. The modular cell culture incubator of claim 1, further comprising gaskets interposed between the first corner segment and second corner segment.

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