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(54) **THERAPEUTIC LASER TREATMENT**

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See application file for complete search history.

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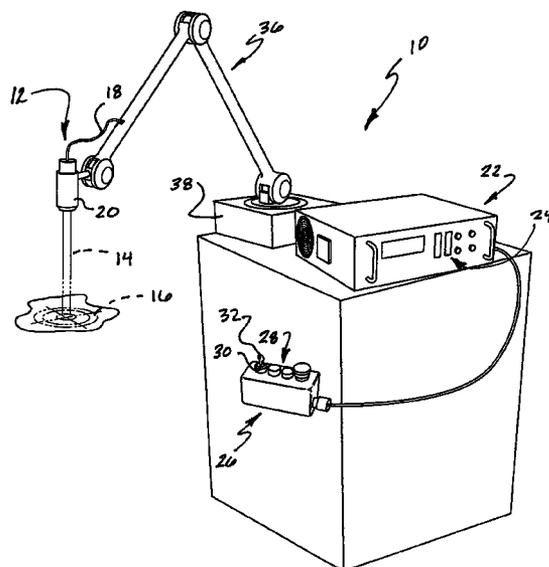
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method for treating selected tissue, including exposing the selected bone or tissue to laser light having a wavelength between approximately 600 and 1400 nm, and maintaining such exposure of the selected tissue or bone to the laser light for a period of time sufficient to deliver a laser light dosage of at least 7 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> per treatment and maintaining such exposure for a period of time sufficient to deliver a laser light dosage of at least 1500 Joules per treatment within a 24 hour period of time. The method also includes upcollimating the laser light such that the laser delivers to the selected tissue a substantially coherent beam of laser light having a cross-sectional area of at least 2 cm<sup>2</sup>, and, further, delivering the laser light to a depth of at least 5 mm in the selected tissue.

**7 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet**



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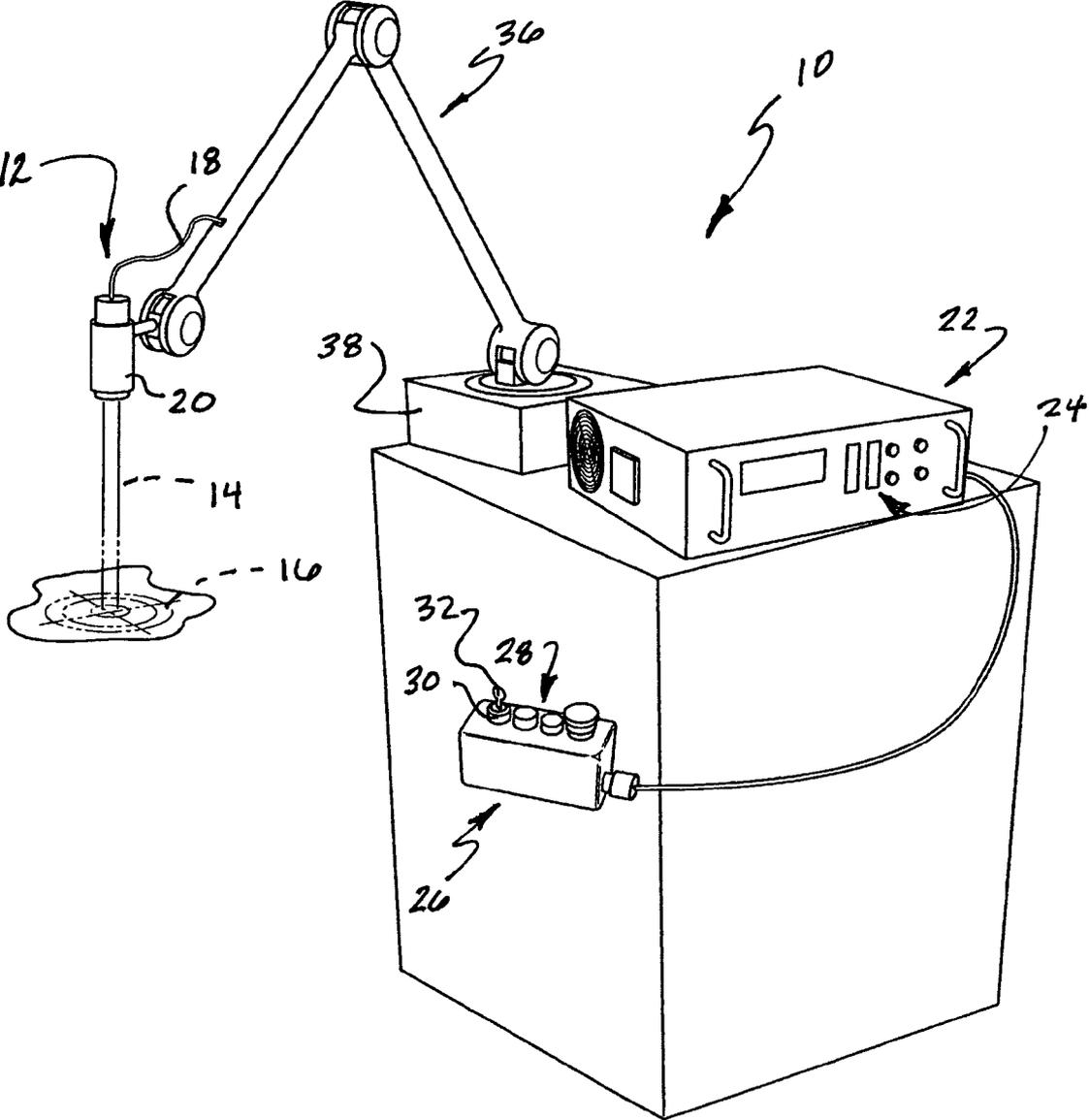
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## THERAPEUTIC LASER TREATMENT

