

1           **Comparison of the efficacy of natural-based and synthetic biocides**  
2                   **to disinfect silicone and stainless steel surfaces**

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6                   I. B. Gomes<sup>a</sup>, J. Malheiro<sup>a</sup>, F. Mergulhão<sup>a</sup>, J.-Y. Maillard<sup>b</sup>, M. Simões<sup>a\*</sup>

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8           <sup>a</sup>LEPABE, Department of Chemical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University  
9 of Porto, Rua Dr. Roberto Frias, s/n, 4200-465 Porto, Portugal

10           <sup>b</sup>School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Cardiff University, Cardiff, United  
11 Kingdom

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16   \*Corresponding author: Manuel Simões, LEPABE, Department of Chemical Engineering,  
17 Faculty of Engineering, University of Porto, Rua Dr. Roberto Frias, s/n, 4200-465 Porto,  
18 Portugal, Tel.: +351 225081654; Fax: +351 225081449. E-mail address: mvs@fe.up.pt

19 **Abstract**

20 New biocidal solutions are needed to combat effectively the evolution of microbes  
21 developing antibiotic resistance while having a low or no environmental toxicity impact.  
22 This work aims to assess the efficacy of commonly used biocides and natural-based  
23 compounds on the disinfection of silicone and stainless steel (SS) surfaces seeded with  
24 different *Staphylococcus aureus* strains. Minimum inhibitory concentration was determined  
25 for synthetic (benzalkonium chloride-BAC, glutaraldehyde-GTA, *ortho*-phthalaldehyde-  
26 OPA and peracetic acid-PAA) and natural-based (cuminaldehyde-CUM), eugenol-EUG  
27 and indole-3-carbinol-I3C) biocides by the microdilution method. The efficacy of selected  
28 biocides at MIC, 10×MIC and 5500 mg/L (representative in-use concentration) on the  
29 disinfection of sessile *S. aureus* on silicone and SS was assessed by viable counting.  
30 Silicone surfaces were harder to disinfect than SS. GTA, OPA and PAA yielded complete  
31 CFU reduction of sessile cells for all test concentrations as well as BAC at 10×MIC and  
32 5500 mg/L. CUM was the least efficient compound. EUG was efficient for SS disinfection,  
33 regardless of strains and concentrations tested. I3C at 10×MIC and 5500 mg/L was able to  
34 cause total CFU reduction of silicone and SS deposited bacteria. Although not so efficient  
35 as synthetic compounds, the natural-based biocides are promising to be used in disinfectant  
36 formulations, particularly I3C and EUG.

37

38 **Keywords:** Biocides, disinfection, phytochemicals, *Staphylococcus aureus*

39

## 40 **Introduction**

41 The role of contaminated environmental surfaces and medical devices in the transmission  
42 of healthcare-associated pathogens has been well reported (Kramer *et al.* 2006, Boyce  
43 2007, Weber *et al.* 2010; Otter *et al.* 2015). A number of studies suggests that microbial  
44 contamination of those surfaces and devices plays an important role in the spread of  
45 pathogens (Weinstein and Hota 2004, Gebel *et al.* 2013; Otter *et al.* 2015). Effective  
46 pathogen transmission depends on several factors including the ability of microorganisms  
47 to remain viable on dry surfaces, their resistance to disinfectants and the frequency that  
48 contaminated surfaces or devices are in contact with patients and healthcare workers  
49 (Boyce 2007, Weber *et al.* 2010). In order to prevent the acquisition and the spread of  
50 healthcare associated infections (HAIs) it is important to implement adequate and efficient  
51 cleaning and disinfection protocols. HAIs represent high morbidity and mortality costs for  
52 patients and financial burden for healthcare units. Therefore, effective strategies are  
53 required to disinfect hospital surfaces and devices (Abreu *et al.* 2013). However, bacterial  
54 resistance to disinfectants is an important factor in the control of HAIs. Microorganisms  
55 may have intrinsic/innate resistance to disinfectants which is commonly related with  
56 cellular impermeability. However, the continuous exposure to disinfectants may increase  
57 microbial resistance by cellular mutations or acquisition genetic elements (Abreu *et al.*  
58 2013; Russel 1998). Quaternary ammonium compounds, biguanides and phenolics,  
59 particularly used in a number of biocidal products in healthcare, have been associated with  
60 emerging bacterial resistance *in vitro* (Russell *et al.* 1999, Maillard 2005, SCENIHR 2009).  
61 For example, studies reported *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Listeria monocytogenes* and  
62 *Staphylococcus aureus* with low susceptibility to benzalkonium chloride (BAC) (Sakagami  
63 *et al.* 1989, Akimitsu *et al.* 1999, To *et al.* 2002, Bridier *et al.* 2011, Ibusquiza *et al.* 2011).

