



1

Development of Antimicrobial Fabrics Based on Silver and Copper Nanoparticles

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ABSTRACT

With growing public unease surrounding the extent of microbial infections, there is a demand for antimicrobial materials including antimicrobial textiles. Nanotechnology has provided new solutions for the development of antimicrobial fabrics. In this study, nanoparticles of silver (Ag) and copper (Cu) and alloy nanoparticles of Ag and Cu (Ag/Cu) have been synthesized by reduction of their respective nitrates by ascorbic acid, using chitosan as a stabilising agent and microwave heating. UV-vis spectrophotometry indicated the presence of the alloy by a single peak (500 nm) for Ag/Cu nanoparticles, whereas mixtures of Ag and Cu nanoparticles (Ag+Cu) showed two peaks of 420 and 500 nm, corresponding to pure Ag and Cu nanoparticles respectively. Particle size is increased by increasing nitrate concentration and reducing the chitosan concentration. Surface zeta potentials were positive for all the nanoparticles and varied from +27.8 to +33.8 mV. Ag and Cu nanoparticles were shown to be spherical whilst the alloy nanoparticles had an irregular shape. Cu nanoparticles resulted in higher inactivation of bacteria such as *Bacillus subtilis* (*B. subtilis*), *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) than did Ag nanoparticles at the same concentration. The effect was reversed when tested on nanoparticles of the same mean particle size with Ag nanoparticles emerging as more effective. Bacterial inactivation increased with concentration of chitosan and the metal concentration. The nanoparticles showed a more potent antibacterial effect than did ions of the same metal. *B. subtilis* was more susceptible than *E. coli* which may be due to the differences in their cell walls structure. MRSA proved harder to inactivate than both *B. subtilis* and *E. coli* under identical conditions. Antifungal activity was significantly affected by the types of nanoparticles employed. Ag nanoparticles displayed higher inactivation than Cu ones. Alloyed nanoparticles demonstrated the highest inactivation against both bacteria and fungi. This constitutes clear evidence of an antimicrobial synergy between the Ag and Cu. Bacteria and fungi in contact with nanoparticle-impregnated fabrics were revealed by FEGSEM to have taken on a shrunken appearance. Nanoparticle-impregnated fabrics reduced microbial viability by 80-90%, but this decreased in relation to the number of washes the fabric was subjected to and indicated a leached out of the nanoparticles. Pre-treatment of cotton fabrics with tannic acid and citric acid enhanced the durability of the antimicrobial effect when washed and this increased with concentration of the acid. Citric acid treated fabrics showed higher durability than tannic acid treated fabrics. Log reductions of *Trichophyton interdigitale* (*T. interdigitale*) were lower than those for *B. subtilis*, *E. coli* and MRSA at the same test conditions. The combination of nanoparticles with the antifungal drug fluconazole proved effective and reduced the time necessary to eliminate the *T. interdigitale* than either nanoparticles or fluconazole alone.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| ABSTRACT..... | iv |
| PUBLICATIONS AND AWARDS..... | v |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | vii |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS | xii |
| NOMENCLATURE..... | xiii |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | xiv |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | xvii |
| CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Background..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Research problems..... | 3 |
| 1.3 Aim and objectives | 5 |
| 1.4 Thesis structure | 7 |
| CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 10 |
| 2.1 Introduction..... | 10 |
| 2.2 Bacteria and fungus..... | 10 |
| 2.2.1 Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria | 10 |
| 2.2.2 Methicillin-resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> (MRSA) | 13 |
| 2.2.3 Fungi and fungal disease..... | 16 |
| 2.2.4 <i>Trichophyton interdigitale</i> | 17 |
| 2.2.5 Fluconazole..... | 18 |
| 2.2.6 Minimum inhibitory concentration and minimum bactericidal concentration..... | 19 |
| 2.2.7 Zone of inhibition | 20 |
| 2.2.8 Viable count method..... | 21 |
| 2.3 Application of antimicrobial fabrics | 22 |
| 2.3.1 Medical applications..... | 22 |
| 2.3.2 Sportswear..... | 23 |
| 2.3.3 Hygienic uses | 24 |
| 2.4 Antimicrobial agents for fabrics | 25 |
| 2.4.1 Synthetic antimicrobial agents..... | 25 |

| | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| 2.4.2 | Chitosan | 28 |
| 2.4.3 | Nanotechnology: a new approach to developing antimicrobial fabric | 30 |
| 2.5 | Routes for nanoparticles synthesis..... | 30 |
| 2.5.1 | Synthesis of Ag nanoparticles..... | 30 |
| 2.5.1.1 | Physical routes | 30 |
| 2.5.1.2 | Chemical routes | 31 |
| 2.5.1.3 | Biosynthetic routes..... | 32 |
| 2.5.2 | Synthesis routes of Cu nanoparticles | 34 |
| 2.5.2.1 | Chemical routes | 34 |
| 2.5.2.2 | Physical routes | 35 |
| 2.5.2.3 | Biosynthetic routes..... | 35 |
| 2.5.3 | Synthesis routes of nanoalloys..... | 36 |
| 2.5.3.1 | Chemical routes | 36 |
| 2.5.3.2 | Physical routes | 37 |
| 2.5.3.3 | Biosynthetic route | 37 |
| 2.5.4 | Disadvantages of conventional methods to synthesise nanoparticles | 38 |
| 2.5.5 | Microwave assisted synthesis | 39 |
| 2.6 | Antimicrobial activity of nanoparticles and application on fabrics | 41 |
| 2.6.1 | Antimicrobial effects of silver and background of use | 41 |
| 2.6.2 | Antimicrobial effects of copper and background of use | 45 |
| 2.6.3 | Antifungal activity of nanoparticle-impregnated fabric | 47 |
| 2.6.4 | Antifungal activity of nanoparticles with antifungal agent..... | 47 |
| 2.7 | Conventional method for pretreatment of the fabrics | 48 |
| 2.8 | Health and environmental concerns of the use of nanoparticles..... | 49 |
| 2.9 | Conclusions..... | 51 |
| CHAPTER 3 MATERIALS AND METHODS..... | | 53 |
| 3.1 | Introduction..... | 53 |
| 3.2 | Materials | 53 |
| 3.2.1 | Chemicals..... | 53 |
| 3.2.2 | Fabric | 54 |
| 3.2.3 | Nutrient media and diluents | 54 |
| 3.2.4 | Microorganisms | 54 |
| 3.3 | Methods..... | 55 |

| | | |
|---------|--|----|
| 3.3.1 | Preparation of chemical solutions..... | 55 |
| 3.3.2 | Preparation of the nanoparticles..... | 55 |
| 3.3.2.1 | Preparation of Ag and Cu nanoparticles without chitosan | 55 |
| 3.3.2.2 | Preparation of Ag and Cu nanoparticles with chitosan..... | 55 |
| 3.3.2.3 | Preparation of Ag/Cu nanoparticles..... | 56 |
| 3.3.2.4 | Preparation of Ag+Cu nanoparticles..... | 56 |
| 3.3.3 | Impregnation of the cotton fabrics with nanoparticles | 56 |
| 3.3.4 | Pretreatment process | 57 |
| 3.3.5 | Durability by repeated hand washing and machine wash..... | 57 |
| 3.3.6 | Bacterial growth media preparation, cultivation and antibacterial activity..... | 58 |
| 3.3.6.1 | Biological experimental set up..... | 58 |
| 3.3.6.2 | Plate and liquid culture preparation | 58 |
| 3.3.6.3 | Cultivation of bacteria..... | 58 |
| 3.3.6.4 | Bacterial growth curves | 59 |
| 3.3.6.5 | Preparation of bacterial sample solution..... | 59 |
| 3.3.6.6 | Determination of the MIC and MBC..... | 60 |
| 3.3.6.7 | Zone of inhibition of the nanoparticle-impregnated cotton fabrics..... | 60 |
| 3.3.6.8 | Log reduction of the nanoparticle-impregnated cotton fabrics..... | 60 |
| 3.3.7 | Fungal growth medium preparation, cultivation and antifungal activity..... | 61 |
| 3.3.7.1 | Preparation of Sabouraud dextrose–chloramphenicol agar medium..... | 61 |
| 3.3.7.2 | Preparation of <i>T. interdigitale</i> spore suspension..... | 61 |
| 3.3.7.3 | Determination of the MIC and MFC | 62 |
| 3.3.7.4 | Zone of inhibition against <i>T. interdigitale</i> | 62 |
| 3.3.7.5 | Antifungal efficacy by viable cell count..... | 62 |
| 3.3.7.6 | Antifungal compounds..... | 63 |
| 3.4 | Characterization | 63 |
| 3.4.1 | UV-vis spectrophotometry analysis..... | 63 |
| 3.4.2 | Particle size and zeta potential analysis | 64 |
| 3.4.3 | Observation by FEGSEM..... | 64 |
| 3.4.3.1 | Nanoparticles | 64 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 3.4.3.2 Bacteria and fungus on the surface of fabrics..... | 65 |
| 3.4.4 Elemental analysis by EDX..... | 65 |
| 3.4.5 FTIR-ATR analysis..... | 66 |
| 3.5 Statistical analysis..... | 66 |
| CHAPTER 4 GREEN SYNTHESIS OF COPPER AND SILVER NANOPARTICLES USING ASCORBIC ACID AND CHITOSAN..... | 67 |
| 4.1 Introduction..... | 67 |
| 4.2 Synthesis of the nanoparticles..... | 68 |
| 4.3 Nanoparticles, colour and UV- Vis spectrophotometry..... | 69 |
| 4.4 Mean particle size of the nanoparticles..... | 74 |
| 4.5 Zeta potential of the nanoparticles..... | 77 |
| 4.6 Conclusions..... | 80 |
| CHAPTER 5 THE ANTIBACTERIAL ACTIVITY AND SYNERGISTIC EFFECTS OF SILVER AND COPPER NANOPARTICLES IMPREGNATED ON COTTON FABRICS AGAINST GRAM- POSITIVE AND GRAM-NEGATIVE BACTERIA | 82 |
| 5.1 Introduction..... | 82 |
| 5.2 Growth curve study..... | 83 |
| 5.2.1 Bacterial cell number and cell density | 83 |
| 5.2.2 pH of culture broths | 86 |
| 5.3 MIC and MBC analysis | 87 |
| 5.4 Adsorption of nanoparticles to cotton..... | 91 |
| 5.5 Energy dispersive X-Ray (EDX) analysis | 93 |
| 5.6 Morphology of the bacteria in contact with the fabrics | 96 |
| 5.7 Zone of inhibition testing..... | 99 |
| 5.8 Bacterial inactivation by viable count method..... | 103 |
| 5.9 Washing durability..... | 110 |
| 5.10 Conclusions..... | 113 |
| CHAPTER 6 THE EFFICIENCY AND DURABILITY OF NANOPARTICLE-IMPREGNATED COTTON FABRICS AGAINST METHICILLIN-RESISTANT <i>STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS</i>..... | 115 |
| 6.1 Introduction..... | 115 |
| 6.2 Growth Curve of MRSA..... | 116 |
| 6.2.1 Bacterial cell number and cell density | 116 |
| 6.2.2 pH of culture broth..... | 118 |

