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(54) **MAGNETIC NANOSTIMULATOR AND NANOSENSOR ARRAY FOR BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL STIMULATION AND SENSING**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
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(71) Applicant: **Regents of the University of Minnesota**, Minneapolis, MN (US)

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(72) Inventors: **Jian-Ping Wang**, Shoreview, MN (US); **Walter C. Low**, Minneapolis, MN (US); **Mahendra DC**, St. Paul, MN (US)

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(73) Assignee: **Regents of the University of Minnesota**, Minneapolis, MN (US)

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Primary Examiner — Charles A Marmor, II

Assistant Examiner — Joshua D Lannu

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B82Y 15/00 (2011.01)

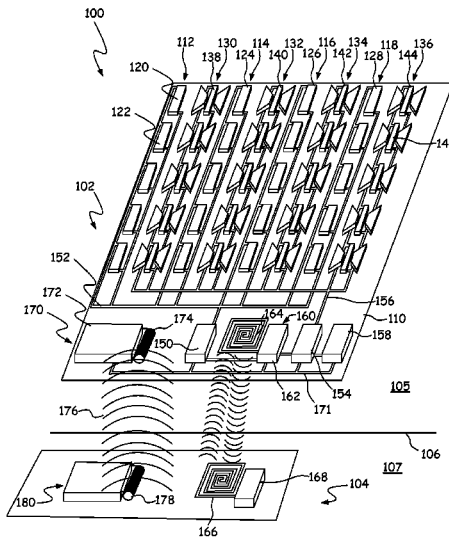
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Westman, Champlin & Koehler, P.A.; Theodore M. Magee

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

An apparatus includes a substrate and a plurality of biological material stimulators positioned on the substrate. Each biological material stimulator forms a fluctuating magnetic field capable of inducing a current in biological material.

20 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



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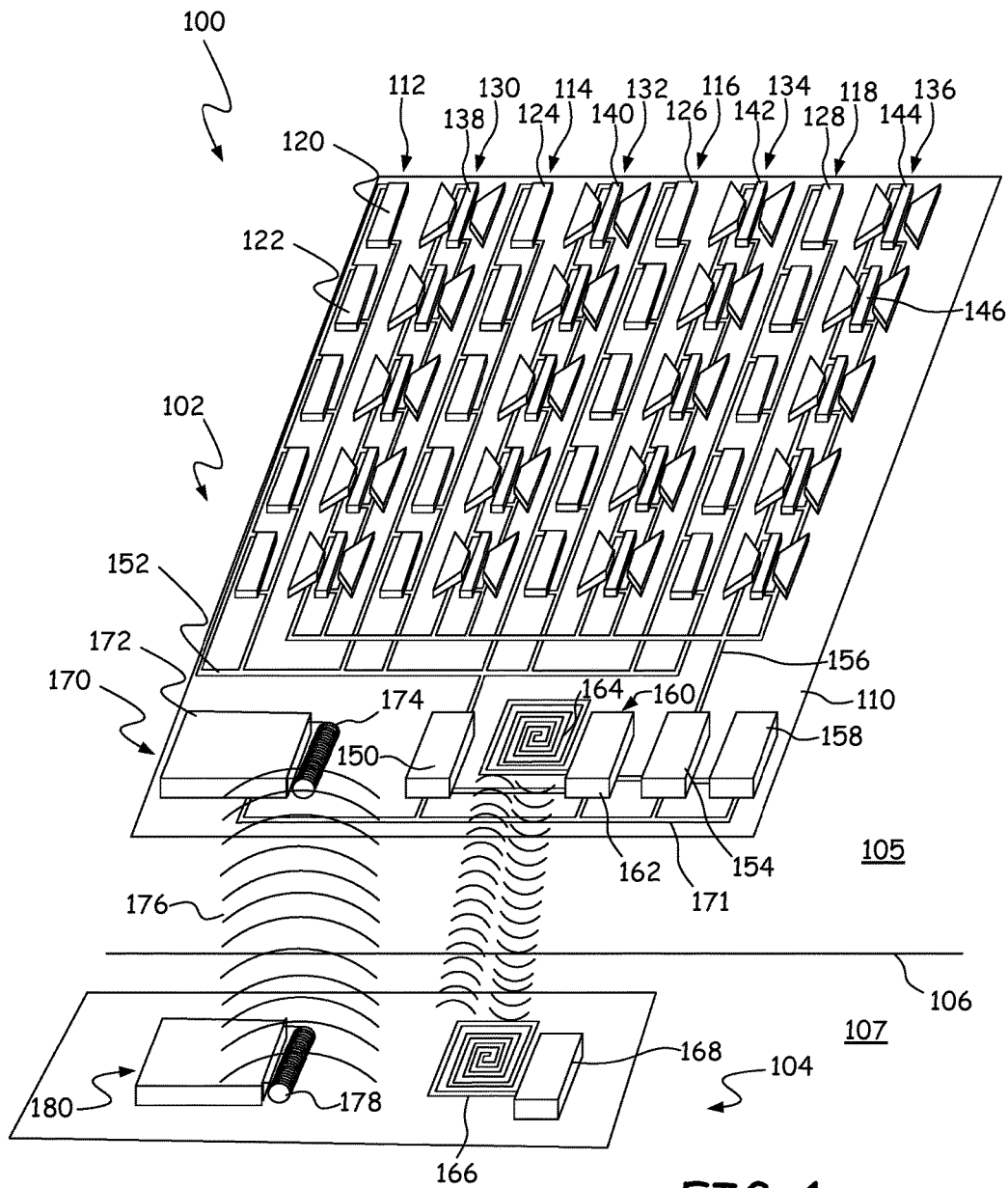


