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Adjustable prosthetic ankles

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Highsmith et al.

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(54) **ADJUSTABLE PROSTHETIC ANKLES**

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(22) Filed: **Jun. 26, 2018**

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(60) Provisional application No. 61/917,033, filed on Dec. 17, 2013.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

A61F 2/50 (2006.01)
A61F 2/66 (2006.01)
A61F 2/68 (2006.01)
A61F 2/76 (2006.01)

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

CPC **A61F 2/6607** (2013.01); **A61F 2/76** (2013.01); **A61F 2002/5018** (2013.01); **A61F 2002/5043** (2013.01); **A61F 2002/6614** (2013.01); **A61F 2002/6836** (2013.01); **A61F 2002/6854** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC A61F 2/54; A61F 2/585; A61F 2/66; A61F

2/6607; A61F 2/76; A61F 2002/502; A61F 2002/5021; A61F 2002/5023; A61F 2002/5083; A61F 2002/5084; A61F 2002/509; A61F 2002/6854; A61F 3/00; E05B 71/00; B62B 5/06

See application file for complete search history.

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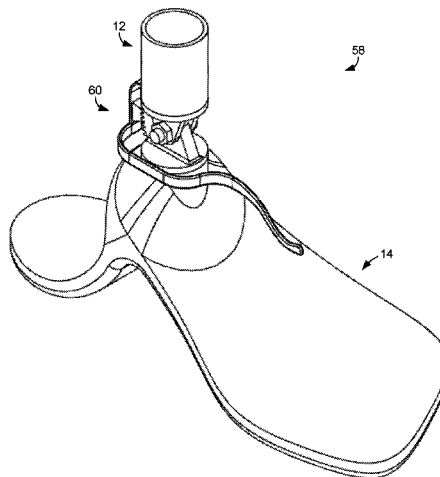
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method for adjusting a flexion angle of a prosthetic ankle includes a user adjusting a relative angle between first and second coupling members of the prosthetic ankle using a flexion angle adjustment mechanism of the prosthetic ankle that requires no tools to adjust.

5 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



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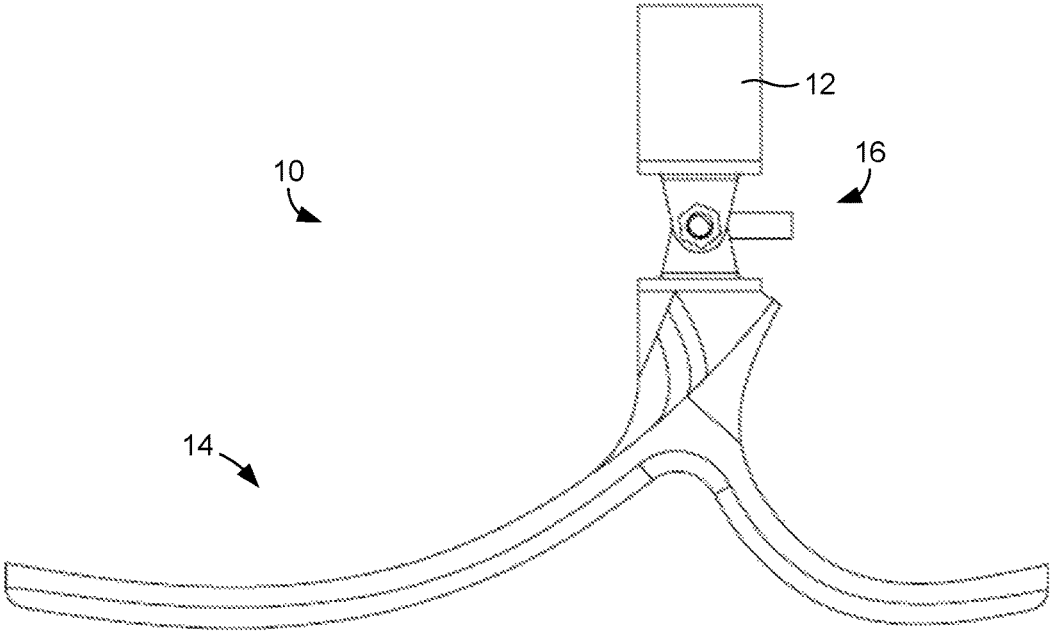