| | | |
|--|--|------------|
| 6.3 | Minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) and minimum bactericidal concentration (MBC) analysis | 118 |
| 6.4 | Morphology of MRSA bacterium in contact with the fabrics | 120 |
| 6.5 | Bacterial inactivation by zone of inhibition and viable count method of nanoparticle-impregnated fabrics against MRSA..... | 122 |
| 6.6 | Durability of nanoparticle-impregnated fabrics..... | 127 |
| 6.7 | Effect of pre-treatment of the nanoparticle-impregnated fabrics..... | 129 |
| 6.7.1 | pH of pre-treatment solution..... | 129 |
| 6.7.2 | FTIR analysis | 130 |
| 6.7.3 | Adsorption of the pre-treatment agent into cotton fibres..... | 133 |
| 6.7.4 | Elemental composition..... | 135 |
| 6.7.5 | Durability after pre-treatment | 137 |
| 6.8 | Conclusion | 140 |
| CHAPTER 7 ANTIFUNGAL ACTIVITY OF NANOPARTICLE-IMPREGNATED FABRICS AGAINST THE PATHOGENIC FUNGUS <i>TRYCHOPHYTON INTERDIGITALE</i> | | 142 |
| 7.1 | Introduction..... | 142 |
| 7.2 | MIC and MFC analysis..... | 143 |
| 7.3 | Antifungal activity by zone of inhibition and viable count | 146 |
| 7.4 | Morphology of <i>T. interdigitale</i> in contact with the fabrics..... | 150 |
| 7.5 | Effect of pre-treatment on antifungal activity and durability | 152 |
| 7.6 | The effects of nanoparticle-impregnated fabrics in combination with fluconazole..... | 156 |
| 7.7 | Conclusion | 160 |
| CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK | | 162 |
| 8.1 | Summary of the experimental work performed..... | 162 |
| 8.2 | Main conclusions from the study..... | 163 |
| 8.3 | Main contributions of the study to knowledge | 167 |
| 8.4 | Recommendations for future work | 169 |
| REFERENCES..... | | 171 |
| APPENDICES..... | | 202 |
| | Appendix A..... | 202 |
| | Appendix B..... | 259 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| ANOVA | - | Analysis of variance |
| ATR | - | Attenuated total reflectance |
| ATCC | - | American type culture collection |
| CFU | - | Colony forming unit |
| EDX | - | Energy dispersive X-ray |
| FEGSEM | - | Field emission gun scanning electron microscopy |
| FTIR | - | Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy |
| ICU | - | Intensive care unit |
| MBC | - | Minimum bactericidal concentration |
| MIC | - | Minimum inhibitory concentration |
| MFC | - | Minimum fungicidal concentration |
| MRSA | - | Methicillin-resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> |
| PBS | - | Phosphate buffer saline |
| PHMB | - | Polyhexamethylene biguanide |
| QAC | - | Quaternary ammonium compound |
| SEM | - | Scanning electron microscopy |
| TEM | - | Transmission electron microscopy |
| TSA | - | Tryptone soya agar |
| TSB | - | Tryptone soya broth |
| UV-vis | - | Ultraviolet visible |

