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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Cheek retraction devices including an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of an upper dental arch, a lower frame element configured to bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of a lower dental arch. The upper and lower frame elements may each include left and right frame portions wherein the upper and lower left frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on one side of the frame, while upper and lower right frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on another side of the frame. The v-shaped hinges on opposed sides permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other. A posterior frame element may be provided extending between the v-shaped hinges.

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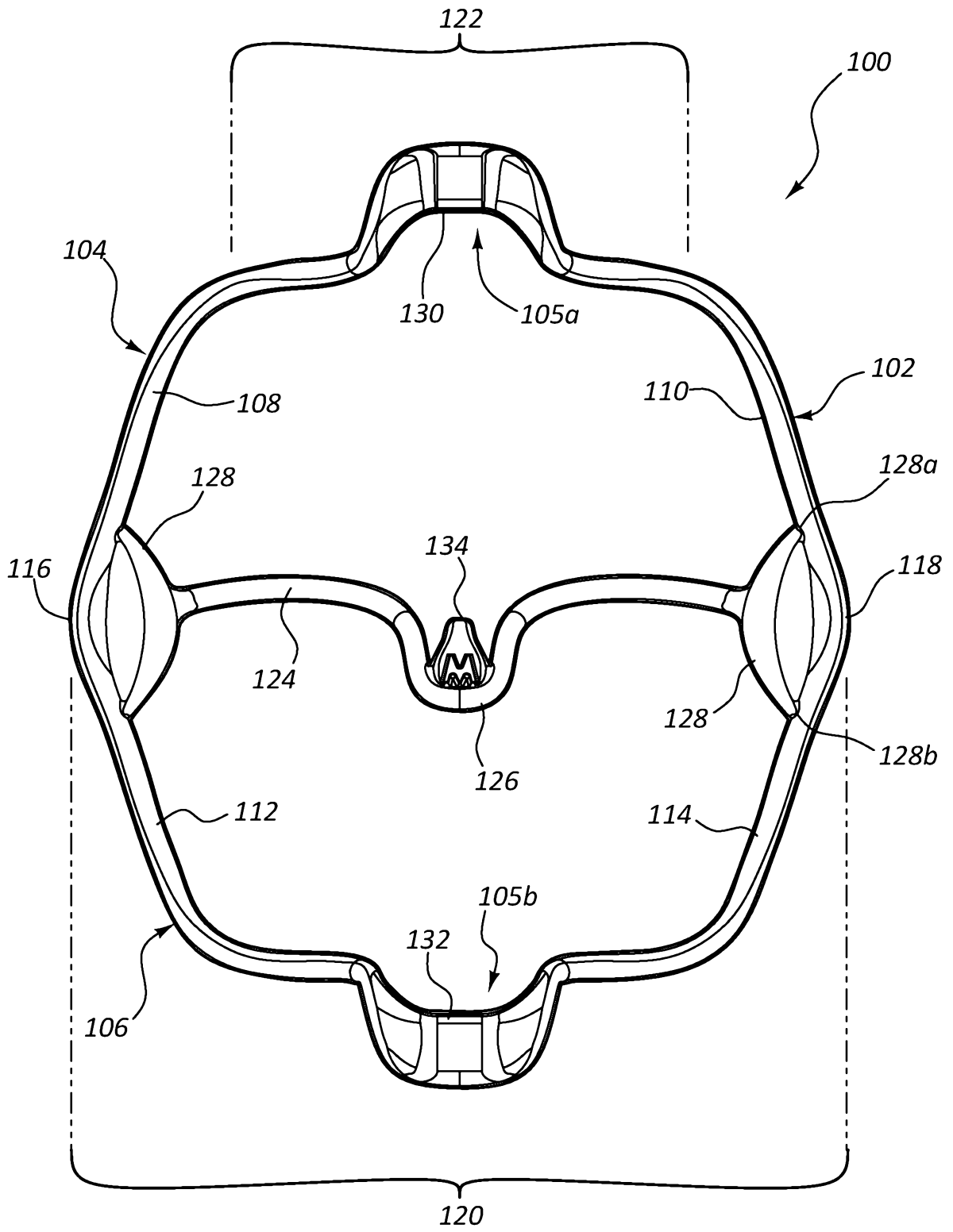


FIG. 1

CHEEK RETRACTOR DEVICE AND METHOD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a divisional application of Australian Application No. 5 2014228039, the original disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference. The present application claims the benefit of United States Patent Application Serial Number 61/789,929, filed March 15, 2013, entitled "CHEEK RETRACTOR DEVICE AND METHOD", the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

10 1. The Field of the Invention

The present invention is in the field of dentistry, particularly cheek retractor devices for use in isolating a patient's teeth and enlarging the working field for the practitioner.

2. The Relevant Technology

15 In certain procedures, particularly certain dental procedures, it can be helpful to retract soft oral tissue around the oral cavity, isolating these soft oral tissues (e.g., the cheeks and lips) so as to create an enlarged working field around the teeth and dental arches.

Various retraction devices exist, although these devices share certain problems. 20 They are often difficult to insert and remove, often requiring extensive time to insert and causing discomfort to the patient during insertion and removal. They generally require that a dentist, dental assistant, or other practitioner use both hands to insert and remove the devices. They are generally uncomfortable to patients and can activate patient's pharyngeal reflexes (i.e., gag reflex). As such, it would be beneficial to provide a cheek 25 retraction device exhibiting improved characteristics.

BRIEF SUMMARY

The present invention is directed to cheek retraction devices for use in dental procedures or other procedures requiring access to the oral cavity. Various features are disclosed which may provide collapsibility, ability to latch in a collapsed configuration, 30 and easier insertion into a patient's mouth, (e.g., even allowing insertion with one hand). The device may include structural and/or curvature characteristics which help "pull" the device into a patient's mouth, facilitating easier insertion and maintenance within the mouth once installed.

In an aspect, there is provided a cheek retraction device comprising a frame for

insertion into an oral cavity, which is selectively collapsible and expandable so as to be in a collapsed configuration to facilitate insertion into the oral cavity and an expanded configuration while positioned in the oral cavity in order to bear against and retract soft oral tissue so as to isolate one or more teeth from soft oral tissue and create an enlarged

5 working field, the frame comprising:

an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and upper lip away from teeth of an upper dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in an oral cavity, the upper frame element including a first generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width, the upper frame element extending between a first side of the frame and a second side of the frame; and

10 a lower frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and lower lip away from teeth of a lower dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in an oral cavity, the lower frame element including a second generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width, the lower frame element extending between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame, wherein:

15 said upper and lower frame elements are joined to one another at the first side of the frame and at the second side of the frame, the upper and lower frame elements are flexible and configured to permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other,

20 the upper frame element deforms at one or more regions between the first generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides,

25 the lower frame element deforms at one or more regions between the second generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides, and

a posterior width of the upper and lower frame elements as defined between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame is greater than an anterior width of the upper and lower frame elements.

In another aspect, there is provided a cheek retraction device comprising a frame for insertion into an oral cavity, the frame being selectively collapsible and expandable, the frame comprising:

30 an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and upper lip away from teeth of an upper dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in the oral cavity, the upper frame element extending

between a first side of the frame and a second side of the frame, the upper frame element including a first generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width and one or more regions between the first generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides; and

5 a lower frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and lower lip away from teeth of a lower dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in the oral cavity, the lower frame element extending between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame, the lower frame element including a second generally horizontal portion that posteriorly
10 bends and increases in width and one or more regions between the second generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides,

wherein said upper and lower frame elements are joined to one another at the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame, the upper and lower frame elements are flexible, the upper frame element is configured to deform at
15 the one or more regions between the first generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides, and the lower frame element is configured to deform at the one or more regions between the second generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides configured to permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other; and

20 a posterior frame element extending between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame, the posterior frame element being flexible and configured to permit the first side of the frame to be at least partially collapsible towards the second side of the frame to be selectively collapsible and expandable in a side-to-side dimension.

25 In another aspect, there is provided a cheek retraction device comprising a frame for insertion into an oral cavity, which is selectively collapsible and expandable so as to be in a collapsed configuration to facilitate insertion into the oral cavity and an expanded configuration while positioned in the oral cavity in order to bear against and retract soft oral tissue so as to isolate one or more teeth from soft oral tissue and create an enlarged
30 working field, the frame comprising:

an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and upper lip away from teeth of an upper dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in an oral cavity, the upper frame element including a first generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width,

the upper frame element extending between a first side of the frame and a second side of the frame; and

a lower frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and lower lip away from teeth of a lower dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in an oral cavity, the lower frame element including a second generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width, the lower frame element extending between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame,

wherein:

said upper and lower left frame elements are joined at the first side of the frame and at the second side of the frame, the upper and lower frame elements are flexible so as to permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other;

an upper lip protecting member disposed on an anterior portion of said upper frame element that is configured to extend over an upper lip when said frame is in said expanded configuration in the oral cavity; and

a lower lip protecting member disposed on an anterior portion of said lower frame element that is configured to extend over a lower lip when said frame is in said expanded configuration in the oral cavity,

wherein:

said lip protecting members are selectively engageable with one another when the upper frame element is folded towards the lower frame element,

the upper frame element deforms at one or more regions between the first generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides, and

the lower frame element deforms at one or more regions between the second generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides.

In another aspect, the cheek retraction device includes a selectively collapsible and expandable frame for insertion into an oral cavity. The collapsed configuration facilitates insertion into the oral cavity, while the expanded configuration while positioned in the oral cavity allows it to bear against and retract soft oral tissue so as to isolate one or more teeth from soft oral tissue and create an enlarged working field. The frame may include an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or

more teeth of an upper dental arch when the frame is in an expanded configuration. Similarly, a lower frame element may be configured to bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of a lower dental arch when the frame is expanded. The upper and lower frame elements may each include left and right frame portions, wherein
5 the upper and lower left frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on one side of the frame, while the upper and lower right frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on another side of the frame. The v-shaped hinges on opposed sides (and disposed at a posterior portion of the device) permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other. A posterior width
10 of the upper and lower frame elements as defined between the right and left frame portions adjacent the v-shaped hinges may be greater than an anterior width of the upper and lower frame elements.

Such a configuration provides a greater posterior width to the device than its anterior width, helping to pull the device into the oral cavity, rather than push it out. For
15 example, other cheek retractors exhibit an oppositely configured wedge relationship, where the anterior dimensions of the device are greater than the posterior dimensions. Such configurations exhibit a tendency to be easily pushed out of the oral cavity, rather than maintained in the desired position.