64 Concerns of bacterial resistance to high-level disinfectants such as oxidising and alkylating  
65 agents have also been reported, for example, resistance to peracetic acid (PAA) in *L.*  
66 *monocytogenes* (Bridier *et al.* 2011, Ibusquiza *et al.* 2011) and vegetative *Bacillus subtilis*  
67 (Bridier *et al.* 2012), *Mycobacterium avium* and *Mycobacterium terrae* (Bridier *et al.*  
68 2011), and glutaraldehyde (GTA) resistance in atypical mycobacteria (Griffiths *et al.* 1997).  
69 Bacterial resistance to OPA was reported by Fisher *et al.* (2012) who isolated  
70 *Mycobacterium gordonae* and *M. avium* from endoscopes disinfected with OPA. This  
71 clearly proposes that the development of new disinfectant solutions is of utmost importance  
72 to prevent effectively HAIs.

73 In this work, three natural-based biocides derived from the plant secondary metabolism  
74 (cuminaldehyde – CUM presented in *Cuminum cyminum* (Morshedi *et al.* 2015), eugenol -  
75 EUG presented in *Syzygium aromaticum* - clove (Just *et al.* 2015) and indole-3-carbinol -  
76 I3C presented in some vegetables of the *Brassica* genus, including cabbage, cauliflower,  
77 and brussels sprouts (Bjeldanes *et al.* 1991)) were evaluated for their potential bactericidal  
78 efficacy against four *S. aureus* strains seeded on silicone or stainless steel, two surface  
79 materials commonly found in hospital settings (Kovaleva *et al.* 2013, Gastmeier and  
80 Vonberg 2014). BAC, GTA, OPA and PAA were used for comparison of activity.

81

## 82 **Materials and methods**

### 83 ***Bacterial strains***

84 *S. aureus* SA1199B, which overexpresses the NorA MDR efflux pump, *S. aureus* RN4220,  
85 which contains plasmid pU5054 (that carries the gene encoding the MsrA macrolide efflux  
86 protein), and *S. aureus* XU212, which possesses the TetK efflux pump and is also an  
87 MRSA strain, were kindly provided by S. Gibbons (University College London, UCL)

88 (Oluwatuyi *et al.* 2004, Smith *et al.* 2007). The collection strain *S. aureus* CECT 976,  
89 already used as model microorganism for antimicrobial tests with phytochemical  
90 compounds (Abreu *et al.* 2012b, Saavedra *et al.* 2010) was included as a quality control  
91 strain.

92

### 93 ***Biocides***

94 The selected biocides were purchased from Sigma (Sintra, Portugal). BAC, GTA, PAA and  
95 OPA solutions were prepared in sterile distilled water. CUM, EUG and I3C solutions were  
96 prepared in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO, Sigma). DMSO was used as negative control and  
97 at the concentration used (10% v/v) did not inhibit bacterial growth neither reduced the  
98 number of CFU in all four test strains.

99

### 100 ***Test surfaces***

101 Stainless steel ASI 316 (SS) and silicone coupons (1 × 1 cm) were acquired from (Neves &  
102 Neves, Muro, Portugal) and used as test surfaces. Prior to use, the coupons were washed  
103 with commercial detergent (Sonasol, Henkel) for 30 min and then rinsed with distilled  
104 water to remove the residual detergent. The coupons were then immersed in ethanol at 70%  
105 (v/v), for 1 h to kill potential microbial contaminants. Finally, the coupons were rinsed with  
106 sterile distilled water for three consecutive times and were stored until required. In order to  
107 ascertain the absence of microbial contaminants from surfaces 400 µL of 4,6-diamino-2-  
108 phenylindole (DAPI) (Sigma) at 0.5 µg/mL were spread on the test surface and left in the  
109 dark for 5 min (Lemos *et al.* 2015). The surfaces were visualized under an epifluorescence  
110 microscope (Leica DMLB2 with a mercury lamp HBO/100W/3) incorporating a CCD  
111 camera to acquire images using IM50 software (Leica), using a ×100 oil immersion

112 fluorescence objective, and a filter sensitive to DAPI fluorescence (359-nm excitation filter  
113 in combination with a 461-nm emission filter).

114

#### 115 ***Minimum inhibitory concentration***

116 The minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) of each biocide was determined by the broth  
117 microdilution method according to CLSI (2012).