NOMENCLATURE

| | | |
|----------|---|-------------------------------------|
| N_0 | - | Initial number of bacteria |
| N | - | Number of bacteria after incubation |
| owf | - | On weight fibre |
| P | - | Probability |
| rpm | - | Revolutions per minute |
| s | - | Second |
| t | - | Time |
| V | - | Volume |
| V | - | Volt |
| W | - | Weight |
| \times | - | Magnification |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 2.1 : Possible or probable side effects in 39 number of patients treated with high-dose fluconazole (Anaissie <i>et al.</i> , 1995)..... | 18 |
| Table 2.2: Synthetic antimicrobial agents used for the development of antimicrobial fabrics and their efficiency against microorganisms. | 26 |
| Table 2.2: Studies of synthetic antimicrobial agents used for the development of antimicrobial fabrics and their efficiency against microorganisms (continued)..... | 27 |
| Table 2.3: Disadvantages of nanoparticles synthesised by different methods..... | 38 |
| Table 2.4: The use of Ag nanoparticles for the development of antimicrobial fabrics and their efficiency against microorganisms | 43 |
| Table 2.5: The use of Cu nanoparticles for the development of antimicrobial fabrics and their efficiency against microorganisms | 46 |
| Table 2.6: Conventional techniques for pretreatment of fabrics to enhance stabilization of nanoparticles against washing..... | 48 |
| Table 5.1: MIC and MBC values of Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesised in 50 mM metal salts and 3% (w/v) of chitosan towards 10^8 CFU/mL <i>B. subtilis</i> and <i>E. coli</i> . The subscript denoted comparison of MIC and MBC values in vertical and the superscript denoted comparison of MIC and MBC values in parallel. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)..... | 88 |
| Table 5.2: MIC and MBC values of Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles of 200nm mean particle size towards 10^8 CFU/mL <i>B. subtilis</i> and <i>E. coli</i> . The subscript denoted comparison of MIC and MBC values in vertical and the superscript denoted comparison of MIC and MBC values in parallel. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)..... | 88 |

Table 5.3: Log reduction of *B. subtilis* and *E. coli* in contact with cotton fabrics impregnated with Ag and Cu nanoparticles and Ag⁺ and Cu²⁺ ions at different concentrations. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Uppercase letters compare in parallel, and lowercase letters compare in vertical. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 105

Table 5.4: Log reductions of *B. subtilis* and *E. coli* towards nanoparticle-impregnated cotton fabrics of Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu (3 wt% chitosan and 50 mM concentration). The data in the table are the mean of triplicate determinations. Uppercase letters compare in parallel, and lowercase letters compare in vertical. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) 106

Table 5.5: Log reductions of *B. subtilis* and *E. coli* towards cotton fabrics impregnated with Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles of 200nm mean particle size. The data in the table are the mean of triplicate determinations. Uppercase letters compare in parallel, and lowercase letters compare in vertical. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 108

Table 5.6: Elemental contents of nanoparticle-impregnated fabrics after different washing times. The data are the mean of triplicate determinations. The subscript denoted comparison of the values in vertical. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)..... 111

Table 5.7: Durability of cotton fabrics impregnated with nanoparticles of 50 mM and 3% w/v chitosan after different washing protocols. Uppercase superscript compare values in parallel, and lowercase subscript compare values in vertical. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)..... 112

Table 6.1: MIC and MBC values of Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesised in 50 mM metal salts and 3% (w/v) of chitosan against 10⁸ CFU/mL MRSA. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)..... 119