FIG. 1

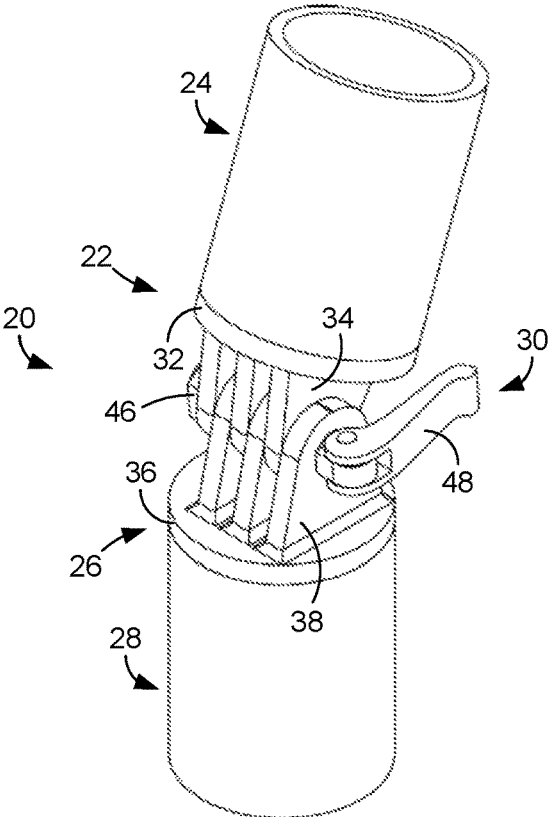


FIG. 2

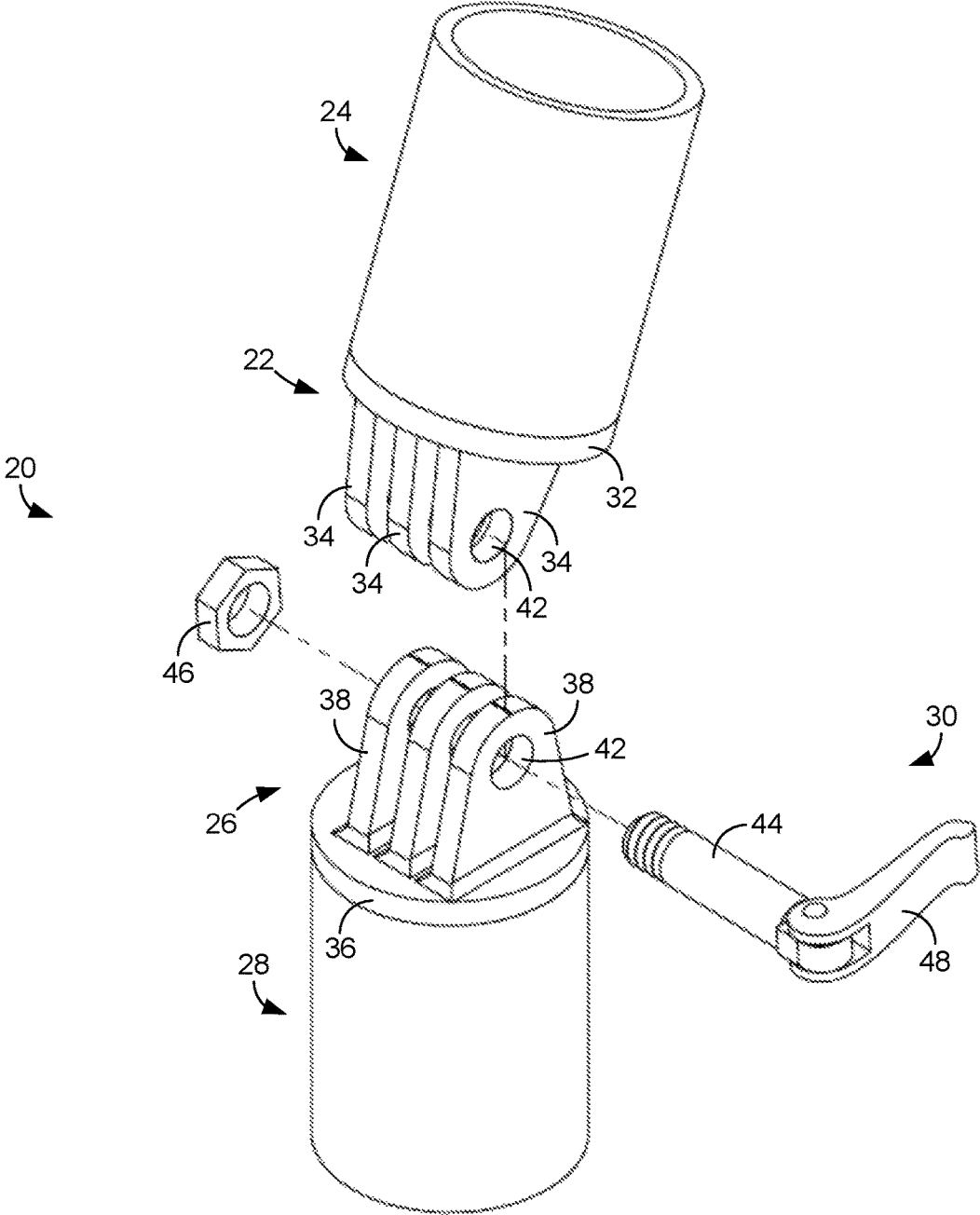


FIG. 3

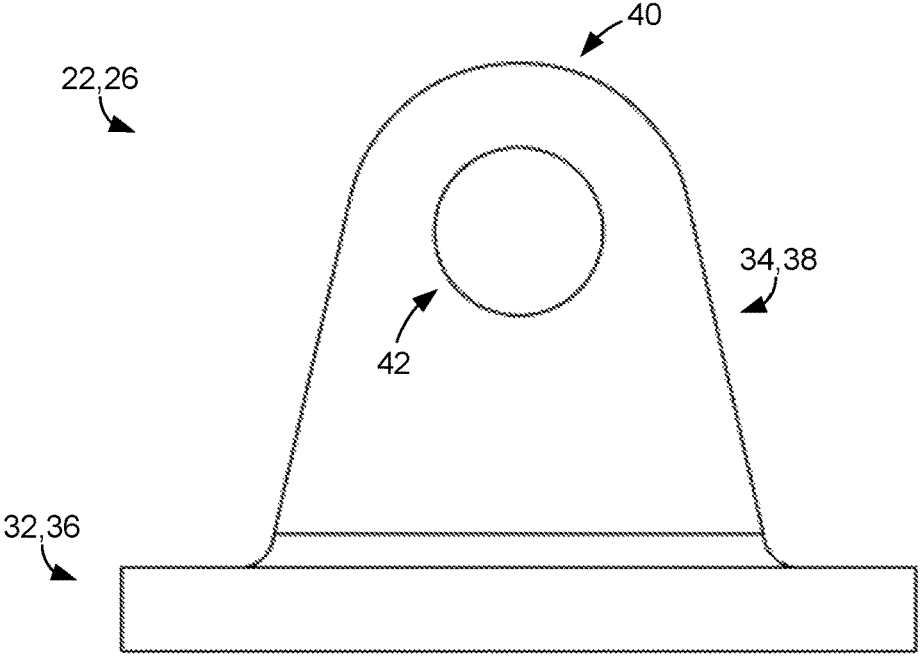


FIG. 4A

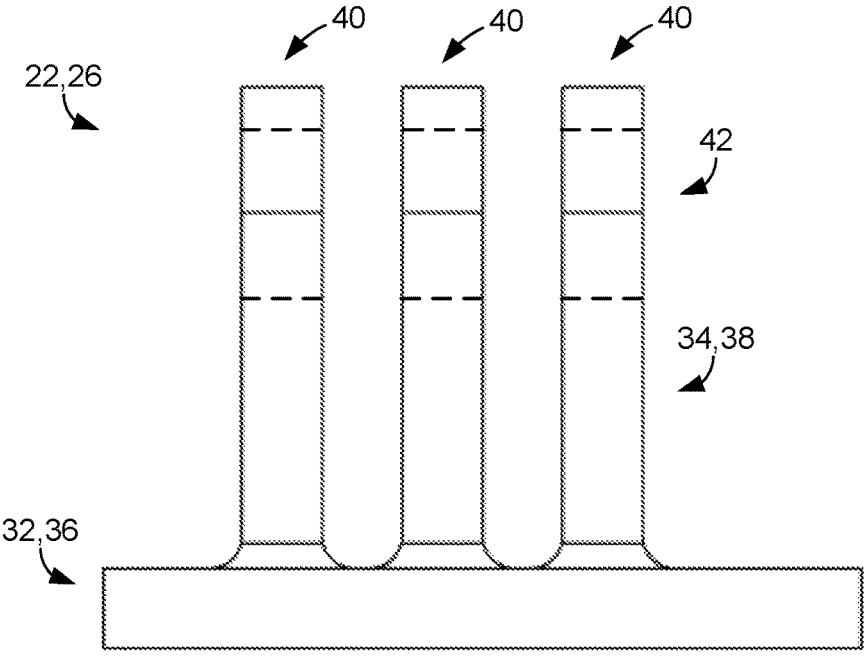


FIG. 4B

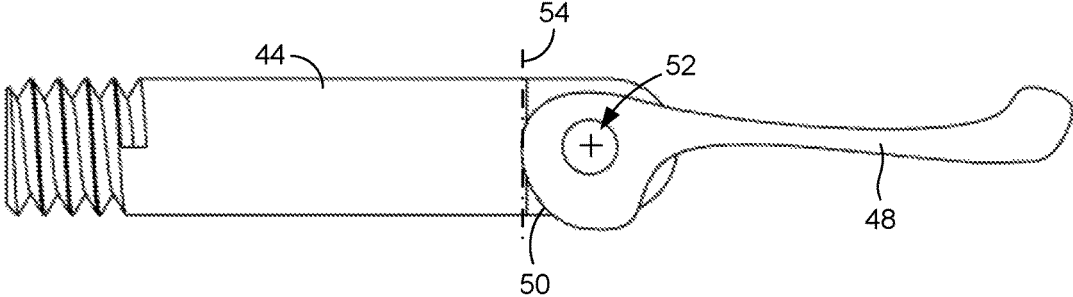


FIG. 5A

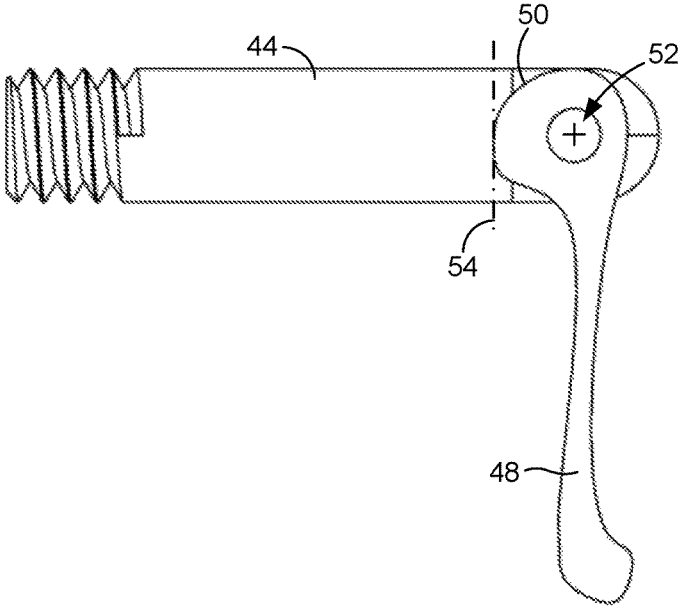


FIG. 5B

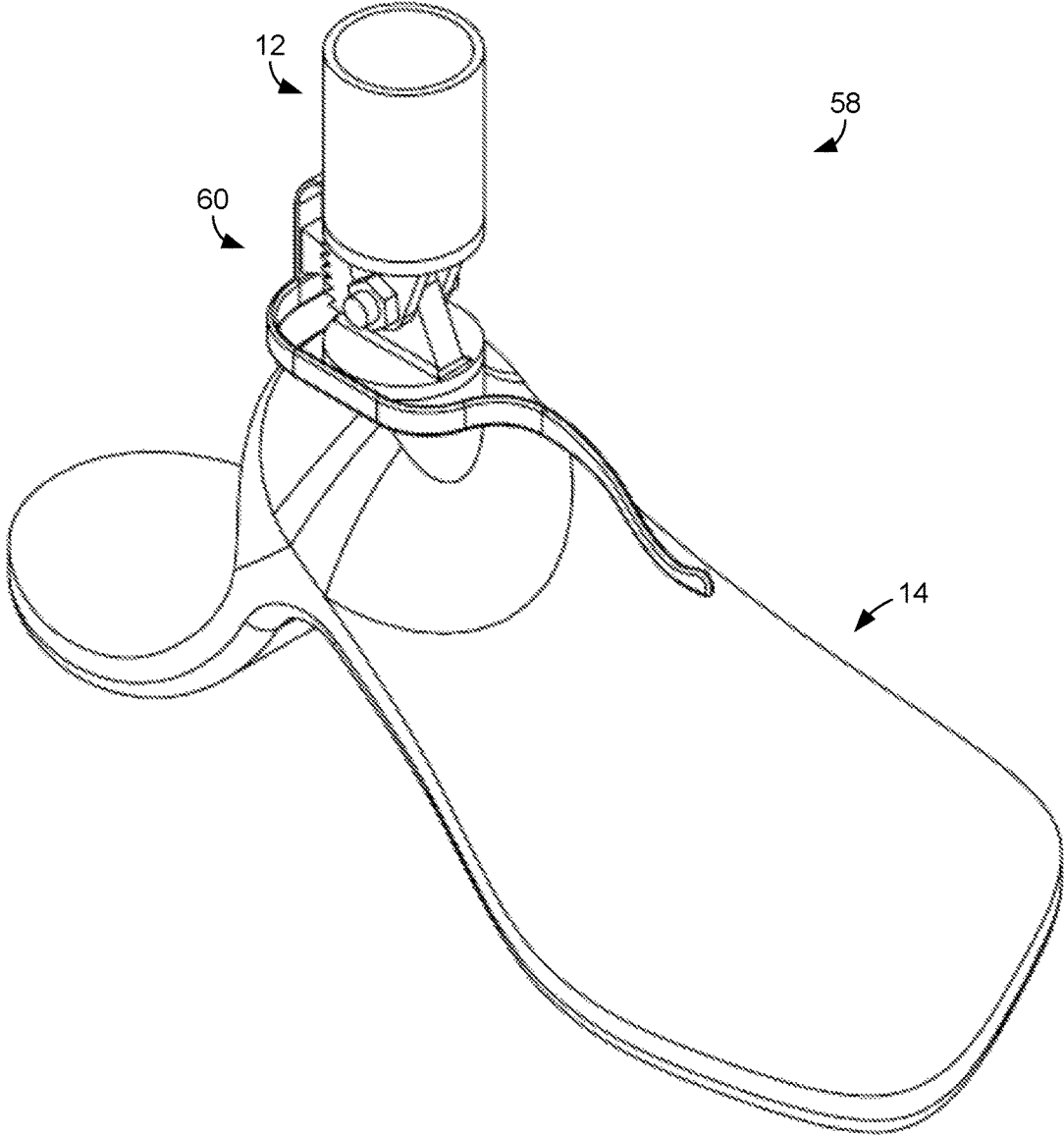


FIG. 6

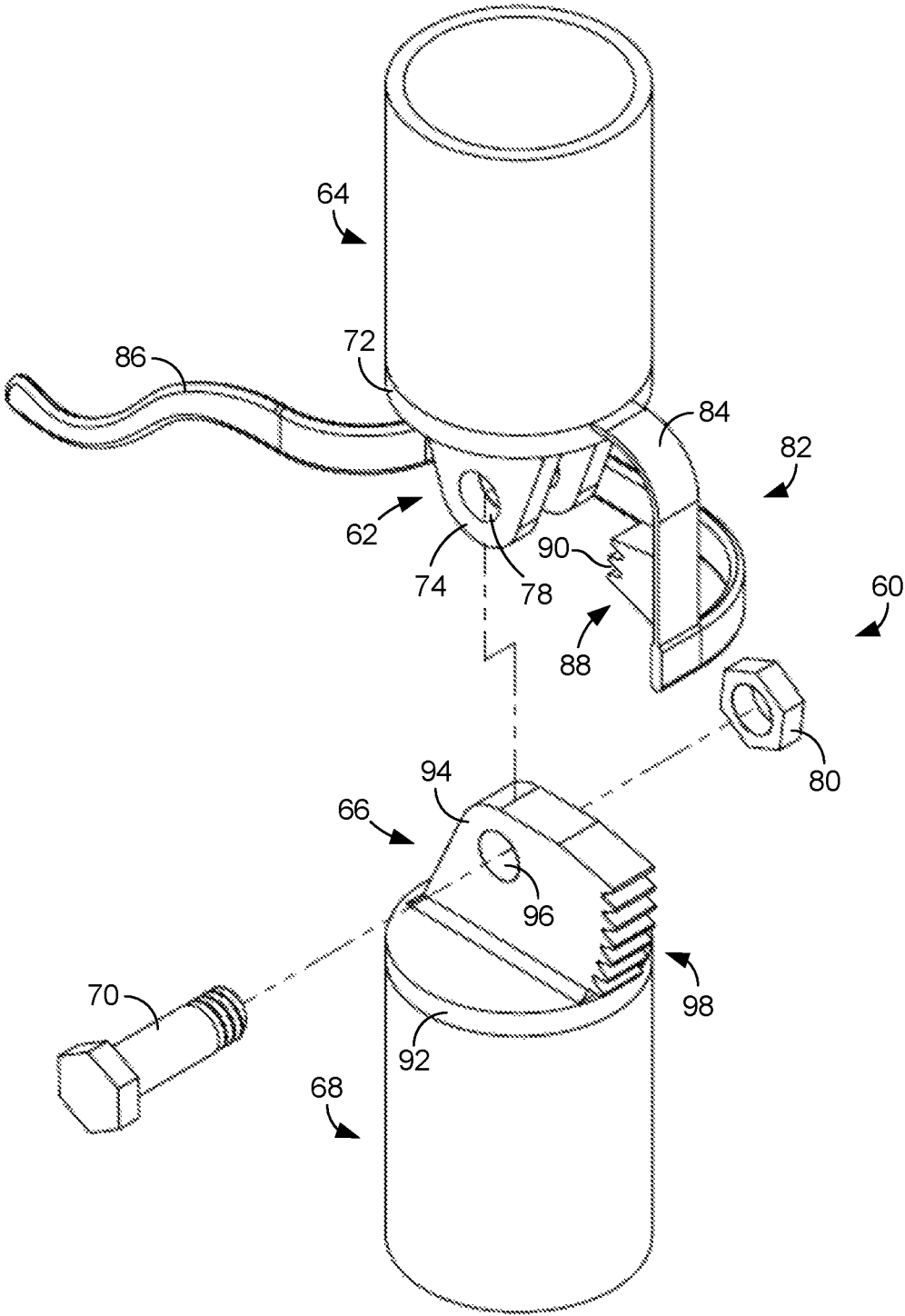


FIG. 7

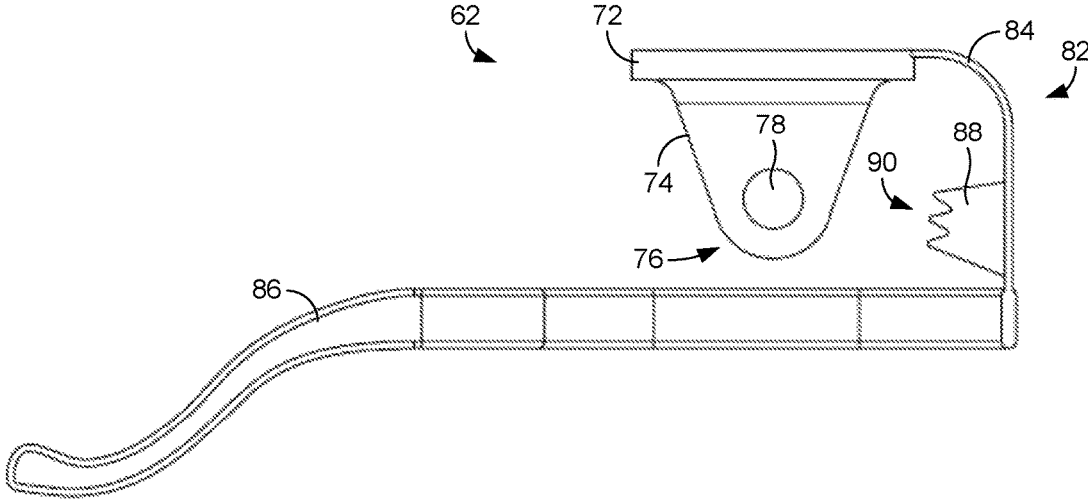


FIG. 8A

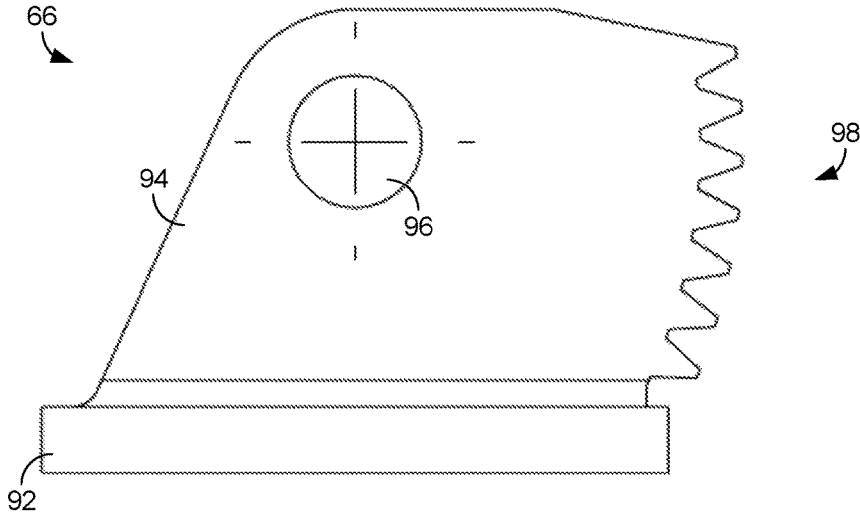


FIG. 8B

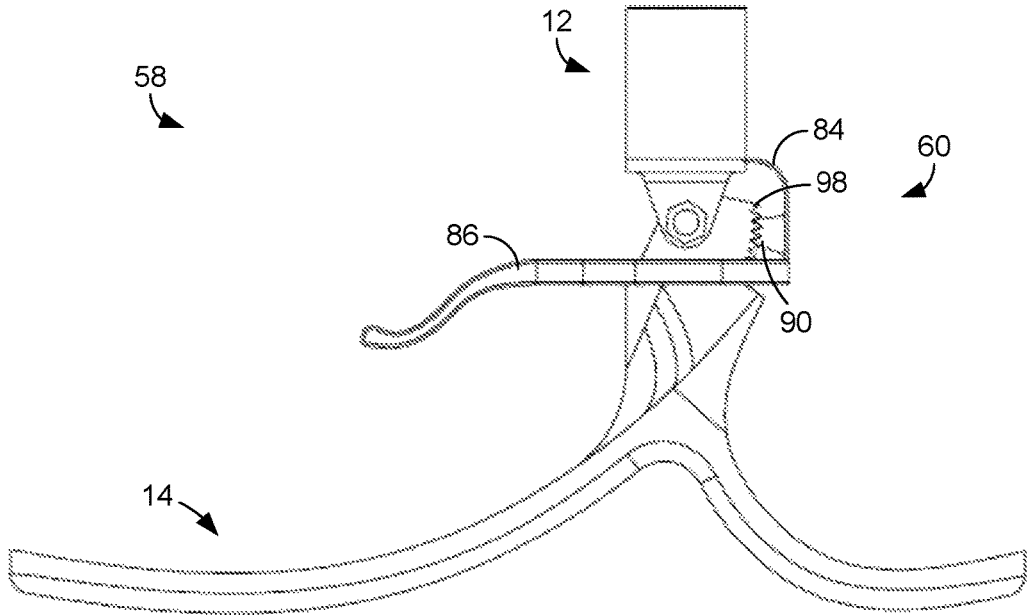


FIG. 9A

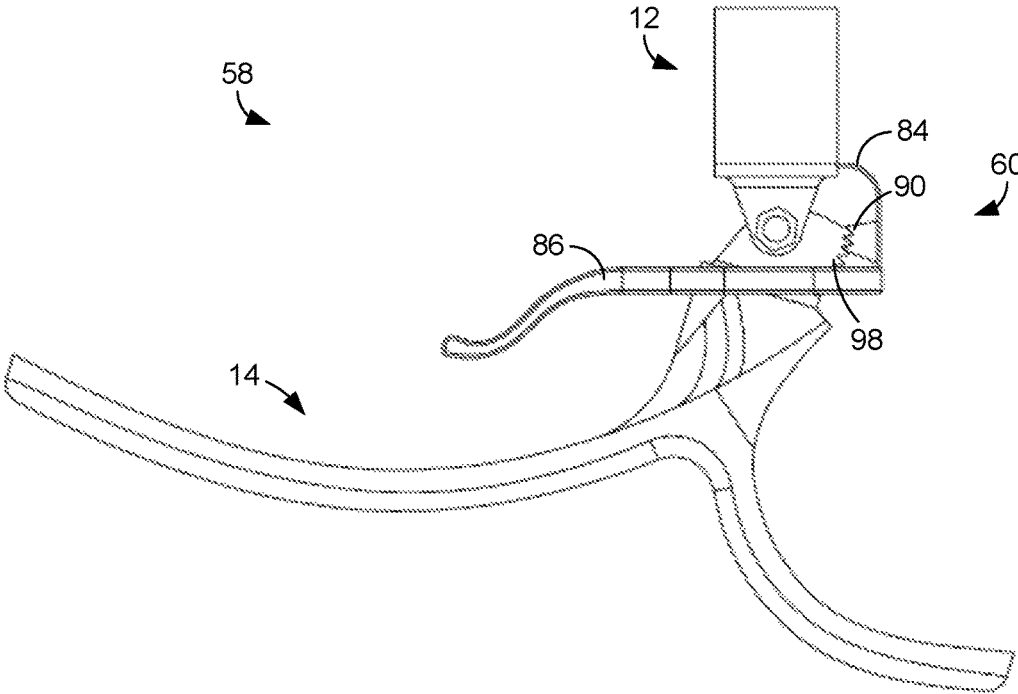


FIG. 9B

ADJUSTABLE PROSTHETIC ANKLES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a divisional application of co-pending U.S. Non-Provisional Application entitled "Adjustable Prosthetic Ankles," having Ser. No. 15/208,273 and filed Jul. 12, 2016, which is a divisional application of co-pending U.S. Non-Provisional Application entitled "Adjustable Prosthetic Ankles," having Ser. No. 14/574,083 and filed Dec. 17, 2014, and claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 61/917,033 and filed Dec. 17, 2013, which are hereby incorporated by reference herein in their entireties.