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a method and apparatus for treating biological tissue using therapeutic laser techniques.

Lasers provide monochromatic light, and have found a number of uses in the field of medicine. Monochromatic light coming from a laser is of the same wavelength, and the coherent characteristic of laser light typically refers to the waves making up the laser light having the same direction, amplitude, and phase with respect to one another.

Lasers used for medical treatments typically fall into several groups. For example, "hot" lasers are typically used in surgery, and "mid-power" lasers may be used in photodynamic therapy for cancer treatment, dermatological treatments, etc. "Low energy" lasers generally deliver significantly less energy to tissue than surgical lasers and mid-power, and accordingly, produce relatively little heat in biological tissue such that the tissue is not subjected to thermal damage. Low energy lasers have been used for dermatology treatments, traumatology, and in other areas for enhancing healing and providing therapeutic benefits.

Due to scattering, laser light may begin to lose coherence and its monochromatic characteristics upon entering tissue. Thus, using conventional techniques and equipment, deeper biological tissue may not be able to distinguish laser light and thus potentially not benefit therefrom.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Generally, the present invention includes a method and apparatus for treating selected tissue, and includes exposing the selected tissue to laser light having a wavelength between approximately 600 and 1400 nm, and maintaining such exposure of the selected tissue to the laser light for a period of time sufficient to deliver a laser light dosage of at least 7 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> per treatment to the selected tissue, and the treatment area may be in the range of 500 cm<sup>2</sup>.

The present invention also includes a method for treating selected tissue, which includes the combination of exposing the selected tissue to laser light having a wavelength between approximately 600 to 1400 nm and upcollimating the laser light such that the laser delivers to the selected tissue a substantially coherent beam of laser light having a cross-sectional area of at least 2 cm<sup>2</sup>.

The present invention further includes a method for treating tissue, comprising exposing tissue to a laser light of a wavelength between approximately 600 to 1400 nm at a power density of at least 300 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>, and maintaining such exposure of the tissue to the laser light for a period of time sufficient to deliver a laser light dosage of at least 7 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup>, and further, delivering the laser light to a depth of at least 5 mm in the selected tissue for treating same.

More specifically, the present invention includes a method for treating tissue, including exposing the selected tissue to laser light at a wavelength of approximately 1,064 nm and at a power density of at least 300 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>, and upcollimating the laser light to deliver a substantially coherent beam of laser light having a cross-sectional area of approximately 10 cm<sup>2</sup> to the selected tissue, and further, maintaining the exposure of the selected tissue to the laser light for a period of time sufficient to deliver a laser light dosage to the tissue of at least 1500 Joules per treatment within a 24 hour period.