FIG. 1

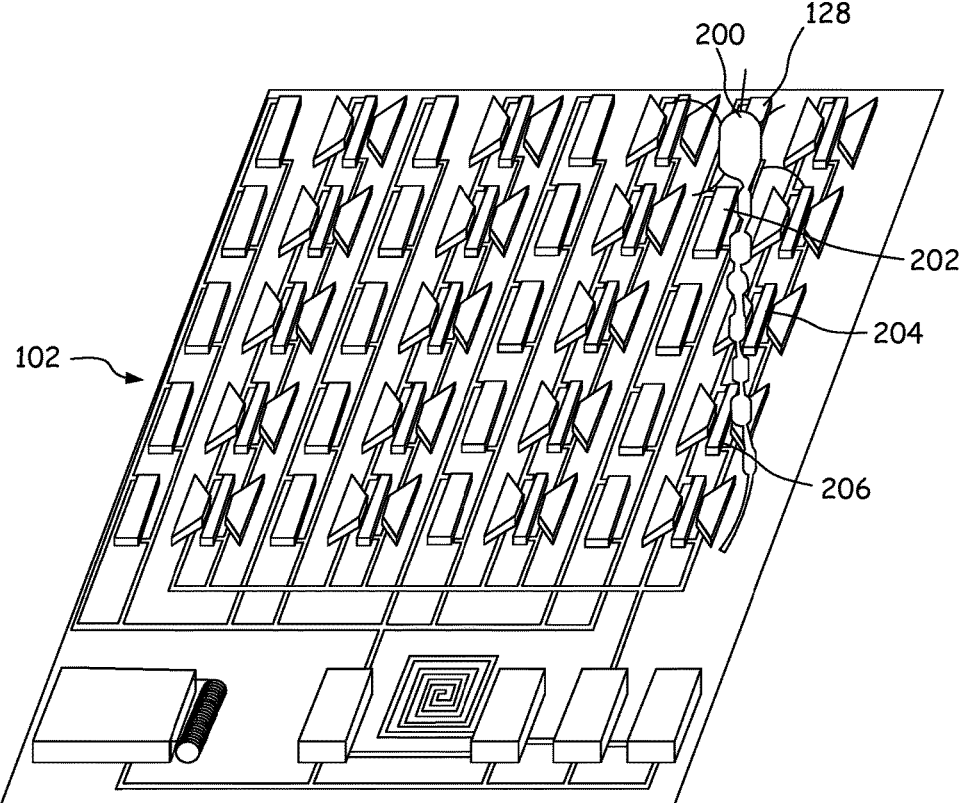


FIG. 2

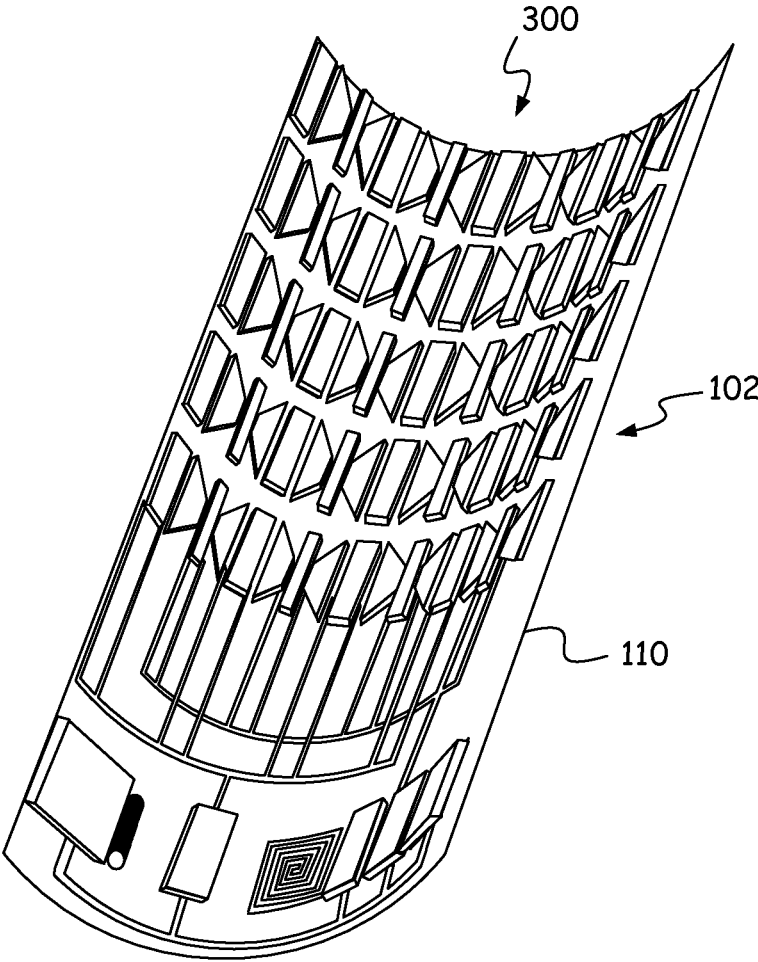


FIG. 3

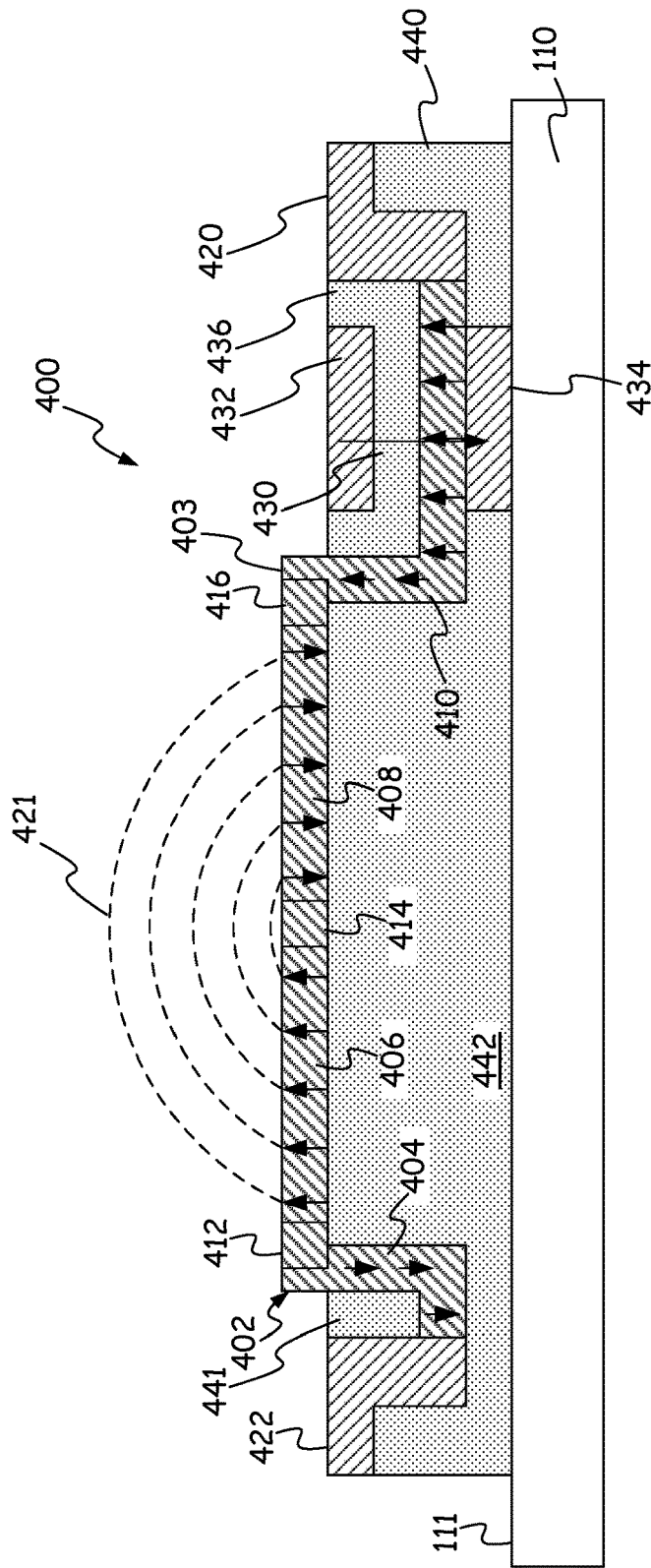


FIG. 4

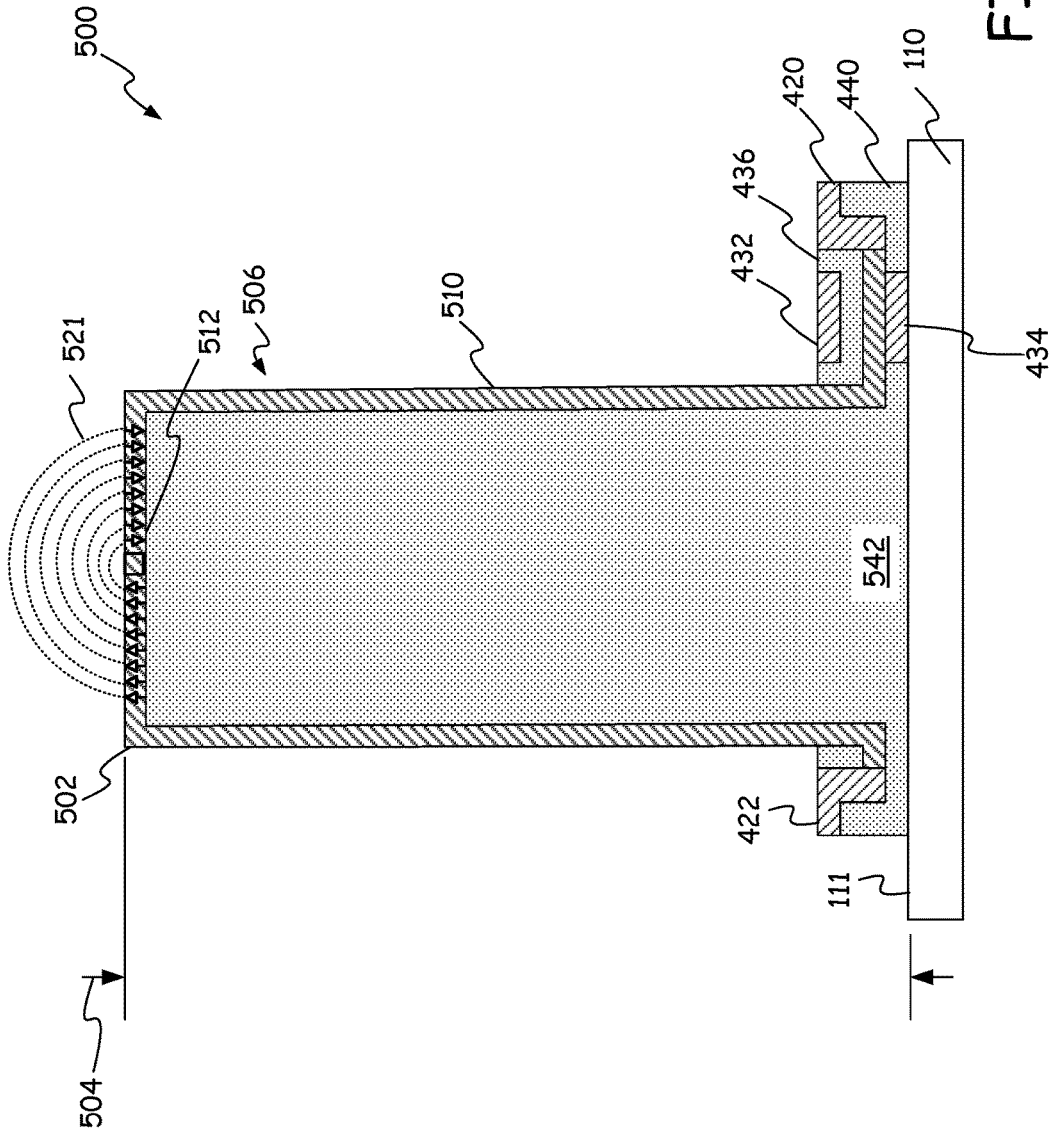


FIG. 5

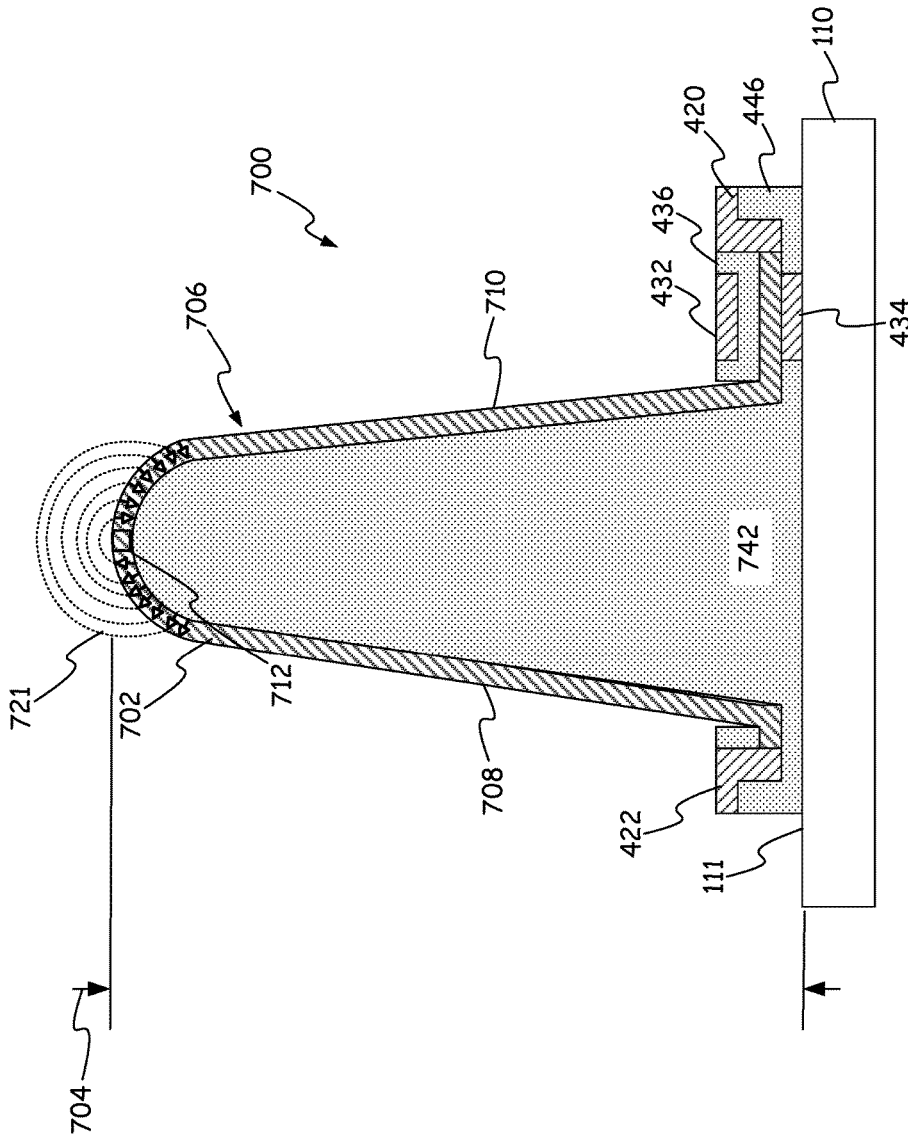


FIG. 7

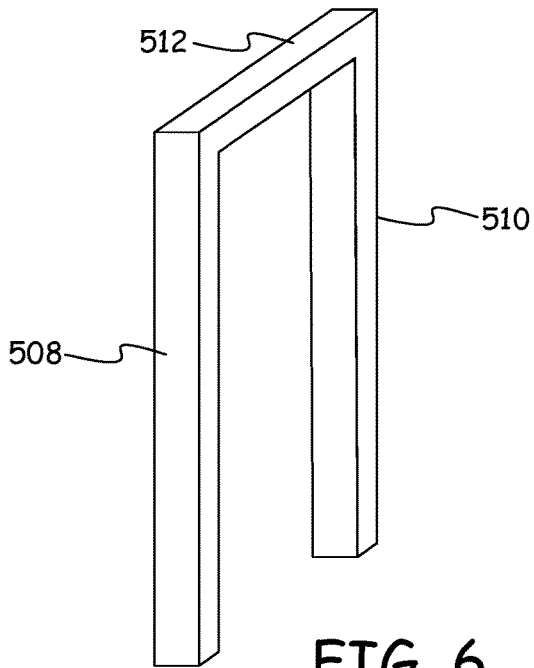


FIG. 6

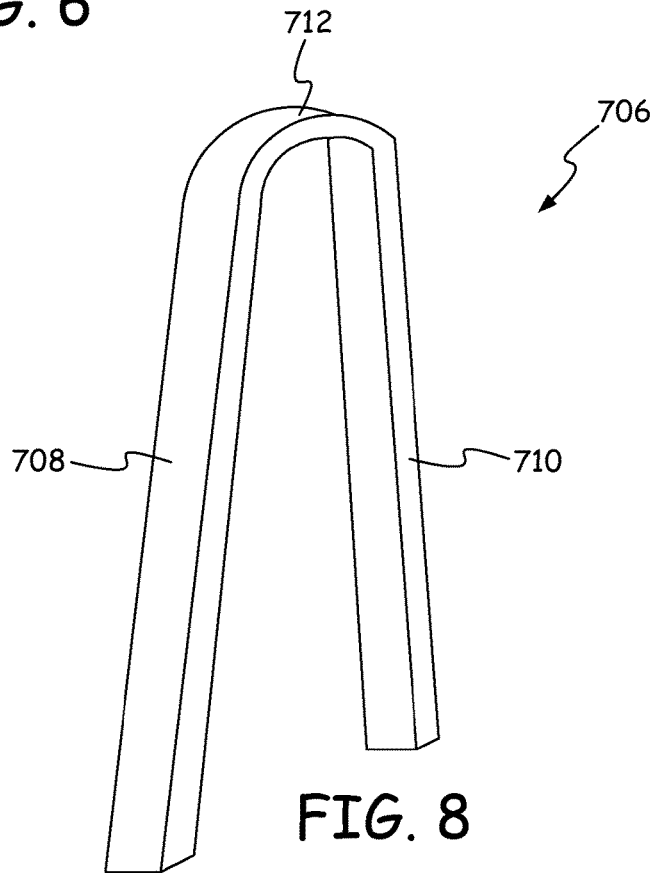


FIG. 8

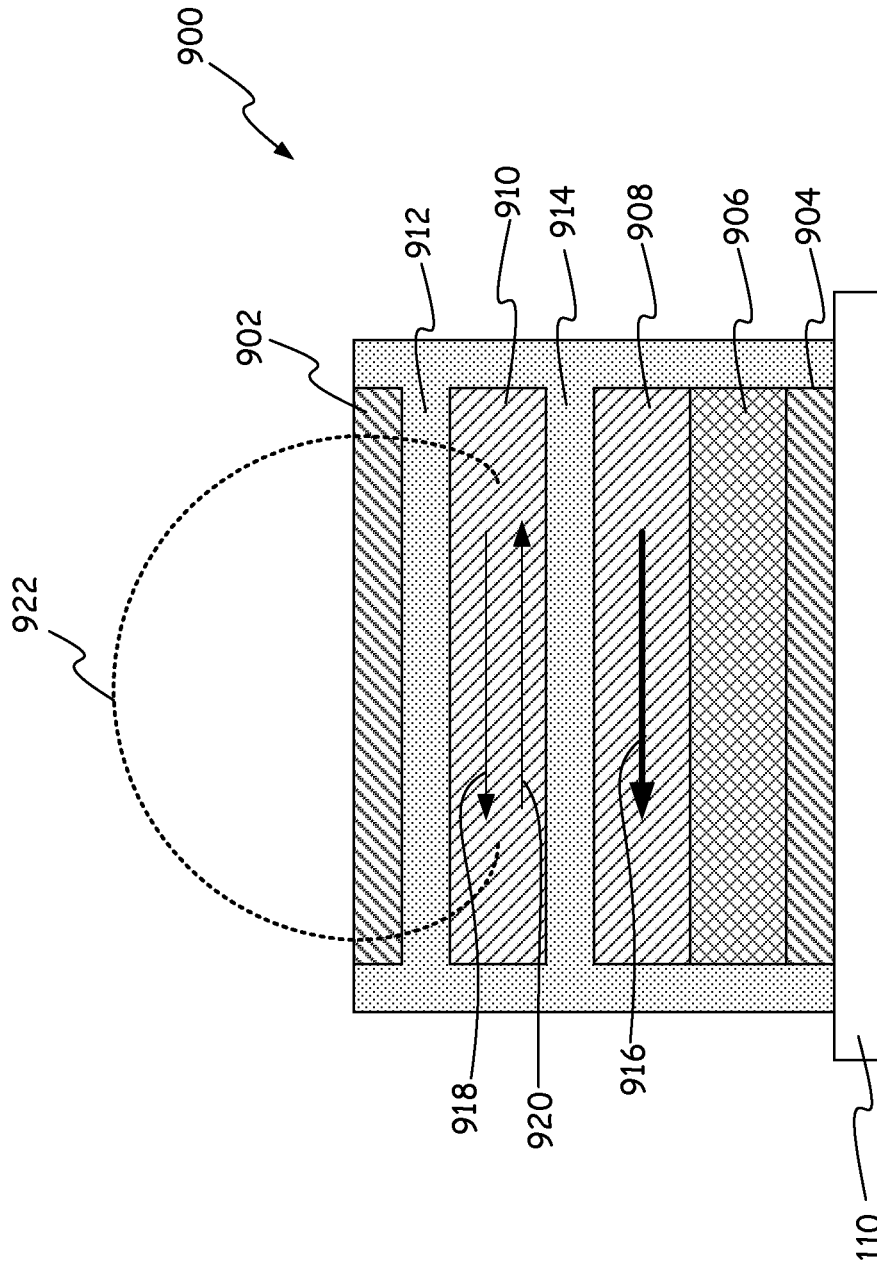


FIG. 9

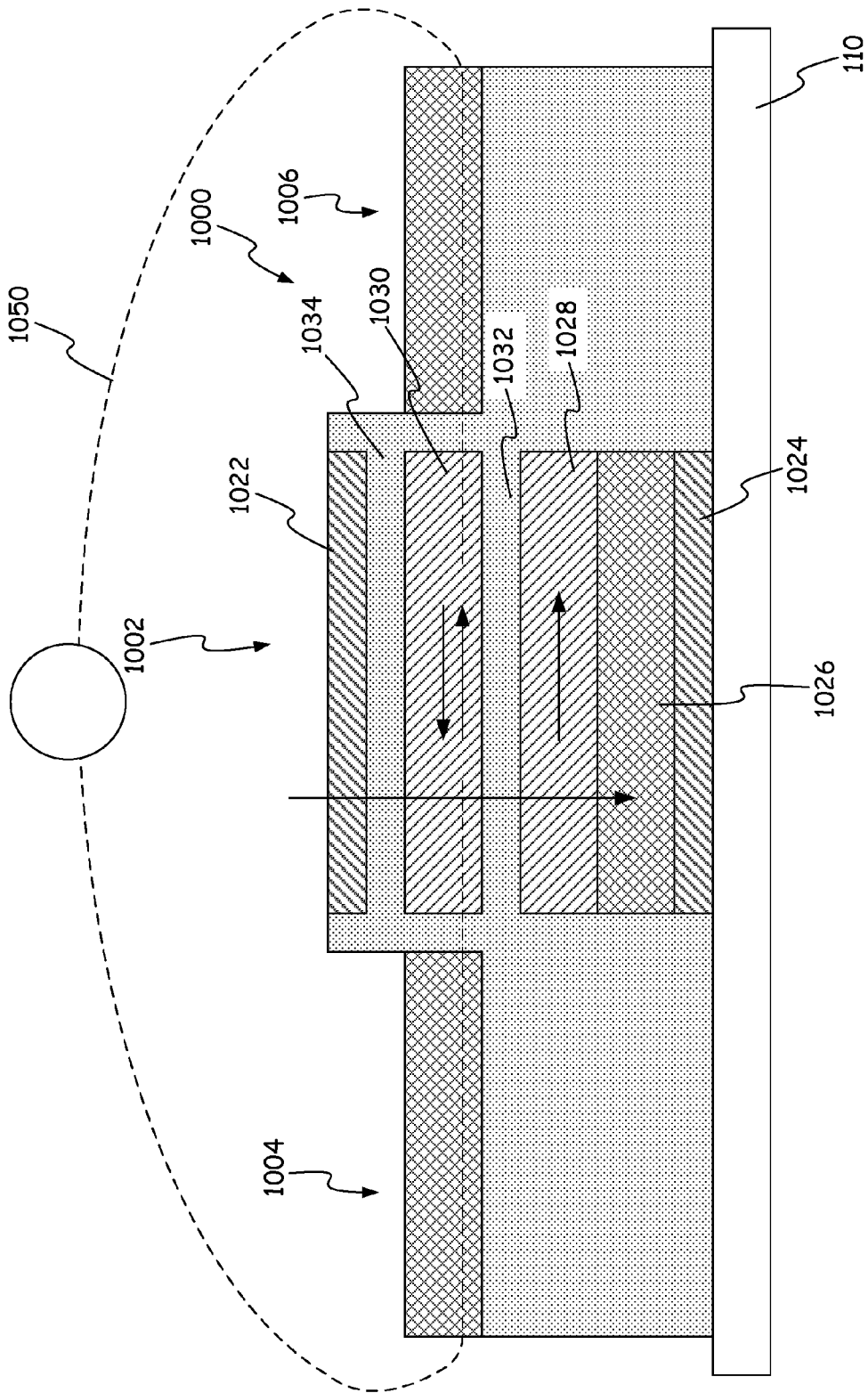


FIG. 10

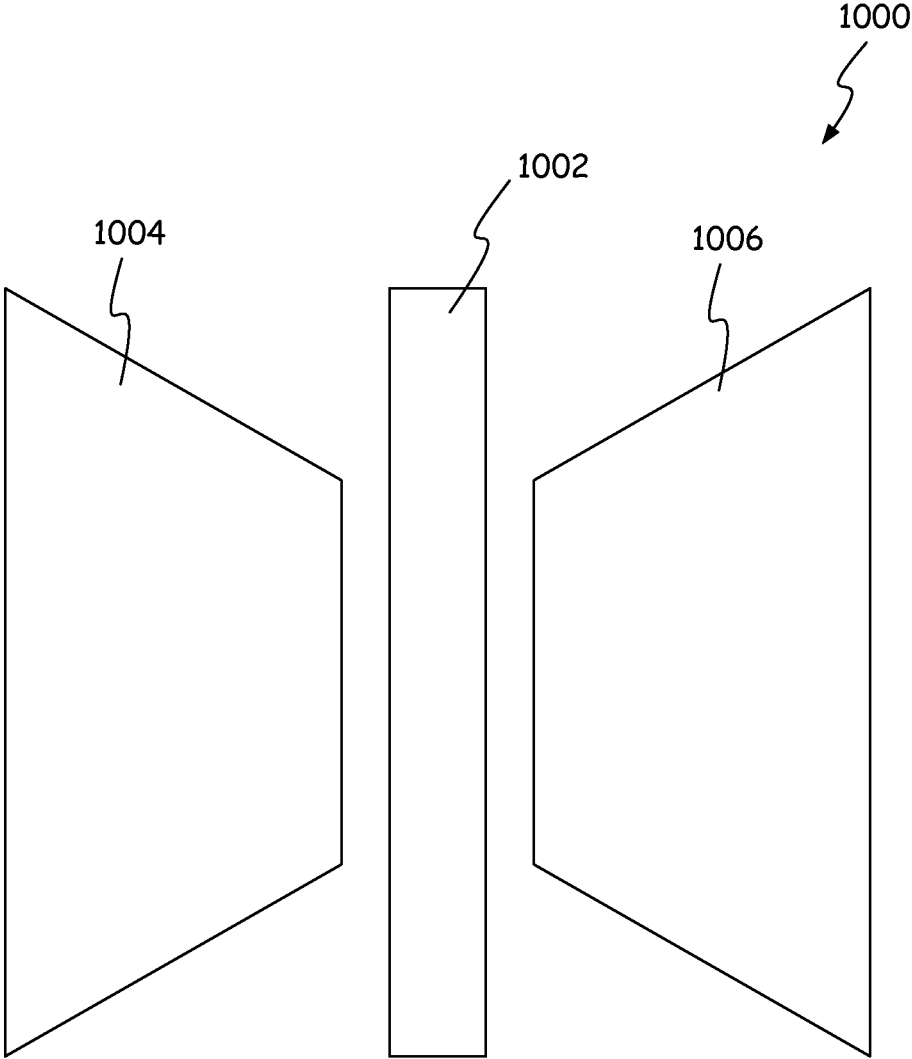


FIG. 11

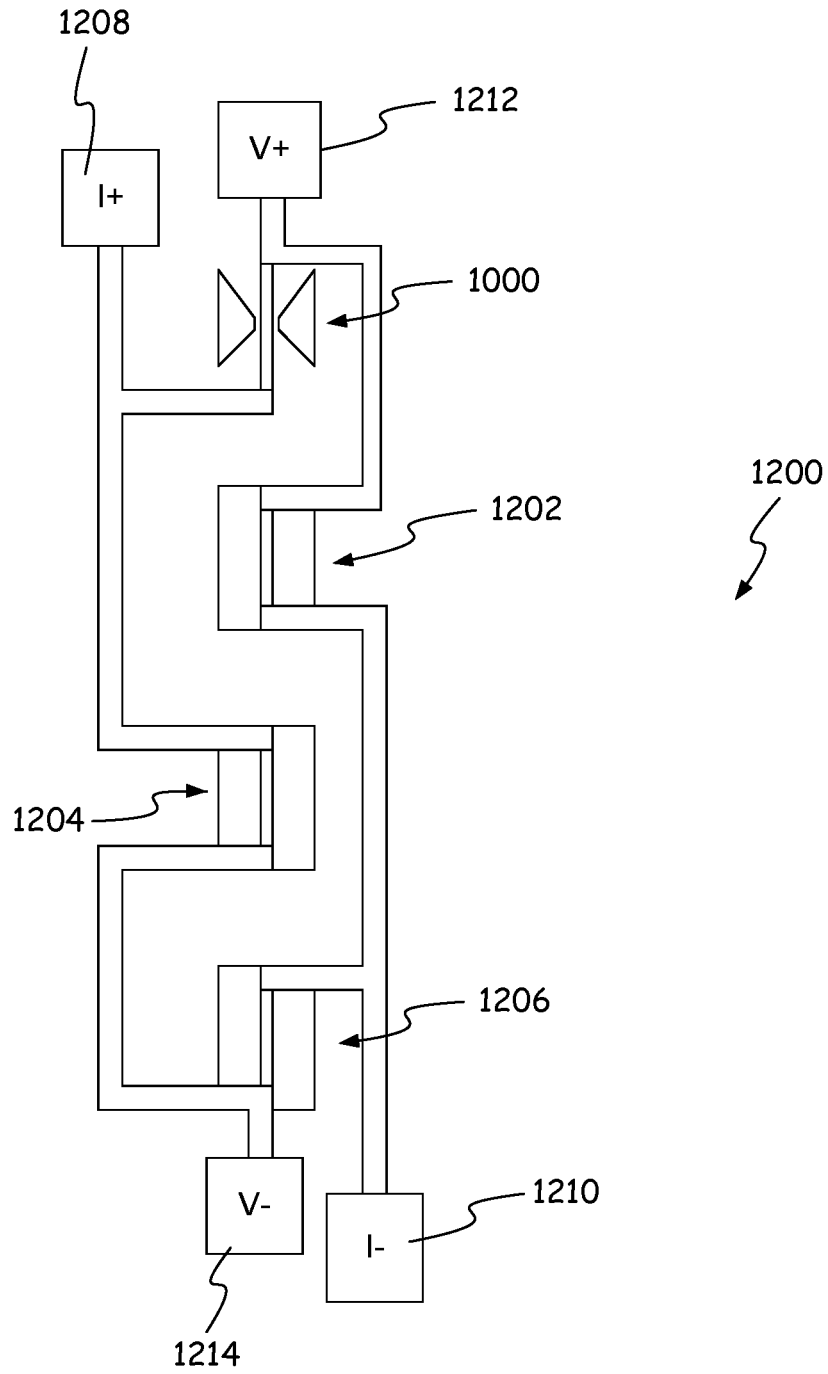


FIG. 12

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MAGNETIC NANOSTIMULATOR AND NANOSENSOR ARRAY FOR BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL STIMULATION AND SENSING