BACKGROUND

Passive ankle prostheses generally do not enable large adjustments to ankle flexion angles. Although there are prosthetic ankles that enable variation of plantar flexion to accommodate heeled shoes, they are not designed for use with large angles of dorsiflexion for hill ascent. Studies have been conducted to investigate the path of the center of pressure relative to the shank, called the roll-over shape, of able-bodied individuals ascending and descending 0°, 5°, and 10° ramps. It was determined that the best fitting rotation of level ground roll-over shape corresponded with the angle of incline of the ramp for positive inclines of the ankle-foot roll-over shape and for positive and negative inclines of the knee-ankle-foot roll-over shape. Therefore, it is important to be able to accommodate the sagittal angle of the ankle to approximate the ground slope.

Prosthesis wearers routinely encounter sloped terrain in daily life. For instance, driveways are commonly sloped, as are wheelchair-accessible ramps used to access buildings and homes. In the U.S., the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides regulations with respect to slopes to determine what is compliant. For instance, building access ramps should be approximately 5° to be considered in compliance for new construction. Specialized activities, such as construction work, military service, and emergency response, may require ambulation on steeply sloped terrain in a loaded condition. Traditional prosthetic ankles may be inadequate to sustain such terrain, as they are typically designed and tested for walking on level ground, stairs, or slight inclines. Mountaineering, which may be occupational or recreational, may require ambulation on extreme slopes under heavily loaded conditions.

In view of the above discussion, it can be appreciated that it would be desirable to have a prosthetic ankle that enables the user to adjust the flexion angle of the ankle to accommodate inclines and declines.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present disclosure may be better understood with reference to the following figures. Matching reference numerals designate corresponding parts throughout the figures, which are not necessarily drawn to scale.