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 6.2: MIC and MBC values of Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles of same mean particle size of 200 nm against 10^8 CFU/mL MRSA. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) | 119 |
| Table 7.1: MIC and MFC values of Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesised in 50 mM metal salts and 3% (w/v) of chitosan against 10^6 CFU/mL <i>T. interdigitale</i> . Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) | 145 |
| Table 7.2: MIC and MFC values of Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles of same mean particle size of 200 nm against 10^6 CFU/mL <i>T. interdigitale</i> . Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) | 145 |
| Table 7.3: Antifungal effect of 50 mM with 3% (w/v) chitosan nanoparticle-impregnated cotton fabrics against <i>T. interdigitale</i> . Comparisons are shown between fabrics that had not received pretreatment and those that had been pretreated with either tannic or citric acid with 10 machine washes. The data in the table are the mean of the triplicate determinations. Different letters signify statistical differences ($p < 0.05$) | 153 |
| Table 7.4: Log reduction of 30% owf citric acid treated fabric impregnated with Ag/Cu nanoparticles against <i>T. interdigitale</i> at different contact time. The data in the table are the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) | 155 |
| Table 7.5: Citric acid treated fabrics without and with Ag/Cu nanoparticles (50 mM and 3 wt% chitosan) in combination with fluconazole against <i>T. interdigitale</i> at 1 hour contact time. The data in the table are the mean of the triplicate determinations. Different letters signify statistical differences ($p < 0.05$) | 157 |
| Table 7.6: Log reduction of 30% owf citric acid treated fabric with Ag/Cu nanoparticles in combination with fluconazole against <i>T. interdigitale</i> at different contact time. The data in the table are the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) | 159 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 2.1: Bacterial cell walls of Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria (Tripathi <i>et al.</i> , 2012)..... | 11 |
| Figure 2.2: Scanning electron microscope of (a) a Gram-positive bacterium and (b) a Gram-negative bacterium. Abbreviations: CW, Gram-positive cell wall; OM, outer membrane; PG, peptidoglycan layer; PM, plasma membrane; S, S-layer (Sleytr & Beveridge, 1999)..... | 12 |
| Figure 2.3: MRSA contaminated surface (as indicated by arrows) of intensive care unit (ICU) patient unit (Ferreira <i>et al.</i> , 2011)..... | 14 |
| Figure 2.4: A cutaneous MRSA abscess located on the hip of a prison inmate, which had begun to release its purulent contents (Green <i>et al.</i> , 2012)..... | 15 |
| Figure 2.5: Skin condition caused by <i>T. interdigitale</i> (Kawakami <i>et al.</i> , 2011)..... | 17 |
| Figure 2.6 : Determination of (a) MIC (b) MBC of the bacterial strain (Wei <i>et al.</i> , 2009)..... | 19 |
| Figure 2.7: Zone of inhibition of cotton fabrics impregnated with Ag nanoparticles at different Ag: copolymer ratios of 20:1 and 30:1 against <i>S. aureus</i> (Budama <i>et al.</i> , 2013)..... | 20 |
| Figure 2.8: Zones of inhibition against <i>C. albicans</i> of Ag nanoparticles coated fabrics (left and centre) and uncoated fabric (right) after incubation (Gittard <i>et al.</i> , 2010)..... | 20 |
| Figure 2.10: Wound infection by bacteria (Pozez <i>et al.</i> , 2007)..... | 23 |
| Figure 2.11: Bacterial skin infection on an athlete during sport activities (Larkin-Thier <i>et al.</i> , 2010)..... | 24 |
| Figure 2.12: Biofilm on sock fibres. (A) Damp sock (Alcian blue); (B) damp sock (SEM); (C) dry sock (Alcian Blue); (D) dry sock (SEM) (Rayner <i>et al.</i> , 2004)..... | 25 |
| Figure 2.13: The structure of chitosan..... | 28 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 2.14: Solution of <i>T. viride</i> cell with silver nitrate, before reaction (left) and after 24 hours of reaction (Fayaz <i>et al.</i> , 2010). | 33 |
| Figure 2.16: Images of latex induced copper nanoparticles at different molar concentrations of the metal precursor. A: 0.5; B: 0.1; C: 0.01 M (Valodkar <i>et al.</i> , 2011). | 36 |
| Figure 2.17: Two main heating mechanisms under microwave irradiation: (a) dipolar polarisation; (b) ionic conduction mechanism (Kappe <i>et al.</i> , 2009). .. | 40 |
| Figure 2.18: Cotton fabric (a) before and (b) after being coated with Ag nanoparticles (Perelshtein <i>et al.</i> , 2008). | 42 |
| Figure 2.19: Cotton fabric (a) before and (b) after being coated with Cu nanoparticles (Mary <i>et al.</i> , 2009). | 45 |
| Figure 4.1: Agglomeration during the formation of (a) Ag and (b) Cu nanoparticles in the absence of a stabilizing agent, as evidenced by the presence of sediment. | 68 |
| Figure 4.2: Nanoparticles suspensions of (a) Ag synthesized in 10 mM metal salts and different concentration of chitosan of 1, 2 and 3 % (w/v) respectively (from left to right) and (b) their respective UV-vis spectra. | 70 |
| Figure 4.3: Nanoparticles suspensions of (a) Cu synthesized in 10 mM metal salts and different concentration of chitosan of 1, 2 and 3 % (w/v) respectively (from left to right) and (b) their respective UV-vis spectra. | 71 |
| Figure 4.4: UV-vis absorbance spectra of (a) Ag and (b) Cu nanoparticles synthesized in 3 % (w/v) chitosan solution and different concentration of metal salts. | 72 |
| Figure 4.5: Nanoparticles suspensions of (a) Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu synthesized in 50 mM metal salts and 3 % (w/v) of chitosan (from left to right) and (b) their respective UV-vis spectra. | 73 |
| Figure 4.6: Mean particle size of (a) Ag (b) Cu nanoparticles synthesized in 10 mM metal salts and different concentration of chitosan. Error bars represent standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). | 75 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 4.7: Mean particle size of the nanoparticles prepared by different concentrations of (a) silver nitrate (b) copper nitrate (c) silver and copper nitrate (combined concentration) at 3 % (w/v) of chitosan. Error bars represent standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). | 76 |
| Figure 4.8: Zeta potential of nanoparticles of Ag and Cu of 10 mM metal salts and different concentration of chitosan. Error bars represent standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). | 77 |
| Figure 4.9: Ag and Cu synthesized in 3 % (w/v) chitosan solution and different concentration of metal salts. Same letters signify that the results are statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$). | 78 |
| Figure 4.10: Zeta potential of the nanoparticles of (a) Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu of 50 mM metal salts and 3% (w/v) of chitosan (b) Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu of 200 nm mean particle respectively. Error bars represent standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Same letters signify that the results are statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$). | 79 |
| Figure 5.1: (a) Growth curve (b) pH of <i>B. subtilis</i> culture in TSB medium at 37 °C. Error bars represent the standard deviation of triplicate experiments. | 84 |
| Figure 5.2: (a) Growth curve (b) pH of <i>E. coli</i> culture in TSB medium at 37 °C. Error bars represent the standard deviation of triplicate experiments. | 85 |
| Figure 5.3: FEGSEM image of cotton fabric without nanoparticles at high magnification of 40,000×..... | 91 |
| Figure 5.4: FEGSEM images of (a) Ag (b) Cu (c) Ag+Cu and (d) Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesized in 50mM metal salts and 3% (w/v) of chitosan on cotton fibres at high magnification of 40,000×..... | 92 |
| Figure 5.5: EDX spectra of untreated cotton fabric..... | 93 |
| Figure 5.6: EDX spectra of cotton fabric impregnated with (a) Ag and (b) Cu nanoparticles. | 94 |