Additionally, the present invention includes an apparatus for therapeutic treatment of biological tissue including a laser device, preferably a neodymium doped yttrium-aluminum-

garnet (Nd:YAG) laser or a neodymium doped yttrium vanadate (Nd:YVO4) laser. The laser preferably delivers light at a wavelength of between 600 and 1400 nanometers (nm), and provides a laser beam for treatment of tissue in a range of 1 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> to 200 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup>. A beam expander and/or a collimator is connected to the laser in order to increase the cross-sectional area of the laser beam and for maintaining the laser beam coherent and monochromatic. Preferably, use of different collimators allow the beam's cross-sectional output to be changed from ½ cm<sup>2</sup> to a cross-sectional output usable in treating the entire body of the patient (by using one or more collimators large enough to expose the entire body of the patient simultaneously) and/or by moving the laser in a grid-like pattern during treatment of the patient with the laser. The output of laser device is preferably in the range from 1 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> to at least 500 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> and is preferably configured such that treatment times for exposing biological tissue can be varied from one second or less to continuous, i.e., 24 hours a day for the desired number of days, or portions thereof.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

The foregoing, as well as other objects of the present invention, will be further apparent from the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment of the invention, when taken together with the accompanying specification and the drawings, in which the FIGURE is a perspective view of an apparatus for providing therapeutic laser treatment constructed in accordance with the present invention.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The foregoing, as well as other objects of the present invention, will be further apparent from the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment of the invention, when taken together with the accompanying drawings and the description which follows set forth this invention in its preferred embodiment. However, it is contemplated that persons generally familiar with the use of lasers for medical treatment will be able to apply the novel characteristics of the structures and methods illustrated and described herein in other contexts by modification of certain details. Accordingly, the drawing and description are not to be taken as restrictive on the scope of this invention, but are to be understood as broad and general teachings.

Referring now to the drawing in detail, an apparatus for therapeutic laser treatment in accordance with the present invention is indicated generally in the FIGURE by reference character 10.

In the FIGURE, a laser system, generally 10, for conducting therapeutic laser treatment is shown, and includes a laser, which, in one preferred embodiment, is a neodymium doped yttrium-aluminum-garnet (Nd:YAG) laser or a neodymium doped yttrium vanadate (Nd:YVO4) laser device, or probe, generally 12, which emits a laser beam 14. Laser device 12 preferably delivers optical radiation in the form of laser light at a wavelength of between 600 and 1400 nanometers (nm), and provides a laser beam 14 in the range from 1 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> to at least 500 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>. Laser system 10 is configured such that treatment times for exposing human and/or animal tissue can be varied from one second or less to continuous, i.e., 24 hours a day for the desired number of days, or portions thereof. Treatments in accordance with the present invention preferably range between 1 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> to 400 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup>, and most preferably involve in most cases exposing the tissue to at least 7 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> of laser exposure and maintaining the exposure

of the selected tissue to the laser light for a period of time sufficient to deliver a laser light dosage to the tissue of at least 1500 Joules per treatment within a 24 hour period. In certain applications, for example, when treating fever blisters, fibromyalgia, etc., treatments within a 24 hour period may exceed 32,000 Joules, and such treatments may be repeated daily.

In one preferred embodiment, laser device **12** has a wavelength of 1064 nanometers in the near infrared region of the electromagnetic spectrum. The energy of the optical radiation is controlled and applied to produce a minimum absorption rate in the irradiated tissue to minimize elevation of the average temperature of the irradiated tissue to a level above the basal body temperature and in no event to the extent the maximum absorption rate is great enough to convert the irradiated tissue into a collagenous substance.

It has been determined through extensive testing that the foregoing condition is satisfied by a Nd:YAG laser operated at its fundamental wavelength of 1064 nanometers at a power output level of from 100-1000 milliwatts/cm<sup>2</sup>, with the laser beam being focused to produce a power density of the projected laser beam in the range of from about 100 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> to about 1000 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>.

Laser system **10** could also include, if desired, an aiming laser (not shown) to facilitate use in aiming the laser beam **14** of laser device, generally **12**, at a target, generally **16**. Target **16** is a generalized representation the desired treatment area of human or animal tissue to be irradiated by laser beam **14**, in a manner described below.