In another aspect, the invention is directed to a cheek retractor device including a
20 selectively collapsible and expandable frame for insertion into an oral cavity. The collapsed configuration facilitates insertion into the oral cavity, while the expanded configuration while positioned in the oral cavity allows it to bear against and retract soft oral tissue so as to isolate one or more teeth from soft oral tissue and create an enlarged working field. The frame may include an upper frame element configured to bear against
25 and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of an upper dental arch when the frame is in an expanded configuration. Similarly, a lower frame element may be configured to bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of a lower dental arch when the frame is expanded. The upper and lower frame elements may each include left and right frame portions wherein the upper and lower left frame portions are joined to one
30 another to form a v-shaped hinge on one side of the frame, while the upper and lower right frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on another side of the frame. The v-shaped hinges on opposed sides (and disposed at a posterior portion of the device) permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other. A posterior frame element may be provided extending between the v-shaped

hinges. The posterior frame element may include a v-shaped or u-shaped portion to permit the v-shaped hinges on opposed posterior sides of the frame to be at least partially collapsed towards one another so that the device is collapsible in a side-to-side dimension as well as an upper-to-lower dimension.

5 In another aspect, the invention is directed to a cheek retractor device including a selectively collapsible and expandable frame for insertion into an oral cavity. The collapsed configuration facilitates insertion into the oral cavity, while the expanded configuration while positioned in the oral cavity allows it to bear against and retract soft oral tissue so as to isolate one or more teeth from soft oral tissue and create an enlarged
10 working field. The frame may include an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of an upper dental arch when the frame is in an expanded configuration. Similarly, a lower frame element may be configured to bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of a lower dental arch when the frame is expanded. The upper and lower frame elements may each include left and
15 right frame portions wherein the upper and lower left frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on one side of the frame, while the upper and lower right frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on another side of the frame. The v-shaped hinges on opposed sides (and disposed at a posterior portion of the device) permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward
20 each other. The frame may include an upper lip protecting member disposed on an anterior portion of the upper frame element that is configured to extend away from an oral cavity and over an upper lip. A lower lip protecting member may similarly be disposed on an anterior portion of the lower frame element in a manner to extend away from the oral cavity and over a lower lip. The lip protecting members may be selectively engagable
25 with one another when the upper frame element is folded towards the lower frame element so as to latch the upper and lower frame elements together.

In another aspect, the invention is directed to a cheek retractor device including a selectively collapsible and expandable frame for insertion into an oral cavity. The collapsed configuration facilitates insertion into the oral cavity, while the expanded
30 configuration while positioned in the oral cavity allows it to bear against and retract soft oral tissue so as to isolate one or more teeth from soft oral tissue and create an enlarged working field. The frame may include an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of an upper dental arch when the frame is in an expanded configuration. Similarly, a lower frame element may be configured to

bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of a lower dental arch when the frame is expanded. The upper and lower frame elements may each include left and right frame portions wherein the upper and lower left frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on one side of the frame, while the upper and lower right
5 frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on another side of the frame. The v-shaped hinges on opposed sides (and disposed at a posterior portion of the device) permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other. A posterior frame element may extend between the v-shaped hinges on opposed sides of the frame, and a selectively removable tongue guard may be provided
10 that is selectively coupleable to the posterior frame element to allow attachment or removal of the tongue guard.

These and other benefits, advantages and features of the present invention will become more fully apparent from the following description and appended claims, or may be learned by the practice of the invention as set forth hereinafter.

15 **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

To further clarify the above and other advantages and features of the present invention, a more particular description of the invention will be rendered by references to specific embodiments thereof, which are illustrated in the appended drawings. It is appreciated that these drawings depict only typical embodiments of the invention and are
20 therefore not to be considered limiting of its scope. The invention will be described and explained with additional specificity and detail through the use of the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is an anterior or front view of an exemplary cheek retractor device;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the device of Figure 1;

25 Figure 3 is a side view of the device of Figure 1, with the upper frame element also shown in broken lines showing how it may be folded and latched with the lower frame member; and

Figure 4 is a posterior or rear perspective view of the device of Figure 1;

30 Figure 5 is an anterior or front view of the device of Figure 1 installed within the oral cavity of a patient;

Figure 6 is an anterior or front view of an alternative exemplary cheek retractor device;

Figure 7 is a perspective view of the device of Figure 6;

Figure 8 is a side view of the device of Figure 6, with the upper frame element also

shown in broken lines showing how it may be folded and latched with the lower frame member; and

Figure 9 is a posterior or rear perspective view of the device of Figure 6;

Figure 10 is an anterior or front view of the device of Figure 6 installed within the oral cavity of a patient; and

Figure 11 is a perspective view of the device of Figure 6, with the tongue garage shown separated from the cheek retractor device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

I. Introduction

The invention generally relates to cheek retractor devices useful for isolating one or more teeth from soft oral tissue and creating an enlarged working field. Such cheek retractor devices may include a selectively collapsible and expandable frame for insertion into an oral cavity. The collapsed configuration facilitates insertion into the oral cavity, while the expanded configuration, while positioned in the oral cavity, allows the frame to bear against and retract soft oral tissue so as to isolate one or more teeth from soft oral tissue and create an enlarged working field.

The frame may include an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of an upper dental arch when the frame is in an expanded configuration. Similarly, a lower frame element may be configured to bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of a lower dental arch when the frame is expanded. The upper and lower frame elements may each include left and right frame portions wherein the upper and lower left frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on one side of the frame, while the upper and lower right frame portions are joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge on another side of the frame. The v-shaped hinges on opposed sides (and disposed at a posterior portion of the device) permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other. A posterior frame element may be provided extending between the v-shaped hinges.

II. Exemplary Cheek Retraction Devices

Figures 1 through 5 illustrate an exemplary cheek retraction device 100. Figure 1, for example, shows a cheek retractor device 100 comprising a frame 102 for insertion into an oral cavity. The frame 102 is selectively collapsible and expandable. In a collapsed configuration (e.g., see Figure 3), device 100 is more easily inserted into the oral cavity, while the expanded configuration (e.g., see Figure 5) allows frame 102 to bear against and

retract soft oral tissue from adjacent teeth to create an enlarged working field for the practitioner. The frame 102 may be flexible yet resilient. For example, absent any applied forces (or engagement of a latching mechanism), frame 102 may assume the expanded configuration seen in Figures 1-4.

5 The frame may include an upper frame element 104 and a lower frame element 106. During use, the upper frame element 104 may bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of a patient's upper dental arch, while the lower frame element 106 may bear against and retract soft oral tissue from one or more teeth of a patient's lower dental arch. Upper frame element 104 may include left frame portion 108 and right frame
10 portion 110. Similarly, lower frame element 106 may include left frame portion 112 and right frame portion 114. Such right and left references are made from the perspective of the practitioner facing the patient in whom the device is to be inserted, although it is to be understood that the designation is somewhat arbitrary, and the frame of reference could alternatively be made from the perspective of the patient (i.e., right becomes left and vice
15 versa).

The upper and lower left frame portions 108 and 112, respectively, may be joined to one another to form a v-shaped hinge 116 on one side of the frame 102. In a similar manner, upper and lower right frame portions 110 and 114, respectively may be joined to one another to form another v-shaped hinge 118 on another side of frame 102. V-shaped
20 hinges 116 and 118 permit upper and lower frame elements 104 and 106 to be at least partially folded toward each other. While hinges 116 and 118 are generally described as "v-shaped", this term is to be construed broadly, such that any acute angular relationship between the upper and lower left or right frame portions (e.g., 108, 112 or 110, 114) may be considered v-shaped. As such, u-shaped and other similar structures are encompassed
25 within the meaning of "v-shaped", as the term is used herein, such that the term "v-shaped" is used for simplicity.

In an embodiment, a posterior width 120 of upper 104 and lower 106 frame elements as defined between the right and left frame portions adjacent v-shaped hinges 116, 118 (e.g., the width from a vertex of angled hinge 116 to the vertex of angled hinge 118) is
30 greater than an anterior width 122 of the upper 104 and lower 106 frame elements. For example, a posterior width 120 may be measured from the vertex of left hinge 116 to the vertex of the right hinge 118. Anterior width 122, for example, may be measured as that portion that is generally horizontal, before bending towards hinges 116, 118. Although different sizes of the device 100 may be designed depending on the facial anatomy of the

patient (which may be determined, for example, by the spacing between the eyes), one embodiment of the device 100 may have a posterior width 120 from about 110-130 mm (e.g., 115-120 mm) and an anterior width 122 from about 80-90 mm (e.g., about 85 mm). In an embodiment, the posterior width 120 may be about 20% to about 80%, from about 5 25% to about 75%, or from about 30% to about 50% (e.g., about 40%) greater than anterior width 122.

Such a larger posterior width 120 or posteriorly, outwardly curved or flared structure provides a configuration by which the device tends to pull itself into the patient's mouth and be retained there, as opposed to exhibiting a tendency for the cheek retractor to be 10 pushed out of the patient's mouth, which is typical of many existing devices. In addition, this feature helps improve the ease of insertion of device 100.

Frame 102 may also include a posterior frame element 124 extending between v-shaped hinges 116, 118. Posterior frame element 124 may include a v-shaped or u-shaped portion 126 (e.g., centrally located along element 124) to permit the v-shaped hinges 116, 15 118 on opposed posterior sides of the frame 102 to be at least partially collapsible towards one another so that the cheek retraction device 100 is collapsible in a side-to-side dimension as well as an upper-to-lower dimension. Such two-dimensional collapsibility greatly improves the ease of insertion, facilitating single-handed insertion and installation.

Posterior frame element 124 may be connected on either side to upper frame element 20 104 and lower frame element 106 by floating gussets 128 providing a pair of connections bridging the v-shaped hinges. For example, right floating gusset 128 may connect with upper right frame portion 110 at 128a, and with lower right frame portion 114 at 128b. The left floating gusset 128 may be similarly connected. Floating gussets 128 may provide additional rigidity (e.g., it may be a rigid element) that helps provide outward 25 curvature to frame 102, and directs applied collapsing forces in an upper-lower direction, stabilizing the structure as it is collapsed downward. Floating gusset 128 may also facilitate easier side-to-side collapsibility when applying side to side forces, as posterior frame element 124 is not directly connected to upper and lower frame elements at hinges 116, 118, but at points spaced apart from the hinges.