- Figure 5.7: EDX spectra of cotton fabric impregnated with (a) Ag+Cu and (b) Ag/Cu nanoparticles..... 95
- Figure 5.8: FEGSEM images of *B. subtilis* bacterium in contact with cotton fibre (a) without nanoparticles (b) impregnated with Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesized in 50mM metal salts and 3% (w/v) of chitosan..... 97
- Figure 5.9: FEGSEM images of *E. coli* bacterium in contact with cotton fibre (a) without nanoparticles (b) impregnated with Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesized in 50mM metal salts and 3 wt% of chitosan. 98
- Figure 5.10: Zone of inhibition of impregnated cotton fabrics with Ag and Cu nanoparticles of 10 mM synthesised in different concentrations of chitosan. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 99
- Figure 5.11: Zones of inhibition of Ag and Cu nanoparticles at 3 % (w/v) chitosan and 10 to 50 mM metal salts and Ag⁺ and Cu²⁺ ions at 10 to 50 mM towards (a) *E. coli* K12 (b) *B. subtilis*. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 101
- Figure 5.12: Zones of inhibition of impregnated cotton fabrics with Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesised in (a) 3 wt% chitosan and 50 mM metal salts solutions (b) 3% chitosan solution with the same mean particle size of 200 nm after overnight incubation at 37°C. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 102
- Figure 5.13: Log reduction of nanoparticle-impregnated fabrics with Ag and Cu nanoparticles of 10 mM and different concentrations of chitosan towards *B. subtilis* and *E. coli* at 30 minutes contact time. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 104

- Figure 6.1: (a) Growth curve of MRSA (b) pH of medium during culture of MRSA in TSB medium at 37 °C. Error bars represent the standard deviation of triplicate experiments..... 117
- Figure 6.2: FEGSEM images of the MRSA bacterium in contact with cotton fibre (a) without nanoparticles (b) impregnated with Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesized in 50mM metal salts and 3 wt% of chitosan. 121
- Figure 6.3: Zone of inhibition of Ag and Cu nanoparticle- and ion-impregnated cotton fabrics against 10^8 CFU/mL MRSA after overnight of incubation. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)..... 122
- Figure 6.4: Zone of inhibition of impregnated cotton fabrics with Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesised in 50 mM metal salts and 3% (w/v) of chitosan impregnated onto fabrics against 10^8 CFU/mL MRSA after overnight of incubation. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 123
- Figure 6.5: Zone of inhibition of impregnated cotton fabrics with Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles of same mean particle size of 200 nm impregnated onto fabrics against 10^8 CFU/mL MRSA after overnight of incubation. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 123
- Figure 6.6: Log reduction of 50 mM Ag and Cu nanoparticle- and ion-impregnated cotton fabrics against 10^8 CFU/mL MRSA after 30 minutes contact time. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 124