A collimator **20** is connected to laser **12** in order to allow the size of laser beam **14**, carried by fiber optic cable **18**, to be increased, while still maintaining and enhancing the coherency and monochromaticity of laser beam **14**. Preferably, by selection of an appropriate collimator **20** and/or through the use of multiple collimators, the beam size can be changed from ½ cm<sup>2</sup> to a cross-sectional output usable in treating the entire body of the patient by using one or more collimators large enough to expose the entire body of the patient simultaneously (except for areas which do not require and/or should not receive laser treatment exposure, such as the patient's eyes, etc.) and/or by moving laser **12** in a grid-like pattern during treatment of the patient. It is to be understood, however, that while laser system **12** is illustrated herein as using a fiber optic cable **18**, a series of mirrors (not shown) could be used instead of, or in combination with, cable **18** to direct the laser beam **14** to target **16**, if desired.

Alternately, instead of using a collimator, it is believed that a laser device could be provided having an output beam with a cross-sectional area of 10 cm<sup>2</sup> or more, without exceeding an output of 600 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>

Laser system **10** also includes a power supply, control unit, and resonator, collectively generally **22**, having a control panel, generally **24**, for controlling the operation output of laser device **12**. Unit **22** preferably includes a processor for allowing for preprogrammed laser treatments to be executed using laser device **12**, such programs being selectable from control panel **24** having a keypad or other data entry device. Also, in one preferred embodiment, a foot pedal (not shown) and/or a handheld controller, generally **26**, is connected to laser device **12** having controls, generally **28**, for allowing a healthcare provider, technician, etc., to control laser **12** remotely from control panel **24**, if desired. Controller **26** may include a keyed lock-out switch **30** having a key **32** in order to prevent unauthorized operation of laser device **12**. Instead of, or in addition to a key **32**, control box **28** could include a keypad (not shown) for entering a desired treatment protocol to be delivered by laser device **12** and/or for allowing a personal identification number (PIN), authorization codes,

biometric identifier such as a fingerprint reader, etc., to be entered by a healthcare provider or technician in order to operate laser device **12**, if desired. Also, controller **26** could be wirelessly connected to control unit **22**, as could also laser device **12**.

Laser device **12** is, in one preferred embodiment, connected to an articulated arm **36** which allows for flexibility in manipulating and aiming laser device **12** at a particular target. It is to be understood, however, that laser system **10** is not limited to articulated arm **36**, and could be mounted in a variety of other configurations, if desired, and/or be handheld by the healthcare provider, if desired.

Furthermore, it is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the laser device **12** shown, but could be a variety of other sizes, as could also collimator **20**, and could be configured for exposing a target **16** of a variety of sizes, including a full body exposure of a patient. Articulated arm **36** is mounted on base **38**, although it could be mounted on a wall, ceiling, floor, examination table, etc., if desired. Also, laser system **10** could be portable, such that it may be carried by hand, and/or mounted on a wheeled cart, or other base, for facilitating transport within a medical facility, in the field, or in other environments.

The present invention includes methods and protocols for using laser energy at elevated dosages in order to achieve therapeutic benefit while refraining from damaging the tissue being treated. In practicing the methods of the present invention, the nature and extent of the tissue disorder is first diagnosed and the location, size, and number of treatment area(s) is established. Thereafter, the treatment area(s) is exposed to monochromatic, coherent light below the level necessary to cause thermal damage to the tissue being treated, wherein the light is in the near infrared portion of the electromagnetic spectrum. The treatment area is exposed to the monochromatic, coherent light for a sufficient treatment time to produce clinically beneficial effects by delivering a dosage typically greater than 7 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup>.

As discussed above, monochromatic light refers to light which is of the same wavelength, and coherent means that the waves of light have similar direction, amplitude, and phase to each other. In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, monochromatic, coherent light having a wavelength in the 600 to 1400 nanometer (nm) range is used in the treatment of soft tissue, bone, and/or body fluids and other disorders by irradiating a treatment area for sufficient time to produce clinically beneficial effects. It is contemplated dosages in the range of approximately 7 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> to approximately 40 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> are preferred, although even higher dosages could be given without departing from the spirit of the present invention.