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

The present application is based on and claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional patent applications Ser. No. 62/148,053, filed Apr. 15, 2015 and Ser. No. 62/148,465, filed Apr. 16, 2015, the content of which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

By applying a voltage or a changing magnetic field to a nerve cell, it is possible to cause the nerve cell to “fire” during which the nerve cell depolarizes and then repolarizes.

In external magnetic stimulation, a strong alternating magnetic field is generated external to the body and is directed into the body. Within the body, the fluctuating magnetic field creates a current along the nerve cells that cause the cells to fire.

Such external systems require strong magnetic fields in order to penetrate into the body. However, as the magnetic fields increase in strength, the area affected by the magnetic fields also increases resulting in low resolution stimulus of the nerve cells. As a result, it is difficult to direct the external magnetic field to only a select number of nerve cells.

In deep brain stimulation, an electrode is inserted into the body and an electric field is generated in the target area to be stimulated. This electric field causes nerve cells to fire.

SUMMARY

An apparatus includes a substrate and a plurality of biological material stimulators positioned on the substrate. Each biological material stimulator forms a fluctuating magnetic field capable of inducing a current in biological material.

In accordance with a further embodiment, a method includes introducing an array of biological material stimulators mounted on a substrate into a living body and applying signals to the array of biological material stimulators to cause the biological material stimulators to generate a fluctuating magnetic field that induces a current in biological material surrounding the biological material stimulator.