- Figure 6.7: Log reduction of Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesised in 50 mM metal salts and 3% (w/v) of chitosan impregnated onto fabrics against 10^8 CFU/mL MRSA after 30 minutes contact time. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)..... 125
- Figure 6.8: Log reduction of Ag, Cu, Ag+Cu and Ag/Cu nanoparticles of same mean particle size of 200 nm impregnated onto fabrics against 10^8 CFU/mL MRSA after 30 minutes contact time. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)..... 126
- Figure 6.9: pH of tannic acid solutions at different concentrations. Data are the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)..... 129
- Figure 6.10: FTIR-ATR of untreated and tannic acid treated cotton fabrics..... 130
- Figure 6.11: FTIR-ATR of untreated and citric acid treated cotton fabrics. 131
- Figure 6.12: FTIR-ATR of untreated and citric acid treated cotton fabrics after curing process..... 132
- Figure 6.13: Schematic diagram of the pre-treatment of cotton fabric by tannic acid..... 133
- Figure 6.14: Schematic diagrams of pre-treatment of cotton fabric by citric acid (a) before and (b) after crosslinking..... 134
- Figure 7.1: Zone of inhibition of 50 mM Ag and Cu nanoparticles synthesized in 3 wt% chitosan and 50 mM ion-impregnated cotton fabrics against 10^6 CFU/mL *T. interdigitale* after 7 days of incubation. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)..... 146

- Figure 7.2: Zone of inhibition of impregnated cotton fabrics impregnated with Ag, Cu, Ag/Cu and Ag+Cu nanoparticles (a) synthesised in 50 mM metal salts and 3% (w/v) of chitosan (b) of same mean particle size of 200 nm impregnated into fabrics against 10^6 CFU/mL *T. interdigitale* after 7 days of incubation. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 147
- Figure 7.3: Log reduction of Ag and Cu nanoparticle- and ion-impregnated cotton fabrics against 10^6 CFU/mL *T. interdigitale* after 7 days of incubation. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 148
- Figure 7.4: Log reduction cotton fabrics impregnated with Ag, Cu, Ag/Cu and Ag+Cu nanoparticles (a) synthesised in 50 mM metal salts and 3% (w/v) of chitosan (b) of same mean particle size of 200 nm impregnated into fabrics against 10^6 CFU/mL *T. interdigitale* after 7 days of incubation. Error bars represent the standard deviation from the mean of triplicate determinations. Different letters signify that the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). 149
- Figure 7.5: FEGSEM images of the fungus *T. interdigitale* in contact with cotton fibre without nanoparticles at low magnification. 150
- Figure 7.6: FEGSEM images of the fungus *T. interdigitale* bacterium in contact with cotton fibre (a) without nanoparticles (b) impregnated with Ag/Cu nanoparticles synthesised in 50 mM metal salts and 3 wt% of chitosan. 151

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Consumers strive to find the best quality products for their daily requirements. This includes clothing which is comfortable, and stays fresh and odour-free in use (Khan *et al.*, 2011). Cotton fabrics are widely used in the production of underwear, protective clothing, medical garments, white goods and sportswear because of their breathability, moisture absorption and comfort (Filipowska *et al.*, 2011; Kantouch & El-Sayed, 2008).

Microorganisms are part of our daily lives and environments. Bacteria are responsible for significant infections and allergy problems (Saihi *et al.*, 2005). Fabrics are frequently exposed to the influence of microorganisms, where the formation of spots and odours are the perceivable signs of contamination (El-Naggar *et al.*, 2003). Microorganisms can also survive on fabric substrate (Hebeish *et al.*, 2011). Fabrics made from natural fibres can act as carriers for microorganisms such as bacteria and mould (Lee, 2010). Natural fibres are more vulnerable than synthetics because of their porous, hydrophilic structures that can retain water, oxygen, and nutrients (Hebeish *et al.*, 2011). Besides this, natural fibres in contact with the human body provide warmth which makes the best environment for microbial growth and multiplication (Prusty *et al.*, 2010). These phenomena can lead to discolouration and deterioration of the quality of the fabric, unwanted stains, dermal infection, allergic reactions and other associated illnesses (Filipowska *et al.*, 2011). The growing need for hygienic living environments has led to a great demand for antimicrobial materials which do not allow microbes to attach, survive or at least proliferate on material surfaces (Thomas *et al.*, 2010).