30 Device 100 may include upper and lower lip protecting members 130 and 132, respectively. Upper lip protecting member 130 may be centrally disposed on the anterior portion of upper frame element 104, such that lip protecting member 130 extends away from the patient's oral cavity and over the patient's upper lip. Lower lip protecting

member 132 may be similarly disposed along lower frame element 106 so as to extend away from the patient's oral cavity and over the patient's lower lip.

Lip protecting members 130 and 132 may curve over and protect the patient's lips during a dental procedure. In addition, as perhaps best seen in Figure 1, members 130 and
5 132 may provide troughs 105a and 105b above and below the generally horizontal anterior line defined by the other anterior portions of upper and lower frame elements 104 and 106 or serve to enlarge the working field. Such troughs may further enlarge the working field available to the practitioner in the region of the patient's incisors, while at the same time covering and protecting the central portion of the patient's lips. In an embodiment, lip
10 protecting members 130 and 132 may be made from a stiffer material than the other frame portions of device 100, which are relatively flexible and resilient. In addition to the benefits described above, lip protection members 130 and 132 may also serve as an emergency removal handle should the device need to be removed quickly. Even where quick removal may not be needed, lip protection members may present a portion of
15 structure 100 that may be easily and readily grasped by the practitioner when the device is to be removed.

Furthermore, as perhaps best seen in Figure 3, the lip protecting members 130 and 132 may be selectively engagable with one another when the upper frame element 104 is folded towards the lower frame element 106 so as to latch the upper 104 and lower 106
20 frame elements together. Of course, while sometimes described herein in terms of the upper frame element being folded downward towards lower frame element 106, it will be understood that the one or both frame elements may move during such folding so that lower frame element 106 may similarly be folded toward upper frame element 104.

An example of such folding and latching is illustrated in Figure 3, where the device is
25 shown both before folding (in solid lines), and after folding (with the upper frame element 104 shown again in broken lines). Such a latching mechanism may be used to lock the frame 102 in a closed, collapsed position prior to insertion into the patient's mouth. As a result of the device being latched in a configuration where it is collapsed in the upper-to-lower dimension, the practitioner is not required to hold the device in this collapsed
30 configuration (it may be maintained until released), allowing the practitioner to more easily hold the device in a side-to-side collapsed configuration as well during insertion. Once cheek retractor device 100 is inserted into the patient's mouth, the latch mechanism may be released to expanded within the patient's mouth. For example, if the upper 104 and lower 106 frame elements are latched together, a practitioner may use one hand to

squeeze the device together in a side to side manner, and insertion may be easily done with one hand, if such insertion is desired. Of course, two-handed insertion is also possible. Different mechanisms for latching upper and lower frame elements 104 and 106 (e.g., a latch structure separate from any lip protection members) may alternatively or
5 additionally be provided. Such additional latch structure could also be provided for latching any side-to-side consolidation of device 100, as well.

Device 100 may also include a tongue guard 134, which may be selectively removable. For example, this may allow attachment or removal of tongue guard 134 from posterior element 124, even while device 100 is installed within an oral cavity of a patient.
10 While tongue guard 134 may be removed while device 100 is installed within an oral cavity of a patient, it may also be removed prior to insertion, after insertion or removal, or at any point in the procedure. Tongue guard 134 may be coupleable to posterior frame element 134 through any suitable mechanism (e.g., friction fit, press-fit, keyed coupling, etc.). For example, a protrusion and receptacle configuration shared between tongue guard
15 and posterior frame element 134 may allow tongue guard 134 to “click” into place once seated.

Tongue guard 134 may serve to prevent activation of a patient’s pharyngeal reflexes (i.e., gag reflex). In some patients with a sensitive or “strong” pharyngeal reflex, it may be desirable to remove tongue guard 134 from the device 100. A removable tongue guard
20 134 permits the device 100 to be used with or without tongue guard 134, depending on patient need or preference. In an embodiment, aspiration may be provided through tongue guard 134 (e.g., it may include perforations or holes formed therethrough). Tongue guard 134 may be formed of the same or a different material than the other portions of device 100. For example, a material that is particularly flexible, soft and adaptable (e.g., silicone
25 or a thermoplastic elastomer) may be preferred. Tongue guard 134 may partially or substantially fully encapsulate or envelop at least a portion of the tongue, such as the distal end of the tongue. Tongue guard 134 may advantageously be supported on posterior frame element 124 which may include a wire frame that permits it to move somewhat from side to side as frame element 124 is deformed (e.g., to allow the patient some ability
30 to move the tongue during a procedure). In addition, the presence of floating gussets 128 as described may cause tongue guard 134 and v-shaped or u-shaped portion 126 of posterior frame element 124 to push forward as device 100 is collapsed and backward as device 100 is expanded.

Device 100 may also include one or more bumpers or enlarged portions on frame 102, positioned to provide additional cushioning to specific areas of the oral cavity. For example, a pair of anterior bumpers 138 on each of the upper and lower frame members may be provided. In addition, left and right posterior bumpers 140 may be provided on
5 frame 102 adjacent v-shaped hinges 116 and 118. Bumpers 138 and 140 may comprise enlarged portions of frame 102 as compared to adjacent portions of the frame 102, to increase surface area contact with soft tissues in these regions, providing increased comfort as the bumpers 138, 140 bear against soft oral tissue. The bumpers may also provide improved access to the oral cavity by the practitioner, better holding back adjacent
10 soft tissue.

For example, anterior bumpers 138 may be located at or near the portion of the upper left and right frame portions where upper frame element 104 bends posteriorly in order to connect with v-shaped hinges 116 and 118. The anterior bumpers 138 of the lower frame element may be similarly disposed so that the upper and lower anterior bumpers 138 serve
15 to cushion the anterior cheek soft tissue adjacent the ends of the patient's mouth. The posterior bumpers 140 similarly serve to cushion the posterior cheek soft tissue towards the back of the patient's mouth, adjacent the jaw.

For example, many existing retraction devices tend to uncomfortably "grab" the corners of the patient's mouth. Bumpers 138 aid in reducing or eliminating any such
20 tendency, greatly increasing the comfort of the device as compared to available alternatives.

Figures 6 through 11 illustrate another exemplary cheek retraction device 200, similar to device 100. Device 200 similarly includes a frame 202 that is selectively collapsible and expandable. Frame 202 may include an upper frame element 204, which may bear
25 against and retract cheeks and/or lips from teeth of the upper dental arch, and a lower frame element 206, which retracts cheeks and/or lips from teeth of the lower dental arch. Upper frame element 204 may include left frame portion 208 and right frame portion 210. Similarly, lower frame element 206 may include left frame portion 212 and right frame portion 214. Frame portions 208 and 212 may be joined to one another to form a v-shaped
30 hinge 216, and right frame portions 210 and 214, may be joined to one another to form another v-shaped hinge 218 on an opposite side of frame 202.

As with device 100, a posterior width 220 of upper 204 and lower 206 frame elements as defined between the right and left frame portions adjacent v-shaped hinges 216, 218 (e.g., the width from a vertex of angled hinge 216 to the vertex of angled hinge 218) may

be greater than an anterior width 222 of the upper 204 and lower 206 frame elements. Also similar to device 100, frame 202 may also include a posterior frame element 224 extending between v-shaped hinges 216, 218. Posterior frame element 224 may include a v-shaped or u-shaped portion 226 (e.g., centrally located along element 224) to facilitate
5 side-to-side collapsibility of device 200. As shown, a cross-member portion 227 of element 224 may extend between the ends of v or u-shaped portion 226 (e.g., providing a triangular shaped portion in member 224). The v-shaped or u-shaped portion 226 and the cross-member portion 227 may function as a tongue guard to aid in restraining or isolating at least a portion of the tongue.

10 Instead of floating gussets 128, posterior frame element 224 of device 200 may be connected directly to upper and lower frame elements 204 and 206, respectively at the location of hinges 216, 218.

Illustrated upper and lower lip protecting members 230 and 232 are also somewhat different than those illustrated with device 100. Both members 230, 232 may include a
15 hollow portion 230a, 232a, respectively. Upper lip protecting member 230 may include a cross-member 231 adjacent portion 230a, which may serve to latch with a corresponding latch member 233 of lower lip protecting member 232. As with device 100, lip protecting members 230 and 232 may curve over and protect the patient's lips during a dental procedure, extending outside the patient's mouth. Because of their extension outside of
20 the mouth, they provide a convenient handle that can be gripped when removing or positioning the device. Figure 8 shows the lip protecting members 230 and 232 selectively engaged with one another, with cross-member 231 latched with latch member 233. For example, cross-member 231 may snap or compression fit under latch member 233, holding cross-member 231, and thus upper frame element 204 latched to lower frame
25 element 206. Tongue guard 234 is not shown in Figure 8 so as to more clearly show the other structures. As seen in Figure 8, the side view of the device may be generally L-shaped, as defined by the upper and lower frame elements.

Device 200 includes a differently configured tongue guard 234 than that of device 100. Tongue guard 234, may be selectively removable (e.g., via a snap-fit compression-fit, or
30 similar, as shown in Figure 11. For example, a top surface of tongue guard 234 may include a recess 236 corresponding to curved portion 226, allowing curved portion 226 to snap into recess 236, attaching tongue guard 234 to frame 202. Tongue guard 234 is further configured as a sheath, which may be closed at the anterior end, and open at the posterior end, so that the tongue may be introduced therein. As such, structure 234 may

serve as a garage into which the tongue may be introduced, so as to ensure the tongue does not interfere with practitioner access to the desired areas of the oral cavity, while also protecting the tongue as it is enveloped by guard 234.

When the patient's tongue is received within guard 234, the naturally applied force
5 may push the device 200 forward (e.g., 1-4 mm), causing a further expansion of device 200 within the oral cavity, to create an even greater clearance around the dental arches (i.e., between the dental arches and the cheeks and/or lips, as well as between the tongue (tongue guard 234) and the lingual dental arch surfaces). Clearance provided between the dental arch and the soft tissue of the cheeks and/or lips with the device in place may
10 depend on the particular anatomy of a given patient, but may typically be as much as 2 cm, e.g., at least about 4 mm, at least about 8 mm, at least about 12 mm, etc. Figure 10 shows a typical clearance (C) around the entire buccal side of lower dental arch of 4 mm to about 2 cm, also showing good clearance on the lingual side of the lower dental arch, between the tongue guard 234 and the dental arch. As seen, the device is able to retract
15 both the lips and the cheeks away from the dental arch, providing excellent clearance all around. Of course, any of the devices according to the present invention may be employed without a tongue guard.

When installed, the device pushes out on the lips and the cheeks simultaneously, retracting these soft tissues away from the dental arches. In that configuration, particularly
20 when employed with a tongue guard such as guard 234, the device "floats" within the mouth, without actually resting on the jaw of the patient. Because of its "floating" configuration, the load applied by the tongue can shift the device as a whole forward (e.g., 1-4 mm), creating somewhat more retraction of the cheeks and lips.

The described retraction devices provide particularly improved retraction adjacent the
25 posterior regions of the dental arch, providing excellent clearance all around the dental arch, including the rear molars, without the device blocking or impeding practitioner access to these areas around the molars.

As with device 100 one or more bumpers 238 or enlarged portions on frame 202 may be provided. In an embodiment, such bumpers 238 may comprise a different material than
30 adjacent frame 202, e.g., comprising a softer, flexible, and/or elastomeric material overmolded with respect to frame 202. For example, bumpers 238 may have a durometer from 0 to about 50, 0 to about 25, or about 15. Tongue guard 234 may similarly be formed of a different material than frame 202, and may have durometer characteristics that are harder than bumpers 238. For example, tongue guard 234 may have a durometer

hardness from about 50 to about 100, about 50 to about 90, or about 60 to about 80. Tongue guard may comprise a flexible and/or elastomeric material.

Both devices 100 and 200 advantageously may allow full closure of the patient's mouth, with the device installed. This is a distinct advantage over many existing cheek retractor devices, where full closure of the jaw is not possible. Because closure of the jaw is possible, a practitioner may perform a bite-check without having to remove the device. As illustrated in Figure 10, the devices 100 and 200 provide excellent displacement or retraction of both the lips and the cheeks, so as to provide a large clearance area (C) around the teeth where the practitioner would like to access. Such clearance provides excellent results for introduction of a dental drill, or for use with an intra-oral scanner, for example, to scan the dental and/or oral structures within the mouth (e.g., for digital crown manufacture). Another advantageous use of the retraction device may be for in-office tooth bleaching. Because the device provides such excellent clearance around the dental arches (i.e., between the dental arch and adjacent soft tissue cheeks and lips, there is less risk of contact between irritative tooth bleaching compositions and such soft tissues, which may otherwise irritate or burn the soft tissues.

In addition to allowing full closure of the jaw, the devices according to the present invention may be configured so as to not block or impede practitioner access to the first and second molars of a typical patient. This is advantageous, as some retraction devices do not provide good access to the posterior teeth, particularly the rear molars. For example, the frame members (e.g., 208, 210, 212, 214, 224) may tend to extend buccally, and generally parallel to, and then wrap around the dental arch, behind the rear molars. In addition, as described above, the inclusion of bumpers (e.g., 138, 238) advantageously reduces any tendency of the device to uncomfortably "grab" the corners of the mouth of the patient, providing increased comfort.

According to an embodiment, the frame of any of the embodiments may advantageously be formed of a shape-memory nickel-titanium alloy exhibiting a martensitic transformation temperature between ambient temperature (e.g., about 20°C) and body temperature (e.g., 37°C). Such a shape memory alloy could allow the device to be highly deformable at ambient temperature prior to and during insertion, while become rigid as it warms to body temperature. This would be advantageous in practice because the alloy could be flexible and easily deformed before insertion, while still providing

excellent retraction after warming up to body temperature. In other embodiments, the frame may be made of any suitable plastic (e.g., polymeric), metal, or other suitable materials. Inexpensive plastic models may be intended for single use, so as to be disposable after a single use. A flexible plastic material for the frame may provide
5 excellent results. Other models, such as one formed of a shape memory nickel-titanium, alloy may be autoclaved or otherwise sanitized following use, so as to allow reuse of the device. In any case, the material is sufficiently flexible so as to allow bending or folding of the upper and lower frame members towards one another, as well as the left and right sides towards one another, and so that when released, the frame is able to recoil back to an
10 expanded configuration.

A device in which the frame is formed of a shape memory nickel-titanium alloy may further include an exterior coating (e.g., silicone, any suitable overmolded plastic, or other coating otherwise encapsulating the Ni-Ti frame) to retard (e.g., insulate) the temperature induced phase transformation of the nickel-titanium alloy. Such a coating may control the
15 rate of heating of the frame after insertion, allowing retraction to occur at a gradual, comfortable and gentle pace.

As used in this specification and the appended claims, the singular forms “a,” “an” and “the” include plural referents unless the context clearly dictates otherwise.

The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing
20 from its spirit or essential characteristics. The described embodiments are to be considered in all respects only as illustrative and not restrictive. The scope of the invention is, therefore, indicated by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description. All changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are to be embraced within their scope.

25 In the claims which follow and in the preceding description of the invention, except where the context requires otherwise due to express language or necessary implication, the word “comprise” or variations such as “comprises” or “comprising” is used in an inclusive sense, i.e. to specify the presence of the stated features but not to preclude the presence or addition of further features in various embodiments of the
30 invention.

CLAIMS

1. A cheek retraction device comprising a frame for insertion into an oral cavity, which is selectively collapsible and expandable so as to be in a collapsed configuration to facilitate insertion into the oral cavity and an expanded configuration while positioned in the oral cavity in order to bear against and retract soft oral tissue so as to isolate one or more teeth from soft oral tissue and create an enlarged working field, the frame comprising:

an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and upper lip away from teeth of an upper dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in an oral cavity, the upper frame element including a first generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width, the upper frame element extending between a first side of the frame and a second side of the frame; and

a lower frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and lower lip away from teeth of a lower dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in an oral cavity, the lower frame element including a second generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width, the lower frame element extending between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame, wherein:

said upper and lower frame elements are joined to one another at the first side of the frame and at the second side of the frame, the upper and lower frame elements are flexible and configured to permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other,

the upper frame element deforms at one or more regions between the first generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides,

the lower frame element deforms at one or more regions between the second generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides, and

a posterior width of the upper and lower frame elements as defined between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame is greater than an anterior width of the upper and lower frame elements.

2. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 1, wherein the frame further

comprises a posterior frame element extending between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame.

5 3. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 2, wherein the posterior frame element is flexible and configured to permit the first side of the frame to be at least partially collapsible towards the second side of the frame.

10 4. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 2 or 3, wherein the posterior frame element is configured to be positioned posterior to a patient's molars when the device is installed in the oral cavity.

5. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 2, wherein the posterior frame element comprises a centrally located, u-shaped portion.

15 6. A cheek retraction device as recited in any one of claims 2 to 5, further comprising a tongue guard.

20 7. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 6, wherein the tongue guard comprises a sheath that is closed at an anterior end and open at a posterior end and configured to receive at least a portion of a patient's tongue.

8. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 6 or 7, wherein the tongue guard comprises an elastomer.

25 9. A cheek retraction device as recited in any one of claims 1 to 8, further comprising:

an upper lip protecting member disposed on an anterior portion of said upper frame element configured to extend away from an oral cavity and over an upper lip; and

30 a lower lip protecting member disposed on an anterior portion of said lower frame element configured to extend away from an oral cavity and over a lower lip,

wherein the upper and the lower lip protecting members are configured to extend out of a patient's mouth when the device is installed in a patient's oral

cavity.

10. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 9, wherein:
one of the upper or the lower lip protecting members includes a cross-member;
5 the other of the upper or the lower lip protecting members includes a latch; and
the cross-member and latch are selectively engageable with one another when
the upper frame element is folded towards the lower frame element to latch the upper and
lower frame elements together.

10 11. A cheek retraction device as recited in any one of claims 1 to 10, further
comprising a pair of anterior bumpers on each of the upper and the lower frame
elements, wherein the bumpers are enlarged as compared to adjacent portions of the
upper and the lower frame elements.

15 12. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 11, wherein the bumpers
comprise a different material as compared to the frame, the bumpers comprising a soft,
flexible material.

20 13. A cheek retraction device as recited in any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein
the cheek retraction device is configured to allow full closure of the jaw while placed in
the oral cavity.

25 14. A cheek retraction device as recited in any one of claims 1 to 13, wherein
the cheek retraction device is configured to enable access to the first and second molars
of a patient while the cheek retraction device is placed in the oral cavity.

30 15. A cheek retraction device as recited in any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein
an intersection between the upper frame element and the lower frame element comprises
a triangular shaped portion.

16. A cheek retraction device comprising a frame for insertion into an oral
cavity, the frame being selectively collapsible and expandable, the frame comprising:
an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and
upper lip away from teeth of an upper dental arch when said frame is in said

expanded configuration in the oral cavity, the upper frame element extending between a first side of the frame and a second side of the frame, the upper frame element including a first generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width and one or more regions between the first generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides; and

a lower frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and lower lip away from teeth of a lower dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in the oral cavity, the lower frame element extending between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame, the lower frame element including a second generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width and one or more regions between the second generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides,

wherein said upper and lower frame elements are joined to one another at the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame, the upper and lower frame elements are flexible, the upper frame element is configured to deform at the one or more regions between the first generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides, and the lower frame element is configured to deform at the one or more regions between the second generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides configured to permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other; and

a posterior frame element extending between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame, the posterior frame element being flexible and configured to permit the first side of the frame to be at least partially collapsible towards the second side of the frame to be selectively collapsible and expandable in a side-to-side dimension.

17. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 16, further comprising:

an upper lip protecting member disposed on said upper frame element, the upper lip protecting member being configured to extend over an upper lip when said frame is in said expanded configuration in the oral cavity; and

a lower lip protecting member disposed on said lower frame element, the lower lip protecting member being configured to extend over a lower lip when said frame is in said expanded configuration in the oral cavity;

wherein:

one of said lip protecting members includes a cross-member;
another of said lip protecting members includes a latch; and
the cross-member and latch are selectively engageable with one another
when the upper frame element is folded towards the lower frame element.

5

18. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 16 or 17, wherein a posterior width of the upper and lower frame elements as defined between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame is greater than an anterior width of the upper and lower frame elements.

10

19. A cheek retraction device as recited in any one of claims 16 to 18, wherein:

15

the frame is configured to allow full closure of the jaw while placed in the oral cavity, and the frame is configured to allow access to the first and second molars of a patient while placed in the oral cavity.