A neuron stimulator includes a substrate having an outer surface and a magnetic nanowire extending transverse to the outer surface such that a top of the nanowire is above the substrate. The magnetic nanowire has at least two magnetic domains with at least one moveable domain wall between the magnetic domains.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of a nanostimulation/nanosensing system in accordance with one embodiment.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the implanted device of FIG. 1 next to a neuron.

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the implanted device of FIG. 1 in a bent configuration.

FIG. 4 is a sectional side view of a nanowire stimulator in accordance with one embodiment.

FIG. 5 is a sectional side view of a nanowire bridge stimulator in accordance with one embodiment.

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FIG. 6 is a perspective view of the nanowire bridge stimulator of FIG. 5.

FIG. 7 is a section side view of a nanowire half loop stimulator in accordance with one embodiment.

FIG. 8 is a perspective view of the nanowire half loop stimulator of FIG. 7.

FIG. 9 is a sectional side view of a Magnetic Tunnel Junction (MTJ) nanostimulator in accordance with one embodiment.

FIG. 10 is a section side view of a Magnetic Tunnel Junction (MTJ) nanosensor in accordance with one embodiment.

FIG. 11 is a top view of the MTJ nanosensor of FIG. 10.

FIG. 12 is a top view of a Wheatstone Bridge nanosensor in accordance with one embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Embodiments described below provide arrays of magnetic nanostructures that generate and/or use magnetic fields for biomedical applications. For example, some magnetic nanostructures are used to modulate (stimulate) biological material such as cells, tissue and organs while other magnetic nanostructures used to sense cellular activity. The magnetic nanostructures can include structures such as nanowires, magnetic tunnel junctions or giant magnetoresistance elements, for example. For embodiments that use nanowires, domain walls are introduced into a nanowire and are moved through the nanowire thereby creating a fluctuating magnetic field external to the nanowire. In accordance with some embodiments, the nanowires are formed as vertical half-loops or bridges that extend away from a substrate so as to place the nanowires in closer contact with the cells that they are stimulating. In accordance with some embodiments, half loops and bridges of differing heights are used to improve contact with the biological material. For embodiments that use magnetic tunnel junctions or giant magnetoresistance elements as the nanostructures, the magnetic tunnel junction or the giant magnetoresistance elements are raised relative to the substrate to provide better contact between the elements and the cells they are to stimulate. The magnetic domain of the top-most magnetic layer in the magnetic tunnel junction or the giant magnetoresistance element is then rotated based on an input signal to form a low frequency magnetic field around the magnetic tunnel junction or giant magnetoresistance element. The magnetic field generated by the magnetic nanostructures can be controlled by either an electrical signal or by a light signal.

In accordance with some embodiments, the magnetic nanostructures are mounted on a flexible substrate such that the substrate and the magnetic nanostructures can be wrapped around biological material to thereby better focus the stimulation signals onto a particular area in the body, such as a particular area in the brain.

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of a nanostimulation/nanosensor system 100 including an implanted device 102 and an external device 104. Implanted device 102 is located within a living body 105 and external device 104 is located in an environment 107 exterior to living body 105 and separated from living body 105 by an outer surface 106 of the living body. In accordance with one embodiment, implanted device 102 is inserted into living body 105 through an incision in outer surface 106 and then the incision is sealed such that there is no wired connection between implanted device 102 and external device 104.

Implanted device 102 includes a flexible substrate 110 having a plurality of nanostimulators and nanosensors

mounted thereon. In accordance with one embodiment, the plurality of nanostimulators and nanosensors are arranged in an array. In FIG. 1, there are four columns **112**, **114**, **116** and **118** of nanostimulators, such as nanostimulators **120**, **122**, **124**, **126** and **128**. There are also four columns of nanosensors **130**, **132**, **134** and **136** that include nanosensors, such as nanosensors **138**, **140**, **142**, **144** and **146**.

Each nanostimulator generates a fluctuating magnetic field when active that interacts with biological material. Although these interactions can include interfering with the normal operation of the biological material, changing the physical structure of the biological material, changing the operation of the biological material and stimulating the biological material to generate a response from the biological material, for example, the interactions are referred to generically as stimulating the biological materials and the devices used to generate the fluctuating magnetic fields are referred to generically as stimulators. In the descriptions herein, the reference to stimulating should be read to include all interactions between the magnetic field generating devices and the biological tissue and the references to stimulators and nanostimulators should be read to include all implanted devices that generate a fluctuating magnetic field that interacts with biological tissue.

In addition to the nanostimulators and nanosensors, a stimulator controller **150**, a sensor controller **154**, a memory **158**, a communication circuit **160** and a power circuit **170** are mounted on flexible substrate **110**. The nanostimulators are connected to stimulator controller **150** by a stimulation bus **152** on flexible substrate **110** to allow controller **150** to activate individual nanostimulators at any one time and to activate multiple nanostimulators at the same time. The stimulator nanostructures such as the nanowire, mtj and giant magnetoresistance nanostructure can be controlled by applying electrical signals to stimulation bus **152** or by applying light signals to stimulation bus **152**. In embodiments where light is used to control the stimulators, stimulation bus **152** takes the form of optic wave guides.

Similarly, the nanosensors are connected to sensor controller **154** by a sense control bus **156** that allows the sensor controller **154** to receive a sensed value from each of the nanosensors. Sensor controller **154** can store the sensed values in memory **158**. In addition, sensor controller **154** can transmit the sensed values or the values stored in memory **158** wirelessly using communication circuit **160**, which consists of a wireless communication controller **162** and an antenna **164**. Wireless communication controller **162** communicates through antenna **164** to an antenna **166** that is coupled to a wireless communication circuit **168** of external device **104**. Through this communication, sensor controller **154** is able to communicate the sensed values externally where the sense values may be used by an external processor.

Stimulator controller **150** may receive instructions to stimulate particular nanostimulators through communication circuit **160**. In particular, instructions may pass through wireless communication circuit **168** and antenna **166** and be received by antenna **164** and wireless communication controller **162** before being provided to stimulator controller **150**.

Although communication circuit **160** is shown to be wireless in FIG. 1, in other embodiments, a wired connection is provided between implanted device **102** and external device **104**.

Power circuit **170** provides power to sensor controller **150**, stimulator controller **154**, communication circuit **160** and memory **158** through a power bus **171**. Some of the

power provided to stimulator controller **150** is routed to the nanostimulators by sensor controller **150** to cause the nanostimulators to generate a low frequency magnetic field as discussed further below. Some of the power provided to sensor controller **154** is routed to the nanosensors to read a magnetic field value sensed by the nanosensors as discussed further below.

In accordance with one embodiment, power source **170** includes an induction loop **174** that generates an electrical current when it receives an alternating magnetic field **176**. The current from induction loop **174** can be used to provide power to power bus **171** directly or can be used to recharge a battery **172** that in turn provides power to power bus **171**. In accordance with one embodiment, the alternating magnetic field **176** received by induction loop **174** is generated by a corresponding induction loop **178** in a power system **180** of external device **104**. Thus, external device **104** provides power wirelessly to implanted device **102**. This power can be provided periodically to charge battery **172** or can be provided continuously to directly power the components of implanted device **102**. After battery **172** has been charged, external device **104** can be removed and does not need to be present in order for implanted device **102** to operate since battery **172** can provide power while external device **104** is not present. In accordance with other embodiments, a wired connection between implanted device **102** and external device **104** allows power to be conveyed between external device **104** and implanted device **102** either periodically to recharge battery **172** or continuously to power implanted device **102**.

FIG. 2 shows implanted device **102** in contact with a neuron **200**. In particular, two nanostimulators **128** and **202** are in contact with neuron **200** and two nanosensors **204** and **206** are in contact with neuron **200**. As a result, one or both of nanostimulators **128** and **202** may stimulate neuron **200** to cause it to fire while one or both of nanosensors **204** and **206** may sense the firing of neuron **200** by sensing the magnetic field generated by neuron **200** as current passes through neuron **200**. Although direct contact with the neuron is not required to stimulate the neuron or to sense a firing event in the neuron, contact does improve the ability to stimulate the neuron and sense a firing event in the neuron.

As mentioned above, the substrate **110** of implanted device **102** is flexible as shown in FIG. 3. Thus, implanted device **102** can be bent to form a curved shape **300** such that implanted device **102** can be wrapped around biological material to thereby focus the stimulation to a particular area in the body and to focus the sensing of cellular activity in a particular area of the body. Although flexible substrate **110** is shown flexed along a first axis, flexible substrate **110** is bendable along multiple axes.

Although FIGS. 1-3 show a combination of nanosensors and nanostimulators on implanted device **102**, in other embodiments, the implanted device contains only nanostimulators and in other embodiments, the implanted device contains only nanosensors. In addition, although the nanosensors and nanostimulators of FIGS. 1-3 are shown in separate columns, in other embodiments, nanosensors and nanostimulators are in a same column.

FIG. 4 provides a sectional side view of a nanostimulator **400**, which can be used as one of the nanostimulators such as nanostimulator **120** of FIG. 1. Nanostimulator **400** uses a nanowire **402** that includes a plurality of magnetic domains **404**, **406**, **408** and **410** with neighboring domains being separated by domain walls **412**, **414** and **416**. In accordance with one embodiment, nanowire **402** is constructed of CoFeB. Nanowire **402** includes two ends, which are in

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contact with two respective electrical contacts **420** and **422**. By passing a polarized current between electrical contacts **420** and **422** through nanowire **402**, it is possible to move domain walls **412**, **414** and **416** and thereby change the magnetic field **421** generated by nanowire **402**. This change in magnetic field **421** creates a fluctuating magnetic field that interacts with biological material. In the case of neurons, the fluctuating magnetic field can induce depolarization in a neuron, causing the neuron to fire. In other biological materials, the fluctuating magnetic field can cause the material or the material's function to be altered in some way.

To change the direction of the magnetic domain in nanowire **402**, a current **430** can be passed from contact **432** to contact **434** to generate a magnetic field in nanowire **402** sufficient to set the direction of the magnetic domain.

The structures of nano stimulator **400** are formed through photolithography and milling on top of an outer surface **111** of flexible substrate **110**. As a result, nanowire **402** extends transverse to outer surface **111** such that a top **403** of nanowire **402** is above substrate **110**. To isolate the electrical contacts, layers of insulating material **436**, **440**, **441** and **442** are deposited and milled.

FIG. **5** provides a sectional side view of a nanostimulator **500**, which is similar to the nanostimulator **400** of FIG. **4** except that nanowire **402** has been replaced with nanowire **502**, which has a greater height **504** than nanowire **402**. Nanowire **502** contains magnetic domains pointing in different directions and separated by domain walls so as to produce a magnetic field **521** that fluctuates as the domain walls are moved through nanowire **502** by a current passing through nanowire **502** from contact **420** to contact **422**. Additional domain walls may be added to nanowire **502** by applying a current between contacts **432** and **434**.

Nanowire **502** forms a bridge structure **506** having legs **508** and **510** and a cross beam **512**. Legs **508** and **510** extend transverse to outer surface **111** of substrate **110** such that the top of cross beam **512** is above substrate **110**. In FIG. **5**, bridge **506** is filled with insulating material **542**. In other embodiments, insulating material **542** is not present and the interior of bridge **506** is empty as shown in the perspective view of FIG. **6**.

In embodiments which use bridge structure **506** as the nanostimulator, different nanostimulators can have different heights **504** within implantable device **102**. Thus, the nanostimulators in columns **112**, **114**, **116** and **118** can each be at a different height allowing for differing levels of physical contact between the nanostimulators and the surrounding biological material.

FIG. **7** provides a sectional side view of a further embodiment of a nanostimulator in the form of a half looped nanowire **702**. Nanowire **702** contains magnetic domains pointing in different directions and separated by domain walls similar to the domains and domain walls of nanowire **402** of FIG. **4**. The different domains form a magnetic field **721** that fluctuates as the domain walls are moved by current passing from contact **420** to contact **422**. Additional domain walls may be added to nanowire **702** by applying a current between contacts **432** and **434**. Nanowire **702** is formed into a half loop **706** with a rounded top **712** and two legs **708** and **710**. Half loop **706** extends transverse to substrate **110** to a height **704** above outer surface **111** of flexible substrate **110**. In accordance with one embodiment, implantable device **102** includes multiple half loop nanostimulators, such as shown in FIG. **7**, each with a different height **704**, such that the implantable device **102** has an array of half loop nanostimulators each at different heights.

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In FIG. **7**, the interior of half loop **706** is filled with an insulating material **742**. In other embodiments, insulating material **742** does not fill half loop **706**. Instead, an empty space is present within half loop **706** as shown in the perspective view of half loop **706** shown in FIG. **8**.

The magnetic stimulation of neurons using the various embodiments causes a neuron to "fire". Before firing, the neuron membrane has a resting potential of -70 mv. At the beginning of the firing event, a current of K^+ ions flows into the membrane causing the membrane potential to rise to 30 mv. This rise in the membrane's potential is referred to as depolarization. A current of K^+ ions then flows out of the membrane causing repolarization followed by hyperpolarization. The membrane then returns to its resting potential.

The amount of magnetic flux required to create depolarization can be calculated using Ampere's law:

$$\oint \vec{B} \cdot d\vec{l} = \mu_0 \oint \sigma \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A}$$

For a typical neuron: $\sigma = 0.33$ s/m and $E = 100$ V/m. If the stimulator is placed a distance $10 \mu\text{m}$, then the required magnetic field strength to cause depolarization of the neuron is $B = 20$ nT.

Domain walls generate magnetic fields external to the magnetic material. For example, a rectangular portion of a domain wall will produce an external magnetic field at a position x , y , z from the center of the rectangle of:

$$B_x = \frac{\mu_0 M_s t}{2\pi s} \log \left[\frac{(s-2y) + \sqrt{(2x-w)^2 + (2y-s)^2 + 4z^2}}{(s-2y) + \sqrt{(2x+w)^2 + (2y-s)^2 + 4z^2}} \cdot \frac{(-s-2y) + \sqrt{(2x+w)^2 + (2y+s)^2 + 4z^2}}{(-s-2y) + \sqrt{(2x-w)^2 + (2y-s)^2 + 4z^2}} \right]$$

$$B_y = \frac{\mu_0 M_s t}{2\pi s} \log \left[\frac{(w-2x) + \sqrt{(2x-w)^2 + (2y-s)^2 + 4z^2}}{(w-2x) + \sqrt{(2x+w)^2 + (2y+s)^2 + 4z^2}} \cdot \frac{(-w-2x) + \sqrt{(2x+w)^2 + (2y+s)^2 + 4z^2}}{(-w-2x) + \sqrt{(2x+w)^2 + (2y-s)^2 + 4z^2}} \right]$$

$$B_z = \frac{\mu_0 M_s t}{2\pi s} \left\{ \tan^{-1} \left[\frac{2(w/2-x)(s/2-y)}{z\sqrt{(2x-w)^2 + (2y-s)^2 + 4z^2}} \right] + \tan^{-1} \left[\frac{2(w/2-x)(s/2+y)}{z\sqrt{(2x-w)^2 + (2y+s)^2 + 4z^2}} \right] - \tan^{-1} \left[\frac{2(-w/2-x)(s/2-y)}{z\sqrt{(2x+w)^2 + (2y-s)^2 + 4z^2}} \right] - \tan^{-1} \left[\frac{2(-w/2-x)(s/2+y)}{z\sqrt{(2x+w)^2 + (2y+s)^2 + 4z^2}} \right] \right\}$$

where M_s is the saturation magnetization of the material, μ_0 is the permeability of the material, w is the width of the magnetic material, t is the thickness of the magnetic material, and s is the width of the domain wall transverse to w and t .

In a further embodiment, a triangle model of a transverse domain wall is used to determine the magnetic field at positions/external to the transverse domain wall. The triangle is an isosceles triangle with its base equal to the width of the domain wall and its height equal to the width of the magnetic material. To determine the magnetic field, the

triangle broken into rectangles and the fields from the rectangles are summed to form the field for the domain wall.

