

**T**he ancients really did know a thing or two about treating illnesses, or rather thought that they did. In the event they were right about combating disease with the precious metal silver, but for all the wrong reasons. Maybe that was a sign of their genius, and then again, they were also very keen on using leeches for all manner of things.

History records that holy places such as abbeys, monasteries and churches generally suffered less from the depredations of illness and disease than the general populace. Further, the higher up the chain of holiness you were, the less likely illnesses were to attack you. At the time, this was offered as proof that closeness to God offered valuable protection. We now know, however, that closeness to the Church silver was probably the cause of the protection received! Mercifully, and some 1500 years later, science has now provided a way to exploit this phenomenon for the benefit of everyone.

**Information**

A treatise on all the technicalities is way beyond this humble submission although there is now a plethora of information available for those interested. Try the web as a starter and be prepared to be amazed at what you can discover.

For the non-techies amongst us, suffice to say that certain types of silver, suitably presented in combination with

# Maybe the monasteries were right - precious metals do work



reduced and the nursing staff totally protected at all times. If bed screens were also manufactured from silver-containing fabrics, the effects of MRSA and other unpleasant bacteria associated with any single patient could be isolated and contained. It doesn't take a genius to think of other applications for these new, silver-based wonder materials within hospitals and other medical environments.

**Hospital trials**

With the technology now available, the only question remaining seems to be why isn't the medical profession clamouring to use these new fabrics which have been favourably assessed by the NHS's very own panel of experts? The good news is that trials in several hospitals are already underway with Great Ormond Street evaluating the fabrics as ward curtains. Individuals have also benefited from the undoubted benefits offered by Toray's silver-technology. In one instance a leukaemia patient had to have potentially life-saving treatment suspended when MRSA was detected. By wearing a pair of Toray pyjama's for just 24 hours the MRSA invasion was eliminated and treatment could be reintroduced.

Based on all the evidence so far, it really does appear that we have discovered something of a medical Holy Grail in the UK by unravelling the mysteries of silver, its ionisation characteristics, and how they can be deployed in the world of medicine.

Our fifth century ancestors would have been proud of us, or maybe they would have said: "I told you so!"

Now about those leeches.

**Kills MRSA and C diff**

Following many years exhaustive R&D work, Toray recently launched a range of fabrics with silver woven into the material in carefully controlled ratios. During routine use the silver ionises, and liberates minute quantities of energy as it does so. Minute it might be, but it is sufficient to kill any bacteria adjacent to the material. The reaction is so successful that MRSA is killed within one hour of contact with the cloth. Amazingly, so are 99.9% of over 800 other bacteria tested to date including the new "horror-bug" Clostridium difficile.

The implications of this UK discovery are tremendous. As a demonstration of this, just take a second to read the statistics

associated with our hospitals. The stark truth is that at a cost of £1billion around 300,000 people contract infection in UK hospitals and an estimated 5,000 people die as a result. The causes of this hospital-acquired infection (HAI) are, of course, many and varied and no single invention or discovery can eliminate it altogether. The See-it-Safe range of fabrics now available from Toray Textiles do, however, offer significant prospects for some dramatic improvements.

**Cross contamination**

As examples, if all nurses uniforms were made from the new silver-technology material, cross contamination between patients in the same and different wards could be



other materials, can have a tremendously beneficial effect in destroying harmful and potentially deadly bacteria. This knowledge has now been put to very good use by a midlands based UK company called Toray Textiles.



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