FIG. 1 is a side view of an embodiment of a lower-leg prosthesis that incorporates an adjustable prosthetic ankle.

FIG. 2 is a perspective side view of a first embodiment of an adjustable prosthetic ankle that can be used in a lower-leg prosthesis, such as that of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is an exploded perspective side view of the adjustable prosthetic ankle of FIG. 2.

FIG. 4A is a first side view of a coupling member of the adjustable prosthetic ankle of FIGS. 2 and 3.

FIG. 4B is a second side view of the coupling member of FIG. 4A.

FIG. 5A is a side view of a quick-release fastener of the adjustable prosthetic ankle of FIGS. 2 and 3 shown in a released position.

FIG. 5B is a side view of the quick-release fastener of FIG. 5A shown in a locked position.

FIG. 6 is a perspective side view of a second embodiment of lower-leg prosthesis that incorporates an adjustable prosthetic ankle.

FIG. 7 is an exploded perspective side view of the adjustable prosthetic ankle shown in FIG. 6.

FIG. 8A is a side view of an upper coupling member of the adjustable prosthetic ankle of FIG. 7.

FIG. 8B is a side view of a lower coupling member of the adjustable prosthetic ankle of FIG. 7.

FIGS. 9A and 9B are side views of the lower-leg prosthesis of FIG. 6 illustrating adjustment of the flexion angle of the ankle of the prosthesis.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As described above, it would be desirable to have a prosthetic ankle that enables the user (e.g., wearer) to adjust the flexion angle of the ankle to accommodate inclines and declines, as well as various footwear, such as heeled shoes and boots. Disclosed herein are adjustable prosthetic ankles that are well-suited for such use. In some embodiments, the adjustable prosthetic ankles are independent (modular) components that can be used in conjunction with separate pylons and prosthetic feet. The ankles include flexion angle adjustment mechanisms that enable the user to quickly and easily change the flexion angle of the ankle without using any tools. In some embodiments, the flexion angle is infinitely adjustable. In other embodiments, the ankle is incrementally adjustable.