Additionally, antimicrobial fabrics could have a major impact in hospitals due to growing concern over microbial cross-contamination in hospitals from the infected patients and indoor air quality in operational areas (Mohammadkhodaei *et al.*, 2010). It has been claimed that, hygiene problems associated with hospital fabrics can affect the recovery of the patient (Zhao *et al.*, 2008). It is believed that the use of antimicrobial fabrics can efficiently control and inhibit microbial contamination and the spread of disease (Copello *et al.*, 2006). This would reduce the possibility of pathogenic bacteria being transported from the hands or gloves of a health care-worker to the wound site of an at-risk patient (Borkow & Gabbay, 2008). The occurrence of pathogenic bacteria in the hospital environment could be restricted by the utilisation of effective antimicrobial compounds on frequently touched surfaces, such as curtains (particularly around patient beds), uniforms and bedding (O'Hanlon & Enright, 2009).

The requirement for antimicrobial treatment is not limited to hospitals. Besides this, cross contamination by microorganisms can also happen in other places such as hotels, schools, nursing facilities, clinics and public areas (El.Shafei & Abou-Okeil, 2011). It mainly occurs in places where crowded conditions prevail and which do not have frequent cleaning (Hebeish *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, the requirement for fabrics that are resistant to the growth of microorganisms and pathogens is extended (Yan *et al.*, 2011).

1.2 Research problems

Microorganisms have been causing various types of diseases for thousands of years and people unable to avert them. An enhanced awareness and routine of infection control performs has had some influence on the existence of microorganism infections. The growth of microorganisms can be controlled by treatment with antimicrobial agents.

The requirement to use antimicrobial fabrics has been increasing all around the world (Lin *et al.*, 2011). Antimicrobial fabrics are developed for three major reasons: (a) to prevent the spread of disease and avoid the danger of injury-induced infection, (b) to avoid the development of odour from perspiration, stains and soil on fabric materials, and (c) to prevent the deterioration of fabrics caused by mildew, particularly for fabrics made of natural fibres (Diana *et al.*, 2010; Gao and Cranston, 2008).

Nowadays, industrial and textile sectors are paying increased attention to manufacturing antimicrobial fabrics for medical and hygienic applications (Thomas *et al.*, 2010). As a result, different types of antimicrobial agents for fabric application have been created, but unfortunately many of these agents have harmful effects and cannot easily degrade in nature (Dastjerdi & Montazer, 2010). Producing new kinds of fabrics with antimicrobial properties using nanoparticles has attracted a great deal of attention from both scientists and consumers in recent years because of their non-toxic, safe and improved antimicrobial efficiency (Kim *et al.*, 2010). Synthesis of metal nanoparticles has been studied extensively because of their antimicrobial activity (Marambio-Jones & Hoek, 2010).

Copper (Cu) is a potent natural antimicrobial material which has been used since ancient times. For example, Cu is used for storing potable water and along with vinegar and honey for cleansing wounds (Russell, 2002). Cu plays a vital role in human health, such as energy production in cells and the maintenance of essential elements and chemicals such as zinc, oestrogen, and neurotransmitters (Cady *et al.*,

Chitosan can form electrostatic attraction with metal components thus enhancing the stability of the nanoparticles (Guibal, 2004; El.Shafei & Abou-Okeil 2011). It has low toxicity and it is therefore safe for human applications, and will not cause environmental-toxicity or biological hazards (Kong *et al.*, 2010). Synthesis is inexpensive and leads to waste reduction and energy efficiency.

Modification of fabric with nanoparticles is developed due to their unique properties. However, the surface modification of fabric with nanoparticles is not permanent especially against washing. Most methods used for stabilization of nanoparticles on the fabrics are costly, very time-consuming and are harmful to the environment because of the application of hazardous chemicals or organic solvents (Dastjerdi & Montazer, 2010)

The development of antimicrobial fabrics based on synergistic effects through combining different metal elements provides a new alternative in the fight against various types of pathogenic microorganisms. This study will provide new insight into the antimicrobial activity of the nanoparticles through synergistic effects between Ag and Cu. The results can be used as a basis for further study of the application of the nanoparticle-impregnated fabrics to kill pathogenic bacteria and fungi. This study will contribute to the knowledge of the application of nanoparticle-impregnated fabrics to reduce undesirable phenomena caused by microorganisms.

1.3 Aim and objectives

The aim of this research work was to develop antimicrobial fabrics that have antibacterial and antifungal effects which involve the use of different types of nanoparticles impregnated onto cotton fabrics and a pre-treatment process. Various methods and analyses were used as reported in this thesis to achieve this aim, with the following objectives: