messages to a docking station in a non-USB serial data communication format

an instrument including the electronics and the first portion of the USB communication device; and

a cradle having a receptacle sized to receive at least a portion of the cradle therein, and electrically connected to the instrument when the instrument is in the receptacle, wherein the cradle includes electrical conductors for passing electrical signals from the instrument to the docking station.

6. The portable medical instrument of claim **5**, wherein the first portion further includes electrical contacts, wherein the first portion determines that the portable instrument is connected to the docking station by detecting a logic level transition that occurs upon electrical connection of the portable instrument to the docking station.

7. The portable medical instrument of claim **5**, wherein the non-USB serial data communication format conforms to one of the following serial data communication standards: RS-232, RS-485, and RS-422.

8. The portable medical instrument of claim **5**, wherein the portable medical instrument is incapable of direct communication with a USB communication device of a host device through a USB cable.

9. The portable medical instrument of claim **5**, wherein the portable medical instrument is an infrared ear thermometer.

10. The portable medical instrument of claim **5**, wherein the cradle further comprises at least one pull-down resistor electrically coupled between at least two of the electrical conductors, wherein the instrument detects when it is inserted into the cradle by detecting a voltage change caused at least in part by the electrical coupling between the electrical conductors through the pull-down resistor.

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