In order to generate a current along the axis of the neuron, the magnetic field produced by the domain wall must fluctuate. To produce this fluctuation, several embodiments

move the domain wall through the material. For a magnetic nanowire, a domain wall can be moved by passing a spin polarized current through the nanowire. The use of transverse domain walls instead of current carrying loops was selected by the present inventors for power efficiency and to avoid damaging neurons. Under electrical deep brain stimulation, 1-4 Volts of electrical energy is applied to the subthalamic nucleus (STN) to trigger the neuron. From Faraday's law of electromagnetic induction, the amount of magnetic field required to induce 1 V EMF for the stimulation of the STN is 800 Gauss (with a radius of STN 2 mm and a pulse width 1 μ s). To generate 800 Gauss magnetic field from current carrying wire, a large current of 3-50 Amps would have to be applied to the wire. This would require a great deal of power and would generate a substantial amount of heat that may damage the neurons. The field from one moving transverse domain wall is sufficient to stimulate the STN. In addition, the domain wall is moved by using a very small alternating current of around 74 micro-Amps. The alternating current supplied to a magnetic layer produces spin-transfer torque which induces motion of domain wall. The spin-transfer torque combined with spin-orbit torque reduces significantly the amount of current required to move the domain wall.

FIG. 9 provides a sectional view of a nanostimulator **900** in accordance with a further embodiment. Nanostimulator **900** is formed of a magnetic tunnel junction nanostructure that includes two electrical contacts **902** and **904**, an anti-ferromagnetic layer **906**, a fixed or pinned ferromagnetic layer **908**, a free magnetic layer **910** and insulating layers **912** and **914**. Fixed magnetic layer **908** has a magnetic domain with a dipole direction **916** that is fixed while free magnetic layer **910** has a magnetic domain with a dipole direction that can be switched by applying spin polarized current between contacts **902** and **904**. Spin polarized current in a first direction causes the magnetic domain to point in a first direction **918** and spin polarized current in a second direction causes the magnetic domain to point in a second direction **920**. Free magnetic layer **910** generates an external magnetic field **922** that can interact with biological material. By alternating between directions **918** and **920** through the application of the spin polarized current, it is possible to create a low frequency fluctuating magnetic field **922** that can interact with biological material such as cells, tissues and organs, for example. In accordance with other embodiments, a giant magneto resistive nanostructure is used in place of the magnetic tunnel junction nanostructure.

FIG. 10 provides a side sectional view and FIG. 11 provides a top view of a magnetic nanosensor **1000** that can be used as one of the nanosensors on an implanted device **102**, such as nanosensor **138**. Nanosensor **1000** includes a central sensing portion **1002** and two magnetic flux guides **1004** and **1006**. Flux guides **1004** and **1006** concentrate magnetic flux into a smaller area within central sensing portion **1002** to thereby increase the sensitivity of central sensing portion **1002**.

Central sensing portion **1002** is constructed of a magnetic tunnel junction similar to the magnetic tunnel junction of stimulator **900** of FIG. 9. In particular, the magnetic tunnel junction of nanosensor **1000** includes electrical contacts **1022** and **1024**, non-ferromagnetic layer **1026**, pinned magnetic layer **1028**, free magnetic layer **1030** and insulator

layers **1032** and **1034**. Pinned magnetic layer **1028** has a fixed domain direction and free magnetic layer **1030** has a free domain direction that may be set based on an external magnetic field **1050** generated by the firing of a neuron or other living biological material. The direction of the domain of free magnetic layer **1030** can be determined by passing a current between electrical contacts **1022** and **1024**. When the domain of free magnetic layer **1030** is parallel to pinned magnetic layer **1028**, a first resistance is detected and when the domain of free magnetic layer **1030** is antiparallel to the domain direction of pinned magnetic layer **1028** a second resistance is detected. Thus, by measuring this resistance, it is possible to determine the direction of external magnetic field **1050** and thus it is possible to determine if a neuron has fired.

Nanosensor **1000** may be used alone to sense neuron firing events or may be included as part of a Wheatstone bridge to sense firing events. For example, nanosensor **1000** can be used as part of Wheatstone bridge **1200** of FIG. 12. In Wheatstone bridge **1200**, three magnetic tunnel junctions **1202**, **1204** and **1206** are used in cooperation with magnetic tunnel junction nanosensor **1000**. Magnetic tunnel junction **1202**, **1204** and **1206** are protected from external magnetic fields by a shielding layer and therefore their free layer does not change its domain direction and therefore does not change its resistance.

A current is passed between current contacts **1208** and **1210** along two parallel paths. A first path is through nanosensor **1000** and magnetic tunnel junction **1202** and a second path is through magnetic tunnel junction **1204** and magnetic tunnel junction **1206**. When the external magnetic field sensed by nanosensor **1000** is in a first direction it causes the domain of the free layer of nanosensor **1000** to be in a first direction and nanosensor **1000** to have a first resistance. This first resistance is balanced by Wheatstone bridge **1200** such that a voltage between voltage contacts **1212** and **1214** is zero. When the magnetic field changes directions thereby changing the domain direction of the free layer of nanosensor **1000**, the resistance of nanosensor **1000** changes causing Wheatstone bridge **1200** to become unbalanced thereby creating a voltage between contacts **1212** and **1214**. This sensed voltage change is detected to indicate a neuron firing event.

Although the present invention has been described with reference to preferred embodiments, workers skilled in the art will recognize that changes may be made in form and detail without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus comprising:

a substrate;

a plurality of biological material stimulators positioned on the substrate, each biological material stimulator forming a fluctuating magnetic field capable of interacting with biological material wherein each biological material stimulator comprises a magnetic structure in which a magnetic domain wall moves to produce the fluctuating magnetic field.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein each biological material stimulator comprises a neuron stimulator capable of inducing a current in a neuron.

3. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein each biological material stimulator is controlled using light.

4. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprises at least one magnetic sensor positioned on the substrate and capable of determining when a neuron fires based on a magnetic field induced by the neuron.

5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the substrate is flexible.

6. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a power source and a wireless communication system positioned on the substrate.

7. A method comprising:

introducing an array of biological material stimulators mounted on a substrate into a living body;

applying signals to the array of biological material stimulators to cause the biological material stimulators to generate a fluctuating magnetic field that interacts with biological material surrounding the biological material stimulators wherein each biological material stimulator comprises a magnetic material and wherein each signal applied to each respective biological material stimulator causes at least one magnetic domain wall in the magnetic material of the respective biological material stimulator to move.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the substrate is flexible.

9. The method of claim 7 wherein each biological material stimulator comprises a half loop of the magnetic material that extends upward from the substrate.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein each half loop of magnetic material has a height and at least two of the half loops of magnetic material have different heights from each other.

11. The method of claim 7 wherein introducing the biological material stimulators further comprises introducing a magnetic sensor mounted on the substrate with the biological material stimulators.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the magnetic sensor comprises a magnetic tunnel junction.

13. The method of claim 7 wherein introducing the array of biological material stimulators comprises sealing the array of biological material stimulators in the living body without a wired connection between the array of biological material stimulators and an environment external to the living body.

14. A neuron stimulator comprising:

a substrate having an outer surface;

a magnetic nanowire extending transverse to the outer surface such that a top of the nanowire is above the substrate, the magnetic nanowire having at least two magnetic domains with at least one moveable domain wall between the magnetic domains.

15. The neuron stimulator of claim 14 wherein the substrate is flexible.

16. The neuron stimulator of claim 14 wherein the magnetic nanowire is one of a plurality of magnetic nanowires extending transverse to the outer surface.

17. The neuron stimulator of claim 16 wherein at least two of the plurality of magnetic nanowires extend different heights above the outer surface relative to each other.

18. The neuron stimulator of claim 14 further comprising a wireless power circuit capable of receiving power wirelessly.

19. The neuron stimulator of claim 14 further comprising at least one magnetic sensor positioned on the substrate.

20. The neuron stimulator of claim 19 further comprising a wireless communication system positioned on the substrate such that a sensed value from the at least one magnetic sensor is communicated through the wireless communication system to an external device.

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