In one preferred method of the present invention, a dosage of approximately 10 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> is delivered to the tissue. Additional treatments and treatment areas maybe treated as determined by the diagnosing physician or other health care provider.

The wavelength of laser light is the basic electromagnetic wave feature directly linked to the energy of an individual light quantum (photon). Cell culture experiments have indicated that there is selectivity in photo-induced phenomena related to wavelengths. Wavelengths in the range of preferably between 600 to 1400 nm are used in the present invention, although wavelengths in the range of 400 to 10,000 nm could also be used, depending on the particular treatment. Since tissue optical parameters (reflection, scattering, refraction, absorption and depth penetration) depend on wavelength, a particular light wavelength may affect three-dimen-

sional light distribution in tissue. For example, in a specific wavelength range, the longer wavelength the more light penetration depth.

Intensity is the rate of light energy delivery to 1 cm<sup>2</sup> of skin or other tissue. Intensity is measured in milliwatts per cm<sup>2</sup> (mW/cm<sup>2</sup>). Suitable intensities for biostimulation are known to be in the range of from 0.1 to 1,000 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>. As used herein, the term "dose" means the light energy provided to the unit of surface (1 cm<sup>2</sup>) of target **16** during a single irradiation and measured in J/cm<sup>2</sup> or mJ/cm<sup>2</sup>.

By way of example, a laser generating 10 Watts of output power may be used to deliver optical energy to a 20 cm<sup>2</sup> treatment area. This produces an intensity, or power density, of 500 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>, which is currently the maximum intensity permitted by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It is to be understood, however, that in the event the FDA raises or lowers the maximum allowable intensity, or if the present invention is used in locations where regulations otherwise permit, the methods and apparatus as disclosed herein can be modified as necessary without departing from teachings of the present invention. There are other optical parameters, including the type of the light source, optical power, intensity, dose, frequency and pulse duration, wavelength and bandwidth, beam diameter and divergence, three-dimensional light distribution, etc. which may be selected to provide an optimized protocol to treat the disorder.

The method in accordance with the present invention is adapted for the therapeutic treatment of any of a patient's tissue, which includes muscle, nerve, bone, body fluids (including spinal fluid), epithelial, and/or connective tissues. In accordance with a preferred embodiment, the method is adapted for the relief of acute and chronic soft tissue trauma and to provide musculoskeletal pain management. A wide range of disorders of biological tissue or their symptoms may be treated by laser system **10**, including the following:

1. Musculo-skeletal conditions, such as: degenerative joint disease, traumatic joint and ligament injury, such as rotator cuff, ankle sprain, knee strain, tennis elbow, golf elbow, TMJ, muscle contusions, bone fracture, fibromyalgia, and costochondritis;

2. Neurological conditions, such as: peripheral neuropathy, reflex sympathetic dystrophy, trigeminal neuralgia, migraine headache, stroke, concussions, plantar fasciitis, radiculopathy, spinal injury, peripheral neuropathy, sciatica, traumatic nerve injury, diabetic nerve, restless leg syndrome, and tension and migraine headache;

3. Wound treatment such as: post op healing, decubitus wound sores, burns (first degree and full thickness); stasis ulcers, allergic rashes (example, poison ivy etc.), and insect bites;

4. Pain management, such as: spinal pain from herniated or bulging disc, back pain from musculoskeletal strain, reflex sympathetic dystrophy, fibromyalgia, pain from musculo-skeletal items listed; and

5. Viral infections, such as: herpes, all types (including mononucleosis) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS); and autoimmune diseases, such as: multiple sclerosis, psoriasis, rheumatoid diseases, chronic fatigue syndrome, Parkinson's disease, and lupus.

Treatment in accordance with the present invention is also anticipated to meet with success in treatment of other neurological conditions, such as: stroke, closed head injury, and spinal cord injury; in cardio vascular system conditions, such as: coronary artery disease and peripheral vascular disease; in viral infection applications, such as viral flu syndromes; and in connection with autoimmune diseases, such as diabetes, ALS, and others.

In accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the tissue to be treated is irradiated with optical energy. The treatment with optical energy is believed to increase microcirculation and creates biostimulative effects at the cellular level. Photobiostimulation occurs when monochromatic, coherent light acts on the photoacceptor molecules within the cells of the tissue being treated.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment, a diode-pumped, solid-state Nd:YAG laser is used as the source of this optical energy, producing optical energy in the form of light at 1064 nm wavelength. This light is guided through fiber optic cable **18** collimator **20** with an aperture sized appropriately for the desired treatment area and the time necessary to cover the treatment area. In accordance with one embodiment, the aperture of collimator **20** is circular, with an area of 10 cm<sup>2</sup>, and this embodiment is particularly adapted for application to a treatment target site of approximately 10 cm<sup>2</sup>.

While laser system **10** is contemplated for use in accordance with the present invention, those skilled in the art will appreciate the variety of other laser systems which may be utilized without departing from the teachings of the present invention. By way of non-limiting examples, representative methods of the present invention are disclosed below.

After diagnosing the nature and extent of a tissue disorder, the physician preferably establishes the location, size, and number of treatment areas. In one embodiment, the size of the treatment areas is approximately 10 cm<sup>2</sup>, although the treatment area may range from between approximately 0.1 cm<sup>2</sup> to entire body of the patient. Where different treatment sites are contemplated, the laser aperture is accordingly adjusted to accommodate the different treatment site sizes, and the treatment sites are treated by exposing them to monochromatic, coherent light from laser device **12**. Larger areas may be treated by moving laser device **12** and collimator over the entire area in a grid-like fashion.

It is contemplated the duration for treatment time can be continuous, i.e., up to 24 hours per day, over several days, if necessary. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the treatment may be a single treatment or may be repeated daily, or periodically for a prescribed number of days necessary to produce clinically beneficial effects.

The relationship between various wavelengths of light and the depth of penetration into the patient's tissues has been demonstrated by others. The choice of wavelength used is dependent upon the depth required to treat the affected tissues.

A single laser device **12** can be used for tender points, trigger points, selected points in the affected area, points on the skin overlying the treatment target (e.g. tendon, spur, calcification deposit), spinal nerve roots, points on the skin overlying selected nerve pathways and other localized (e.g. acupuncture) points.

If desired, laser device **12** of the present invention may be constructed of flexible plastic (not shown) or other suitable material to be wrapped around the surface contours of the body. Alternatively, the laser device may be formed in the shape of a ring (not shown), having light sources arranged on its inner surface, to apply treatment to a finger or other extremity.

There are different techniques for performing the treatment methods of the present invention, depending on the application. In the contact technique, laser device **12** is applied directly to the skin surface. In the contact with pressure technique, laser device **12** is applied to the skin surface with pressure. This technique allows deeper light penetration to the tissue, since light scattering is generally significantly less

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in compressed tissue, and light absorption by blood is less because blood is partially squeezed out of the compressed tissue.

The scanning technique is used for the treatment of large areas with laser devices. In practicing the scanning technique, the laser device is moved by the health care provider along the skin surface with definite speed and the affected area is irradiated by a laser beam. This technique is used when the area to be treated is large, and preferably involves use of one or more collimators 20.

The use of monochromatic, collimated laser light at approximately 1064 nm, at an intensity of 500 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>, is believed to allow the beneficial effects of laser light to penetrate deeper than heretofore practiced, in that the laser light is not so readily absorbed and dissipated prior to reaching the targeted tissue, which may reach down to the bone.

The majority of treatments in accordance with the present invention involve exposing the tissue to at least 7 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> of laser exposure for a period of time sufficient to deliver a laser light dosage of at least 1500 Joules to the tissue, per treatment within a 24 hour period. In certain applications, for example, when treating fever blisters, fibromyalgia, etc., treatments within a 24 hour period may exceed 32,000 Joules, and such treatments may be repeated daily.

Following are examples of the present invention, all of which use laser light at 1064 nm wavelength at an intensity of 500 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>, but it is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to such examples and that such examples are presented herein for non-limiting, illustrative purposes:

#### EXAMPLES

##### Example 1

A 50 year old male presented with a 2-year history of severe pain in feet. He had previously been treated by multiple physicians and podiatric physicians with multiple modality treatment regimens, all without relief of symptoms. These symptoms were primarily pain at night and on early rising. Despite those treatments, the patient, who was on his feet all day as a freight delivery person, was in constant pain. He presented for treatment by referral and was given a total of approximately ten minutes of treatment with a laser over the soles of his feet. After a second treatment of approximately five minutes, the patient was pain-free. He has remained in that state to date without further treatments, and has continued his normal work schedule.