In the following disclosure, various specific embodiments are described. It is to be understood that those embodiments are example implementations of the disclosed inventions and that alternative embodiments are possible. All such embodiments are intended to fall within the scope of this disclosure.

FIG. 1 is a side view of an embodiment of a lower-leg prosthesis 10 that incorporates an adjustable prosthetic ankle. As shown in the figure, the prosthesis 10 generally includes a shank or pylon 12 that replaces the wearer's missing shin, a prosthetic foot 14 that replaces the wearer's missing foot, and an adjustable prosthetic ankle 16 that connects the pylon and the foot.

FIGS. 2-5 illustrate a first embodiment of an adjustable prosthetic ankle 20 that can be used in a lower-leg prosthesis, such as one similar to that shown in FIG. 1. With specific reference to FIGS. 2 and 3, the ankle 20 generally comprises a first or upper coupling member 22 that is mounted to a first or upper shaft 24, a second or lower coupling member 26 that is mounted to a second or lower shaft 28, and a flexion angle adjustment mechanism in the form of a quick-release fastener 30 that connects the upper and lower coupling members together. The upper shaft 24 can either be part of the pylon of the lower-leg prosthesis or a component that connects the ankle 10 to the pylon. In similar manner, the lower shaft 26 can either be part of the prosthetic foot of the lower-leg prosthesis or a component that connects the ankle 10 to the prosthetic foot.

The upper and lower coupling members **22**, **26** can be made of a strong metal material, such as a metal material like steel, aluminum, titanium, or alloys thereof, a composite material like carbon fiber, or a hard rubber material, and, as shown most clearly in FIG. 3, can have similar configurations. In the illustrated embodiment, the upper coupling member **22** includes a base **32** from which multiple parallel mounting flanges **34** downwardly extend, and the lower coupling member **26** includes a base **36** from which multiple parallel mounting flanges **38** upwardly extend. Each base **32**, **36** can comprise a generally disc-shaped element that is adapted to connect with its associated shaft **24**, **28**. In some embodiments, the base **32**, **36** can comprise a component (not shown) that extends into its associated shaft **24**, **28** for purposes of securing it thereto.

In the illustrated embodiment, each mounting flange **34**, **38** is a planar element that extends from its associated base **34**, **36** and tapers as it does so. As is apparent from FIG. 4A, each mounting flange **34**, **38** can have a generally triangular shape that terminates in a rounded distal end **40**. As is shown in FIG. 4A, each mounting flange **34**, **38** has an opening **42** that is adapted to enable a bolt of the quick-release fastener **30** to pass.

With reference back to FIG. 3, the quick-release fastener **30** generally comprises a threaded bolt **44** that is adapted to pass through the openings **42** of the mounting flanges **22**, **26**. More particularly, when the mounting flanges **22**, **26** are positioned so that they interleave with each other and their openings **42** align, the bolt **44** can be passed through each mounting flange and the bolt's distal end can be threaded into a threaded nut **46** positioned on the opposite side of the ankle **20**.

An elongated lever **48** is pivotally mounted to the proximal end of the bolt **44** that can be used to lock and release the quick-release fastener **30**. As shown most clearly in FIGS. 5A and 5B, the lever **48** comprises a curved, variable radius cam surface **50** that is adapted to engage the nearest mounting flange, which is represented by the plane **54**. The lever **48** can be manually pivoted by the user about its pivot axis **52**, which is proximate to the cam surface **50**. As shown in FIG. 5A, when the lever **48** is flipped outward away from the plane **54** so as to place it in a released position, the distance between the pivot axis **52** and the portion of the cam surface **50** that engages the flange is relatively small. As shown in FIG. 5B, however, when the lever **48** is flipped inward toward the plane **54** so as to place it in a locked position, the distance between the pivot axis **52** and the portion of the cam surface **50** that engages the flange is relatively large. If the nut **46** is tightened to the extent that both it and the cam surface **50** firmly contacts a mounting flange **34**, **38** when the lever **48** is in the released position of FIG. 5A, moving the lever to the locked position of FIG. 5B pinches the mounting flanges together so as to prevent relative angular motion of the upper and lower coupling members **22**, **26** and, therefore, alteration of the flexion angle of the ankle **10**.

During use of the prosthetic ankle **20**, the lever **48** of the quick-release fastener **30** can be flipped outward, as illustrated by FIG. 5A, to enable the user to adjust the flexion of the ankle, and therefore the prosthetic foot, to a desired angle, whether it be in the dorsiflexion or the plantar flexion direction. Because of the nature of the coupling between the upper and lower coupling members **22**, **26**, infinite adjustment of the flexion angle is possible between its two extreme positions. Once the desired angle has been achieved, the user can simply flip the lever **48** inward, as illustrated by FIG. 5B, to lock the ankle **20** and prevent further angular movement

between the upper and lower coupling members **22**, **26**. With such operation, the user can quickly and easily adjust the prosthetic ankle **20** and foot to the exact desired position. If desired, the resistance to motion of the ankle **20** can be adjusted by changing the torque placed on the nut **46**, changing the number of flanges **34**, **38** used, or modifying the material or surface properties of the flanges.

FIG. 6 illustrates an embodiment of a lower-leg prosthesis **58** that includes an alternative adjustable prosthetic ankle **60**. With reference to FIG. 7, the ankle **60** generally comprises a first or upper coupling member **62** that is mounted to a first or upper shaft **64**, a second or lower coupling member **66** that is mounted to a second or lower shaft **68**, and a threaded fastener **70** that connects the upper and lower coupling members together. The upper shaft **64** can either be part of the pylon of the lower-leg prosthesis or a component that connects the ankle **60** to the pylon. In a similar manner, the lower shaft **66** can either be part of the prosthetic foot of the lower-leg prosthesis or a component that connects the ankle **60** to the prosthetic foot.