20

20. A cheek retraction device comprising a frame for insertion into an oral cavity, which is selectively collapsible and expandable so as to be in a collapsed configuration to facilitate insertion into the oral cavity and an expanded configuration while positioned in the oral cavity in order to bear against and retract soft oral tissue so as to isolate one or more teeth from soft oral tissue and create an enlarged working field, the frame comprising:

25

an upper frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and upper lip away from teeth of an upper dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in an oral cavity, the upper frame element including a first generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width, the upper frame element extending between a first side of the frame and a second side of the frame; and

30

a lower frame element configured to bear against and retract cheeks and lower lip away from teeth of a lower dental arch when said frame is in said expanded configuration in an oral cavity, the lower frame element including a second generally horizontal portion that posteriorly bends and increases in width, the lower frame element extending between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame,

wherein:

said upper and lower left frame elements are joined at the first side of the frame and at the second side of the frame, the upper and lower frame elements are flexible so as to permit the upper and lower frame elements to be at least partially folded toward each other;

an upper lip protecting member disposed on an anterior portion of said upper frame element that is configured to extend over an upper lip when said frame is in said expanded configuration in the oral cavity; and

a lower lip protecting member disposed on an anterior portion of said lower frame element that is configured to extend over a lower lip when said frame is in said expanded configuration in the oral cavity,

wherein:

said lip protecting members are selectively engageable with one another when the upper frame element is folded towards the lower frame element,

the upper frame element deforms at one or more regions between the first generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides, and

the lower frame element deforms at one or more regions between the second generally horizontal portion and the first and the second sides.

21. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 20, wherein one of said lip protecting members includes a cross-member and another of said lip protecting members includes a latch, the cross-member and latch being selectively engageable with one another when the upper frame element is folded towards the lower frame element so as to latch the upper and lower frame elements together.

22. A cheek retraction device as recited in claim 20 or 21, further comprising a posterior frame element extending between the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame, the posterior frame element being flexible and configured to permit the first side of the frame and the second side of the frame to be at least partially collapsible towards one another in a side-to-side dimension.

23. A cheek retraction device as recited in any one of claims 20 to 22, wherein:

the device further comprises a tongue guard coupled to the posterior frame element; and the tongue guard comprises a sheath that is closed at an anterior end, open at a posterior end, and configured to receive at least a portion of a patient's tongue.

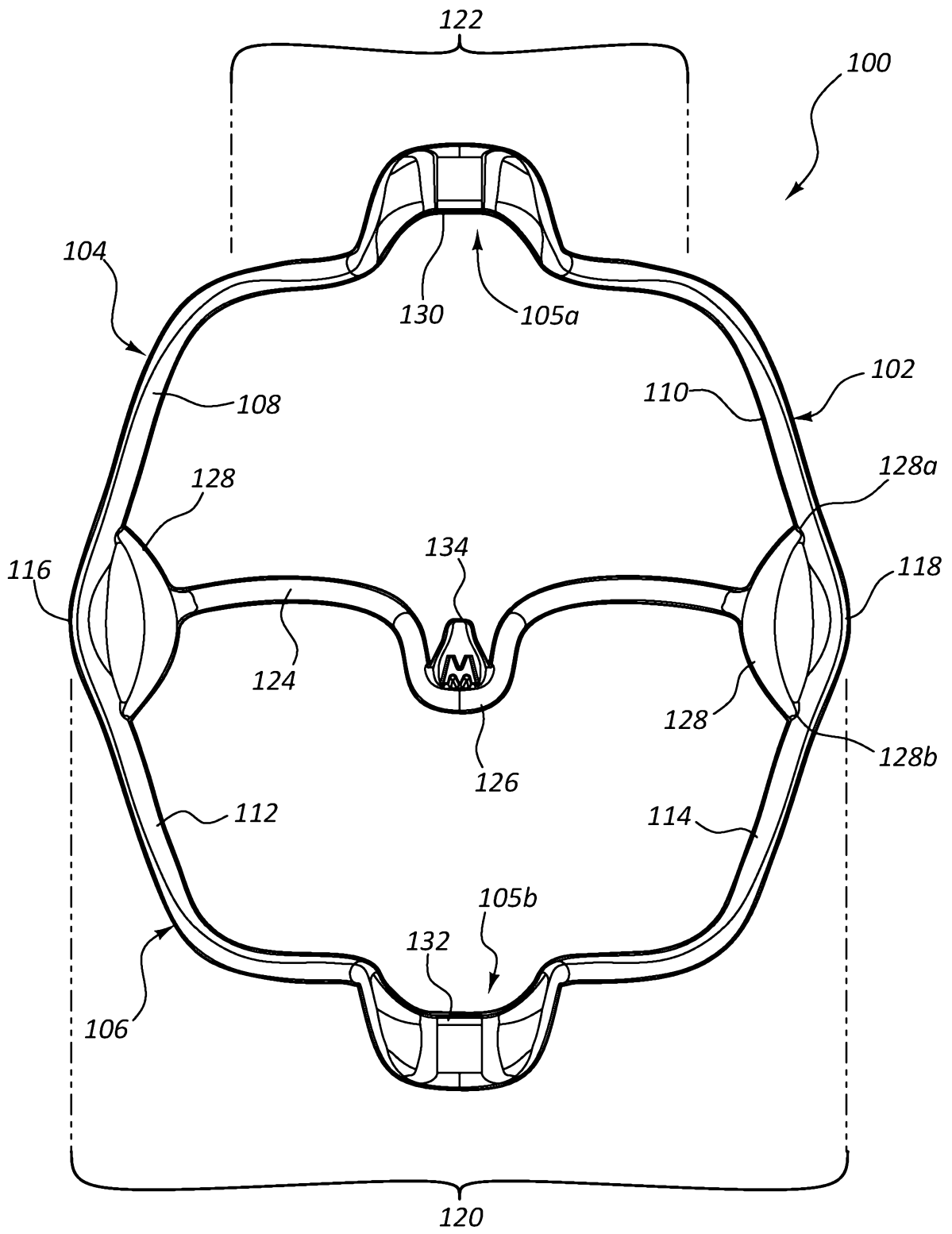


FIG. 1

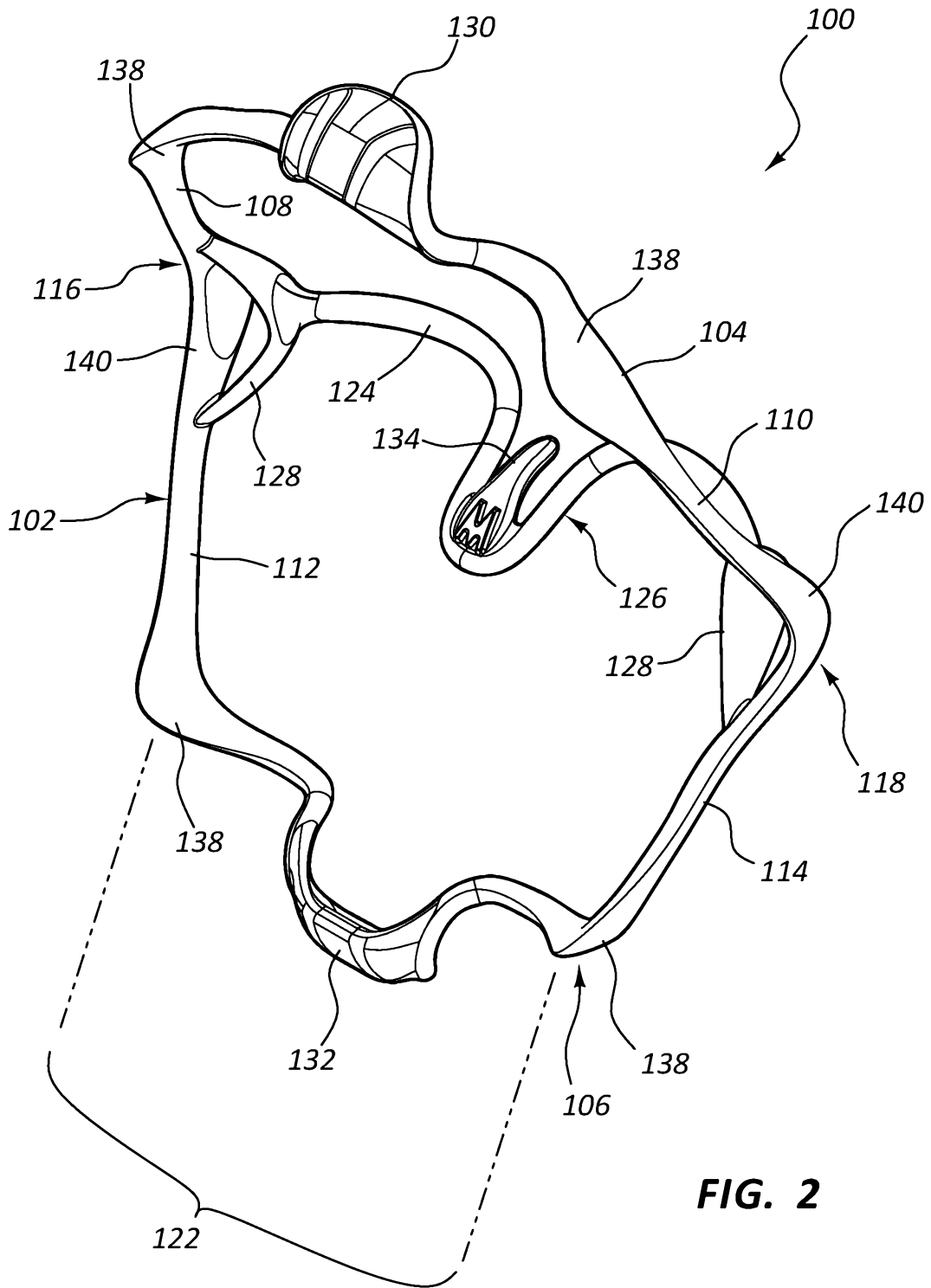


FIG. 2

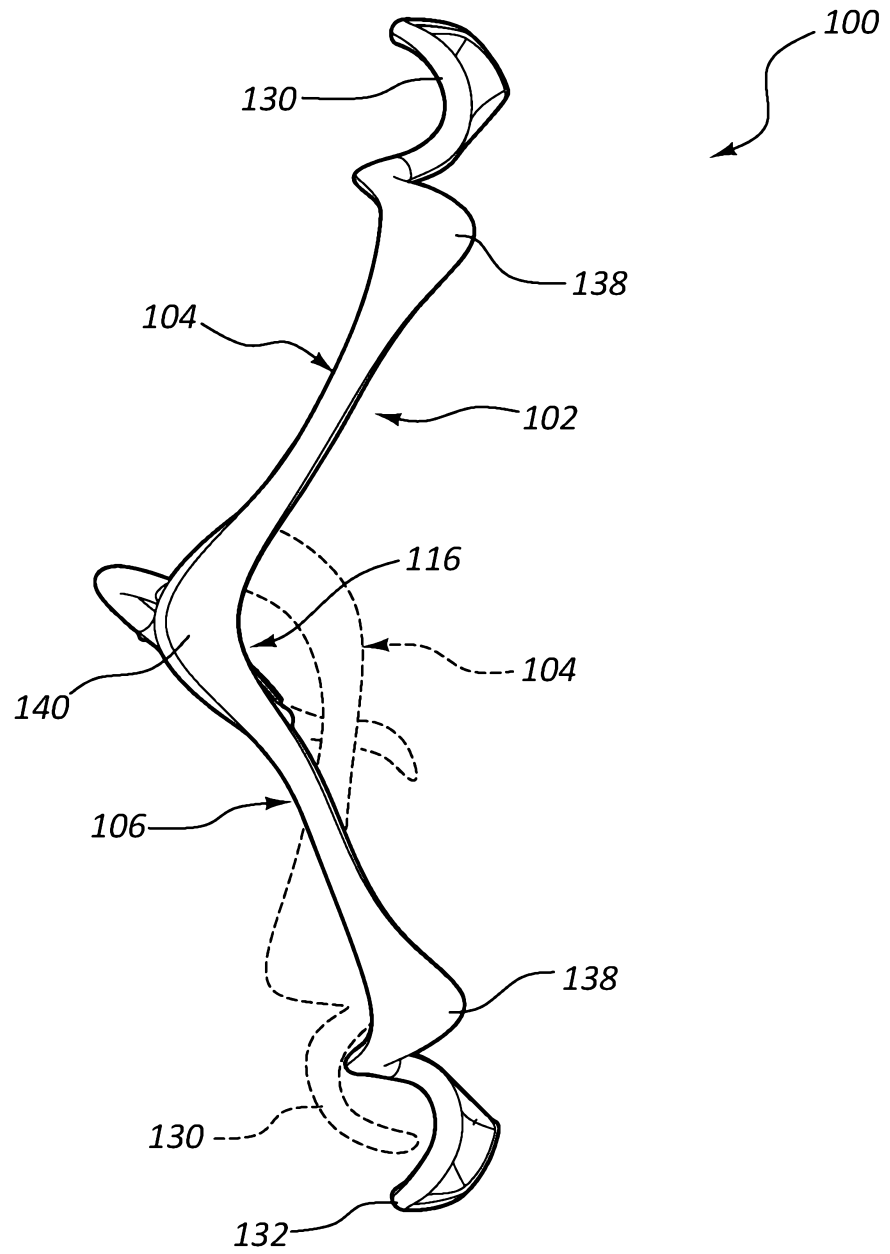


FIG. 3

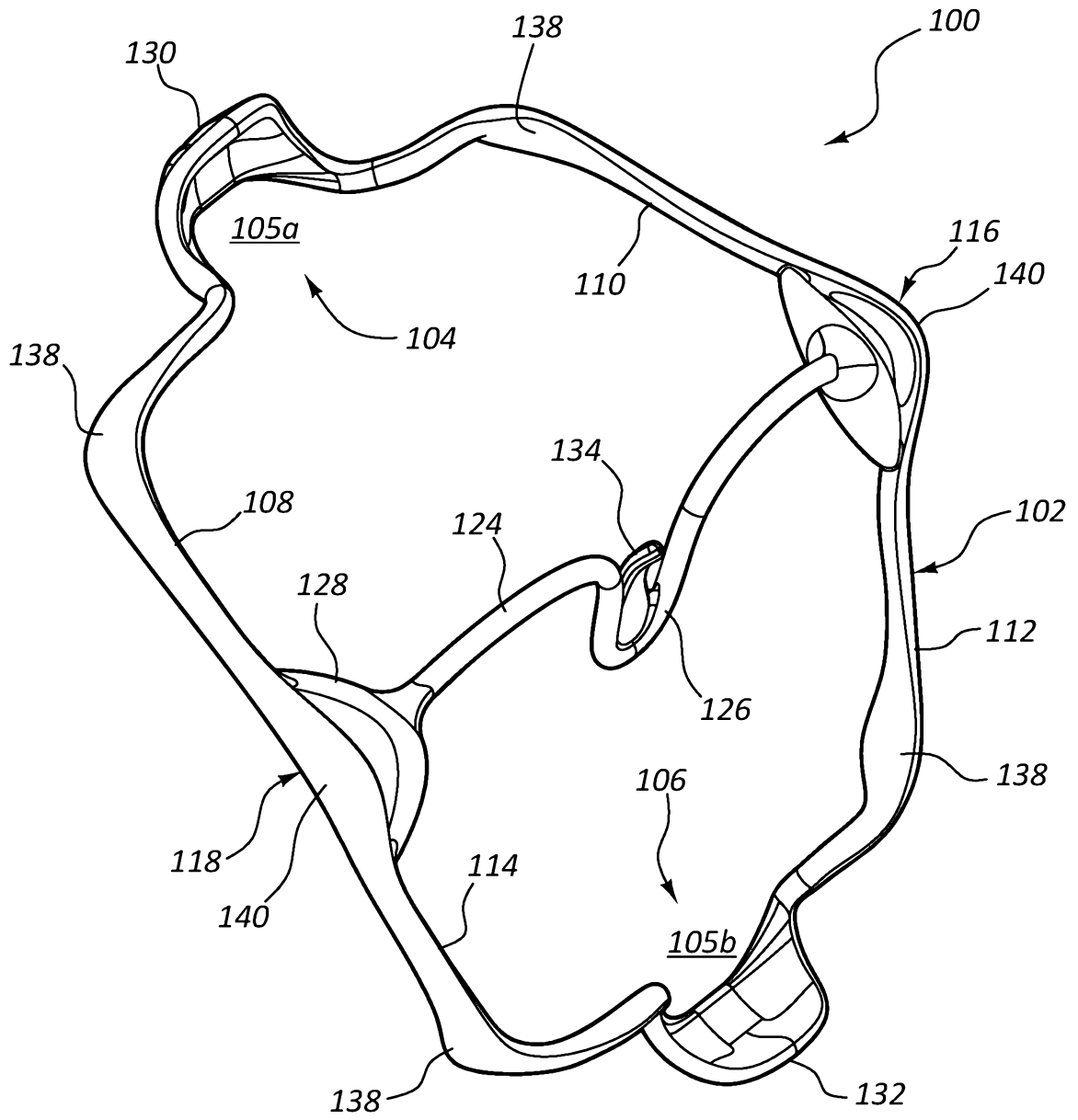


FIG. 4

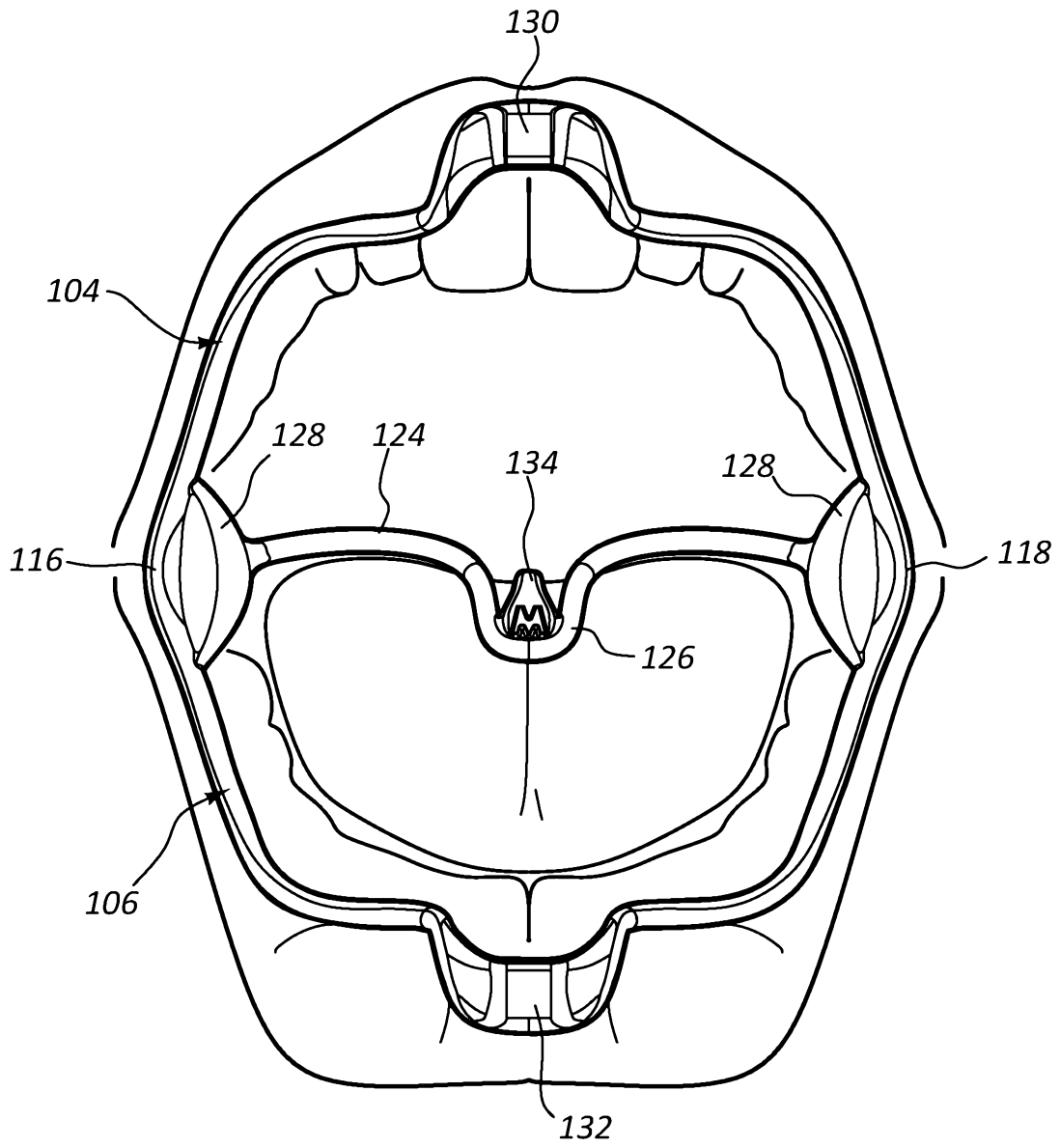


FIG. 5

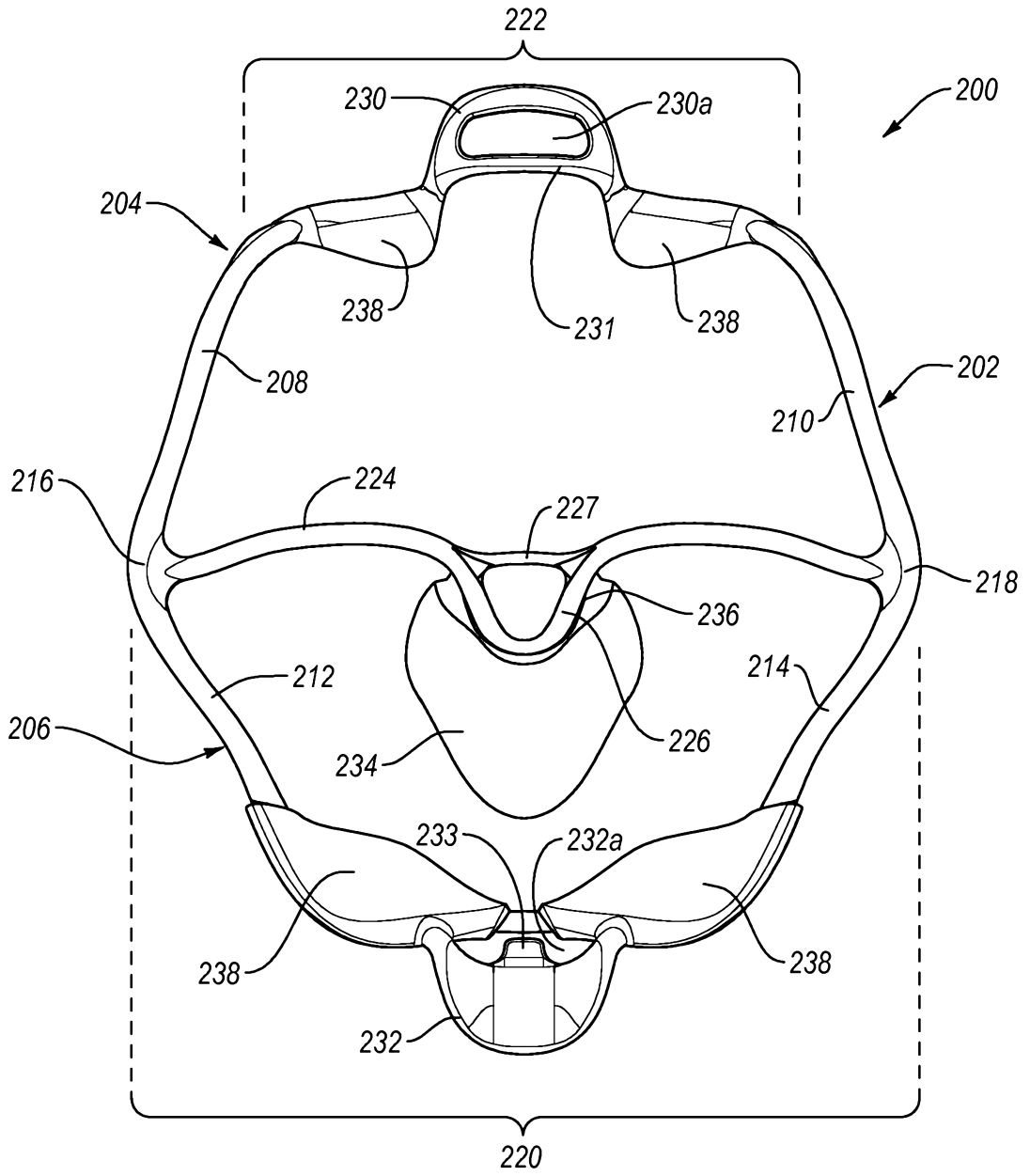


FIG. 6

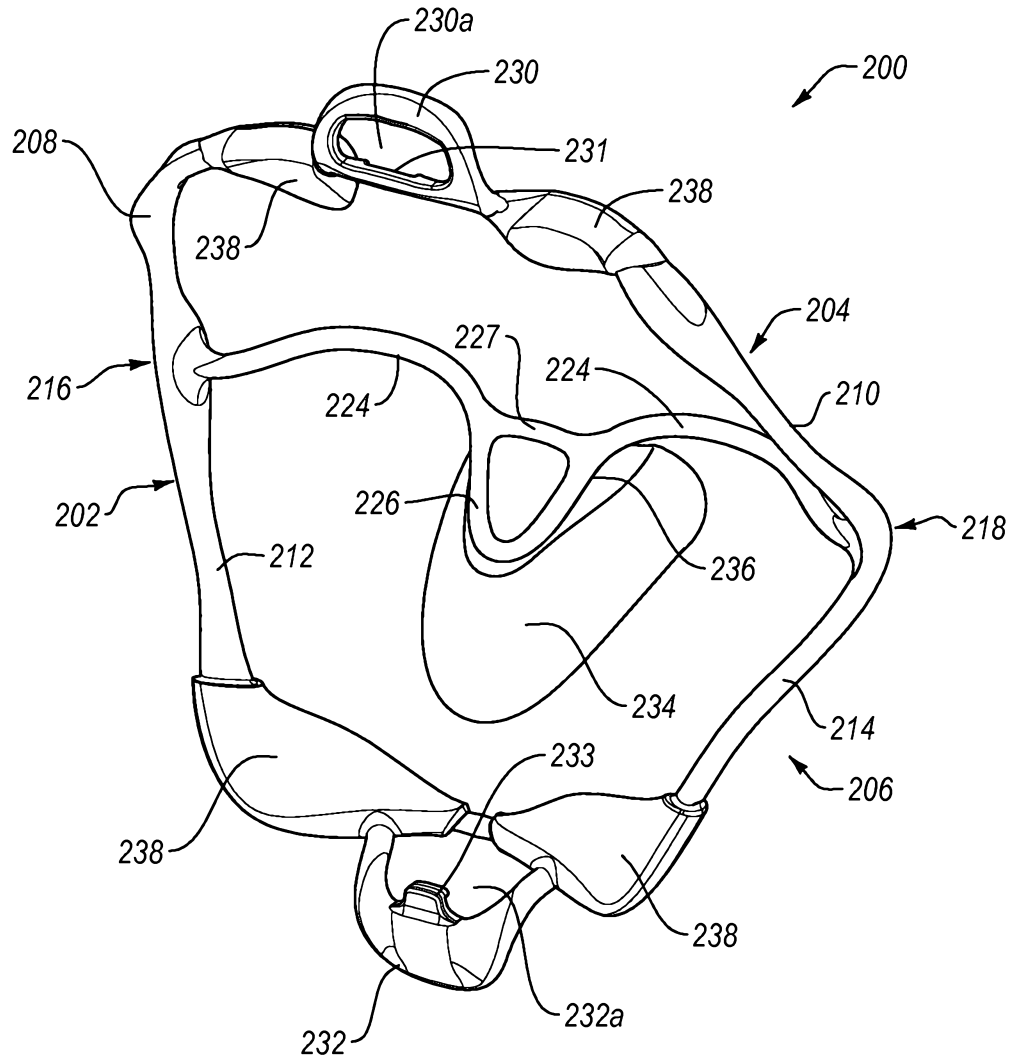


FIG. 7

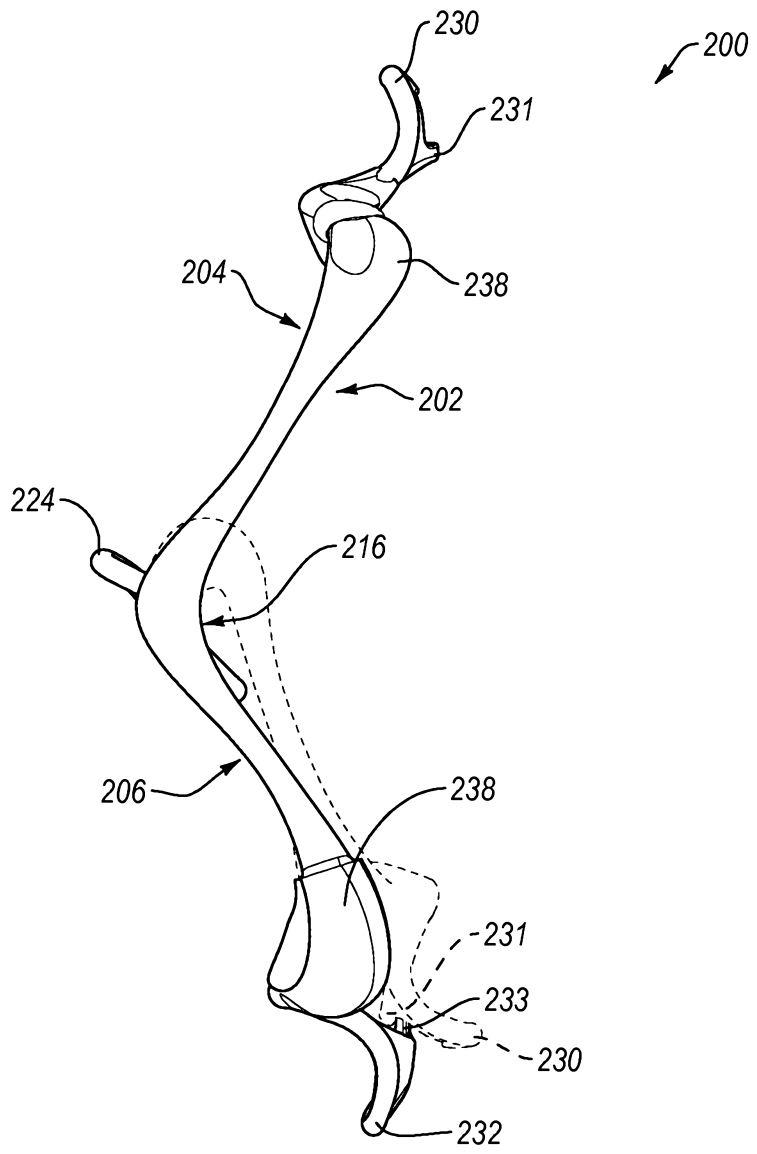


FIG. 8

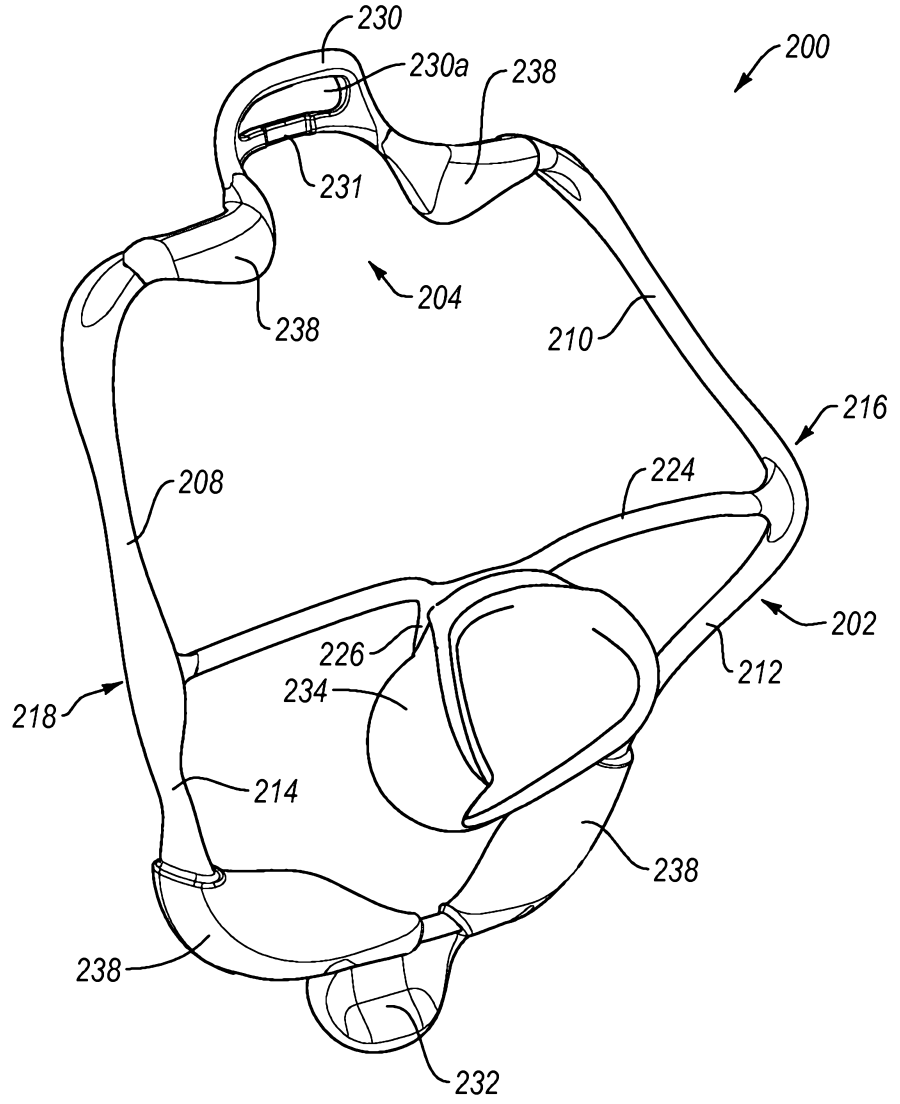


FIG. 9

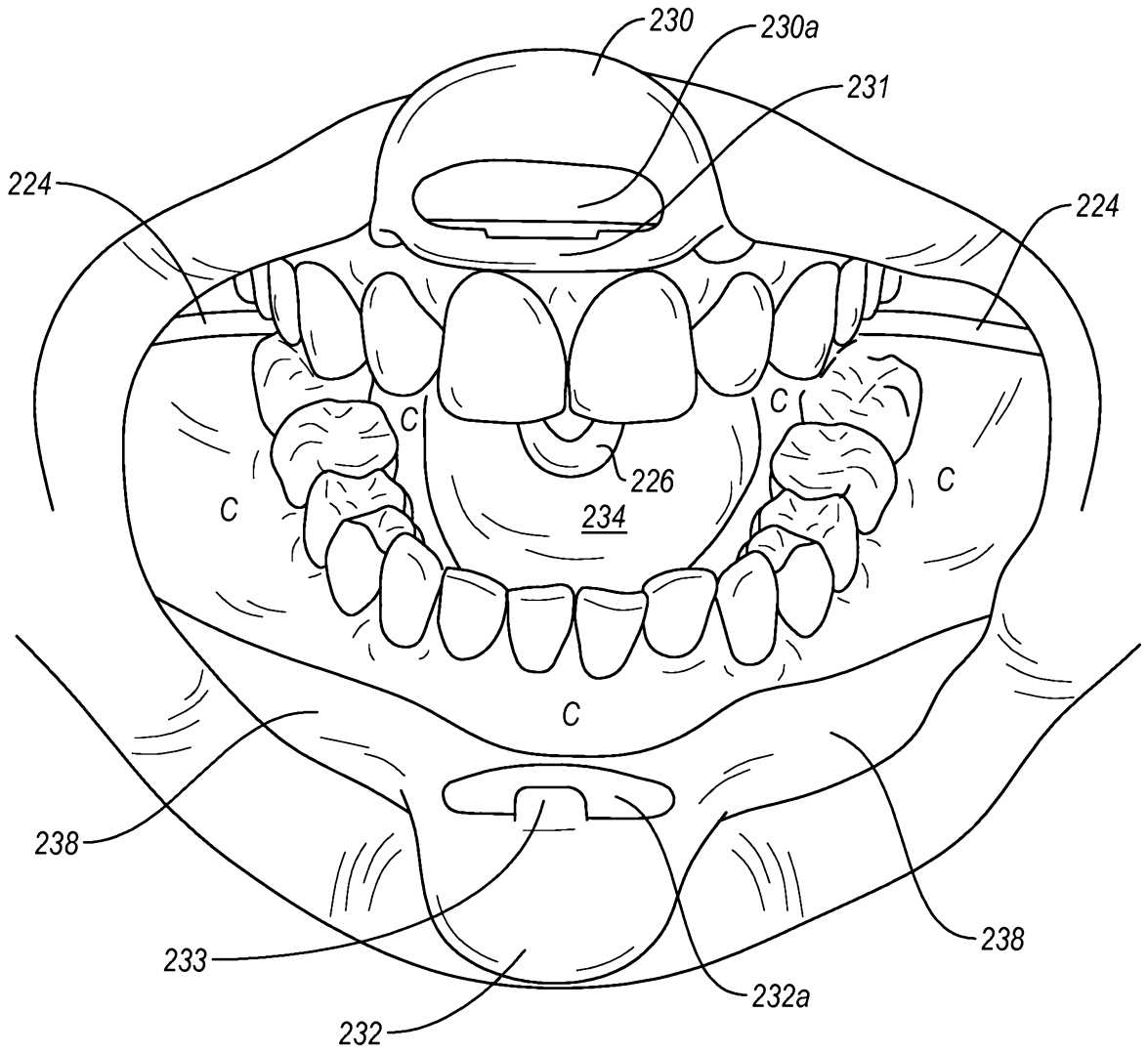


FIG. 10

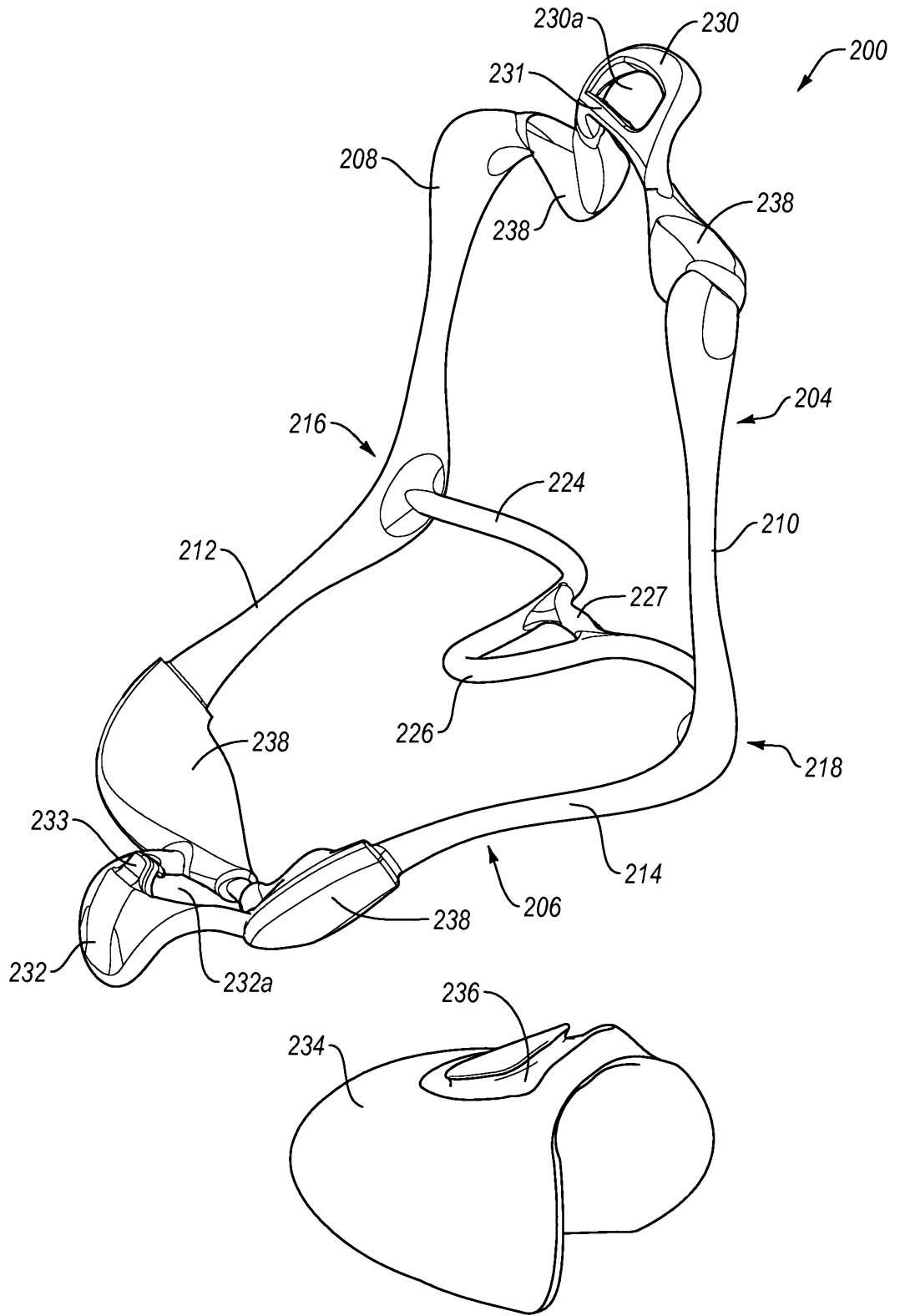


FIG. 11