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(54) **SURGICAL ACCESS SYSTEM AND RELATED METHODS**

- (75) Inventors: **Patrick Miles**, San Diego, CA (US);  
**Scot Martinelli**, Mountain Top, PA (US); **Eric Finley**, Lancaster, CA (US)
- (73) Assignee: **NuVasive, Inc.**, San Diego, CA (US)
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See application file for complete search history.

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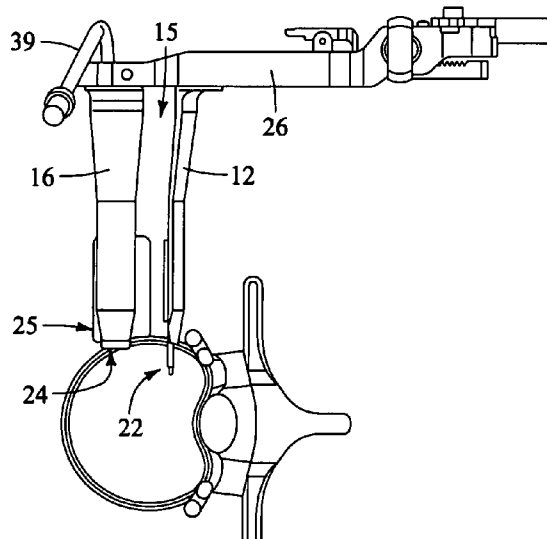
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*Primary Examiner* — Mark W Bockelman  
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Fish & Richardson P.C.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A surgical access system including a tissue distraction assembly and a tissue retraction assembly, both of which may be equipped with one or more electrodes for use in detecting the existence of (and optionally the distance and/or direction to) neural structures before, during, and after the establishment of an operative corridor to a surgical target site.

**20 Claims, 22 Drawing Sheets**



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