##### Example 2

The patient presented with chronic neck pain and unable to raise his hands above 90 degrees in the lateral plane without significant pain. He had been to numerous clinics in the past, including pain clinics, chiropractors, etc. without relief. A physical examination revealed bilateral tenderness in both subscapular areas, as well as moderate swelling of the soft tissues. The treatment with a laser included the patient receiving 2 treatments bilaterally along the subscapular region, with total treatment time being approximately 20 minutes in length. There was a five day separation in treatment protocols. The results were that after the third treatment day, there was a 90% reduction in pain with motion, and after the tenth treatment day of treatment, the patient stated he was free of pain and had no movement restrictions.

##### Example 3

The patient was presumed to have chronic arthritic neck pain, as no neurological symptoms were present, and an MRI

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showed no disc disease. The patient had less than 30 degrees of rotation to the left and 45 degrees to the right. The patient received 10 treatments of approximately 20 minutes each to the cervical areas three through seven. At the end of the treatment, the patient had 80 degrees of rotation bilaterally.

##### Example 4

The patient presented with pain in the left knee, and the diagnosis was that the pain was caused by an old ACL injury which had not been repaired. Pre-treatment parameters included 30 degree flexion and significant pain with ambulation, especially when walking stairs. The patient also experienced difficult ambulation upon rising in the morning. The treatment protocol included the patient receiving ten 20 minute treatments. He received five consecutive treatments, followed by five days without treatment, and then five more similar treatments. Post treatment measurements yielded flexion at 95 degrees with no pain in climbing stairs, no early morning pain, and generally unlimited ambulation.

##### Example 5

The patient presented two years out post-op for lumbar disc disease. No further surgery was suggested. He was referred for pain relief using the laser protocols. The patient was free of all objective findings, other than the surgical incisions He complained of severe hyperesthesia over his entire right foot, especially the lateral aspect. The pain was severe enough to cause him to awaken at night when the bed sheets touched his foot. The treatment included the patient receiving a total of ten treatments consisting of five minutes to the L4-S1 segment of the lumbar spine, as well as five minutes to the areas of hyperesthesia on the right foot. The result was that after completion of the seventh treatment, the patient noted complete resolution of all pain and tenderness.

##### Example 6

A 60 year old male physician presented with an undiagnosed peripheral neuropathy which manifested with symptoms including loss of sensation and prior perception of his lower extremities. The patient was a prominent physician and on the board of major university medical system, and had undergone multiple tests with numerous specialists. No specific diagnosis was ever established except "peripheral neuropathy". This problem had been present for over 15 years, and the doctor felt that his symptoms were progressing. The treatment protocol consisted of daily exposure to the laser over the entire length of his spinal cord, as well as over the lumbar plexus. Each session lasted approximately 30 minutes. The length of the total sessions was five days, followed by 10 days of rest, and the process was then repeated. After the second cycle of treatments, the patient reported a significant change is his ability to "feel" his legs. Before the treatment, he could not walk on the beach because he could not tell where his feet were and would fall constantly. Also, before the treatment he could walk on the concrete surface of his pool deck and not feel any heat, and now he must wear shoes to avoid painful burning sensation. He could also walk on the beach without fear of falling.

##### Example 7

A 55 year old female who was 20 years post-op from an ankle reconstruction, presented with severe ankle pain on the operative ankle. She had multiple screws implanted at the

time of surgery. Since then she was in constant pain and could only wear running shoes with the back of the shoes cut out. She could not climb stairs without significant discomfort. Several surgical consultations were sought, and the only advice she was given was a total ankle fusion, which she rejected. She received a total of three treatments to the entire ankle of approximately ten minutes per treatment. She has been free of pain for the last 60 days, and is back wearing normal shoes.