The upper and lower coupling members **62**, **66** can be made of a strong material, such as a metal, composite, or hard rubber material. As is apparent from FIG. 7, the upper coupling member **62** includes a base **72** from which two parallel mounting flanges **74** downwardly extend. The base **72** can comprise a generally disc-shaped element that is adapted to connect with its associated shaft **64**. In some embodiments, the base **72** can comprise a component (not shown) that extends into its associated shaft **64** for purposes of fixing it thereto. In some embodiments, the mounting flanges **74** have configurations similar to those described above for the mounting flanges **34**, **38**. Accordingly, as shown in FIG. 8A, the mounting flanges **74** can each comprise a planar element that extends from the base **72** and tapers as it does so. The mounting flanges **74** can have a generally triangular shape that terminates in a rounded distal end **76**. In addition, each mounting flange **74** includes an opening **78** that is adapted to receive the threaded fastener **70**. This fastener **70** can comprise a threaded bolt, which is adapted to thread into a threaded nut **80** (see FIG. 7).

As shown in FIGS. 7 and 8A, an adjustment lever **82**, which forms a first part of a flexion angle adjustment mechanism, is connected to the base **72**. In the illustrated embodiment, the lever **82** comprises a compliant element **84** that extends downward from the base **72** and an elongated lever arm **86** that extends forward from a distal end of the compliant element. As described below, the angle of the prosthetic ankle **60** can be adjusted when the user manipulates the lever arm **86** so as to bend the compliant element **84** outward. Extending inward from the compliant element **84** toward the center of the ankle **60** is a tooth block **88** that comprises inwardly facing teeth **90** that, as described below, are adapted to engage similar teeth provided on the lower coupling member **66**.

Referring next to FIGS. 7 and 8B, the lower coupling member **66** comprises a base **92** from which upwardly extends a mounting flange **94** that is sized and configured to fit between the mounting flanges **74** of the upper coupling member **62**. As shown in FIG. 8B, the mounting flange **94** includes an opening **96** that is adapted to receive the threaded fastener **70**. In addition, the mounting flange **94** includes a row of outwardly facing teeth **98** that are provided along a lateral edge of the flange. The teeth **98** are adapted to engage the teeth **90** of the lever **82** and therefore form a second part of the flexion angle adjustment mechanism. The lateral edge can have a slight curvature (radius) that facili-

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tates this engagement. FIGS. 9A and 9B illustrate an example of use of the prosthetic ankle 60.

Beginning with FIG. 9A, the ankle 60 is in a first configuration in which the teeth 90 of the lever 84 of the upper coupling member 62 are engaged with a first subset of teeth 98 of the 94 of the lower coupling member 66. This results in the ankle 60 having a particular angle of flexion (~0° in FIG. 9A). In FIG. 9B, the ankle 60 is in a second configuration that results when the user moves the lever 84 so as to bend the compliant element 86 outward and disengage the teeth 90 from the teeth 98, and then re-engages the teeth in a different orientation. In such a case, the teeth 90 engage with a second subset of teeth 98. This results in the ankle 60 having a different angle of flexion (~17° in FIG. 9B). The total angle of adjustment for the ankle 60 as well as the number of discrete angular positions into which the ankle can be placed can be controlled by modifying the size (pitch) and/or number of teeth of the coupling members 62, 66.

Stress analysis was performed for the above-described embodiments in a SolidWorks® 2011 Simulation (Dassault Systems, Vélizy-Villacoublay, France). A static bearing load of 2,000 N was applied to each section of the ankle coupling members. The coupling members of the first embodiment (FIGS. 2-5) had a lower maximum von Mises stress of 79 megapascals (MPa). The upper and lower coupling members of the second embodiment (FIGS. 6-9) had maximum stresses of 93 and 99 MPa, respectively. These stresses fall well under the yield stress of tempered (T6) 6061 aluminum but are near the yield stress of the weaker tempered and annealed (T1 and 0) aluminums with typical yield strengths of 241 and 97 MPa, respectively.

The above-described prosthetic ankle embodiments present potential solutions to the need for rugged, manually adjustable ankle prostheses. When properly adjusted, performance is expected to be similar to that of commercially available devices. In cases in which the ankles are made of aluminum alloys that resist corrosion and temperature embrittlement, the ankles are tolerant to cold, water, and ice. The disclosed embodiments enable the adjustment of ankle flexion for extended hill ascent and descent in amputees. The embodiments are also low in cost relative to microprocessor foot/ankle systems that may lack the durability to withstand rigorous environments and loads. Furthermore, the disclosed embodiments are completely mechanical in nature and therefore do not require battery recharging and are at lower risk of damage from being wet.

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The invention claimed is:

1. A method for adjusting a flexion angle of a prosthetic ankle, the method comprising:

providing a prosthetic ankle comprising first and second coupling members each including a mounting flange having an opening through which a bolt can pass, the first coupling member having a first set of teeth associated with an adjustment lever of a flexion angle adjustment mechanism and the second coupling member having a second set of teeth, wherein the first and second teeth are configured to engage each other; and a user adjusting a relative angle between upper and lower coupling members of the prosthetic ankle by moving the adjustment lever of the flexion angle adjustment mechanism from a first position to a second position to pull the first set of teeth out of engagement with the second set of teeth, manually adjusting the relative angle between the upper and lower coupling members, and then returning the adjustment lever to the first position to re-engage the first set of teeth with the second set of teeth, wherein the relative angle between the first and second coupling members is fixed when the first set of teeth is engaged with the second set of teeth, wherein the adjustment lever includes a compliant element that extends from the first coupling member and an elongated lever arm that extends from the compliant element, wherein the first set of teeth is positioned between the compliant element and the elongated lever arm and wherein movement of the elongated lever arm causes the compliant element to bend and the first set of teeth to disengage from the second set of teeth to enable adjustment of the angle between the first and second coupling members.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the mounting flange of the second coupling member has an edge that includes the second set of teeth.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the edge is curved.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the flexion angle adjustment mechanism further comprises a threaded bolt that passes through the openings of the mounting flanges of the first and second coupling members and a threaded nut in which the threaded bolt is received.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the first coupling member comprises a base and wherein the adjustment lever extends from the base.

* * * * *