From the foregoing, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that various modifications in the above-described method and apparatus can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. Present embodiments, therefore, are to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention being indicated by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description, and all changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are therefore intended to be embraced therein.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for treating selected tissue physiologically linked to trigeminal neuralgia, comprising:

providing a laser light source that delivers a beam of monochromatic coherent light at about 1064 nm;

providing an aiming laser for aiming said beam of monochromatic coherent laser light;

aiming said aiming laser at the tissue to define a target in the tissue;

collimating said beam of monochromatic coherent laser light into a beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light having a cross-sectional area of at least ten cm<sup>2</sup>; and

exposing an area of at least ten cm<sup>2</sup> of said target in the tissue to a depth of at least five millimeters in the tissue with said beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light at a power density of approximately 500 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> for a time sufficient to deliver at least 40 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> and at least 1,500 total Joules to the tissue per treatment, to thereby treat said trigeminal neuralgia.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing a probe connected to said laser light source that outputs said beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light; and

wherein said exposing of said target in the tissue with said collimated monochromatic coherent light includes pressing said probe against the skin of a patient.

3. A method for treating selected neurological tissue, comprising:

providing a laser light source that delivers a beam of monochromatic coherent light at about 1064 nm;

providing an aiming laser for aiming said beam of monochromatic coherent laser light;

aiming said aiming laser at the tissue to define a target in the tissue;

collimating said beam of monochromatic coherent laser light into a beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light having a cross-sectional area of at least ten cm<sup>2</sup>; and

exposing an area of at least ten cm<sup>2</sup> of said target in the tissue to a depth of at least five millimeters in the tissue with said beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light at a power density of approximately 500 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> for a time sufficient to deliver at least 40 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> and at least 1,500 total Joules to the tissue per treatment, to thereby treat said neurological tissue.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising:

providing a probe connected to said laser light source that outputs said beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light; and

wherein said exposing of said target in the tissue with said collimated monochromatic coherent light includes pressing said probe against the skin of a patient.

5. A method for treating selected tissue physiologically linked to migraine headaches, comprising:

providing a laser light source that delivers a beam of monochromatic coherent light at about 1064 nm;

providing an aiming laser for aiming said beam of monochromatic coherent laser light;

aiming said aiming laser at the tissue to define a target in the tissue;

collimating said beam of monochromatic coherent laser light into a beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light having a cross-sectional area of at least ten cm<sup>2</sup>; and

exposing an area of at least ten cm<sup>2</sup> of said target in the tissue to a depth of at least five millimeters in the tissue with said beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light at a power density of approximately 500 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> for a time sufficient to deliver at least 40 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> and at least 1,500 total Joules to the tissue per treatment, to thereby treat said migraine headaches.

6. A method for treating selected tissue physiologically linked to reflex sympathetic dystrophy, comprising:

providing a laser light source that delivers a beam of monochromatic coherent light at about 1064 nm;

providing an aiming laser for aiming said beam of monochromatic coherent laser light;

aiming said aiming laser at the tissue to define a target in the tissue;

collimating said beam of monochromatic coherent laser light into a beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light having a cross-sectional area of at least ten cm<sup>2</sup>; and

exposing an area of at least ten cm<sup>2</sup> of said target in the tissue to a depth of at least five millimeters in the tissue with said beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light at a power density of approximately 500 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> for a time sufficient to deliver at least 40 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> and at least 1,500 total Joules to the tissue per treatment, to thereby treat said reflex sympathetic dystrophy.

7. A method for treating selected tissue physiologically linked to peripheral neuropathy, comprising:

providing a laser light source that delivers a beam of monochromatic coherent light at about 1064 nm;

providing an aiming laser for aiming said beam of monochromatic coherent laser light;

aiming said aiming laser at the tissue to define a target in the tissue;

collimating said beam of monochromatic coherent laser light into a beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light having a cross-sectional area of at least ten cm<sup>2</sup>; and

exposing an area of at least ten cm<sup>2</sup> of said target in the tissue to a depth of at least five millimeters in the tissue with said beam of collimated monochromatic coherent light at a power density of approximately 500 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> for a time sufficient to deliver at least 40 Joules/cm<sup>2</sup> and at least 1,500 total Joules to the tissue per treatment, to thereby treat said peripheral neuropathy.