118

#### 119 ***Monolayer bacterial adhesion and surface disinfection***

120 *S. aureus* was grown overnight in Muller Hinton (MH) broth at 30 °C under 150 rpm  
121 agitation (AGITORB 200, Aralab, Portugal). Bacterial suspensions were then centrifuged  
122 (Eppendorf centrifuge 5810R) at 3777 *g* for 10 min, washed twice with saline solution  
123 (NaCl, 8.5 g/L) and resuspended in saline to a final concentration of  $3 \times 10^8$  CFU/mL.  
124 Monolayer bacterial adhesion in 48-well microtiter plates was performed for 2 h according  
125 to Simões et al. (2007) and Meireles et al. (2015). Briefly, coupons of silicone or SS were  
126 inserted vertically in each well and 1 mL of bacterial suspension was added. Microtiter  
127 plates were then incubated at 30 °C and 150 rpm. After 2 h incubation the coupons were  
128 transferred to new microtiter plates with NaCl (8.5 g/L) to remove non-adherent and  
129 weakly adherent bacteria (Meireles *et al.* 2015). In order to evaluate if bacteria adhered on  
130 the surfaces, coupons were microscopically analysed with DAPI according to Lemos *et al.*  
131 (2015). The coupons were inserted in new microtiter plates with the selected biocide.  
132 Biocides were tested at different concentrations: MIC, 10×MIC and a concentration  
133 representing those actually applied in hospital disinfection (5500 mg/L, a concentration  
134 higher than the MIC of the selected biocides, corresponding to the in-use concentration of  
135 OPA (Rutala *et al.* 2008)). The bacteria adhered on the surfaces were exposed to biocides

136 for 30 min. According to the CDC guidelines for the disinfection of healthcare facilities the  
137 exposure time for high-level disinfection should be at least 12 min, depending of the  
138 compound (Rutala *et al.* 2008). Taking into account that natural-based compounds are not  
139 as efficient as high-level disinfectants (higher MIC values were obtained) 30 min exposure  
140 was used following previous studies with phytochemicals and synthetic biocides (Lemos *et*  
141 *al.* 2015; Simões *et al.* 2006). After biocide exposure coupons were carefully rinsed in  
142 another microtiter plate with saline solution. This procedure was repeated twice to reduce  
143 the levels of biocide to sub-lethal concentrations (Johnston *et al.* 2002). Chemical  
144 neutralizers were not used as there is no data on antimicrobial quenchers for the selected  
145 phytochemicals. However, the dilution to sub-lethal concentrations showed to be as  
146 efficient as the application of neutralizers for BAC, GTA, OPA and PAA, using the  
147 methods described by Walsh *et al.* (1999) and Furi *et al.* (2013). Adhered bacteria were  
148 scraped with a metal scalpel from the surface of the coupons and resuspended in saline  
149 solution. The coupons were also inserted in saline solution and vortexed (Heidolph reax-  
150 top) for 1 min in order to improve bacterial detachment and to disaggregate cell clusters  
151 (Meireles *et al.* 2015). The viability of bacteria was assessed in MH agar plates. The  
152 number of colony forming units (CFU) was evaluated after 24 h incubation at 30 °C.  
153 Results are presented as log CFU *per* cm<sup>2</sup> of surface. All the experiments were performed  
154 in triplicate with three repeats.

155

### 156 ***Statistical analysis***

157 The data were analyzed using the statistical program SPSS version 20.0 (Statistical Package  
158 for the Social Sciences). Results were analyzed using a One-Way ANOVA test. Statistical  
159 calculations were based on a confidence level  $\geq 95\%$  ( $P < 0.05$  was considered statistically

160 significant).

161

## 162 **Results and Discussion**

163 The use of disinfectants in hospital environments is a first line defense in infection  
164 prevention and control. Recent bacterial outbreaks have highlighted the importance of  
165 infection prevention and control illustrating just how quickly disease can spread at both  
166 national and global level (Duarte *et al.* 2009; Gebel *et al.* 2013). The increasing use of  
167 biocides is also a concern for emerging bacterial resistance and exacerbating environmental  
168 toxicity (SCENIHR 2009, Davin-Regli and Pagés 2012).

169 Phytochemicals are an attractive source of environmental friendly, relatively inexpensive  
170 and widely available new broad-spectrum antimicrobials with low levels of cutaneous  
171 cytotoxicity, corrosion and environmental toxicity. In terms of antimicrobial potential,  
172 phytochemicals have already demonstrated activity when used alone and when combined  
173 with other compounds as antimicrobial potentiators or as resistance-modifying agents of  
174 less effective products (Abreu *et al.* 2012a, Saavedra *et al.* 2010). Nevertheless, bacterial  
175 resistance to phytochemicals has not been studied yet probably due to their modest use for  
176 microbial growth control (Abreu *et al.* 2013; Simões *et al.* 2009).

177 Three phytochemical products were selected for this study based on their different chemical  
178 structures (CUM is a benzaldehyde with a isopropyl group, EUG is a phenylpropanoid and  
179 I3C an indole) and on the existence of previous evidences of their antimicrobial activity  
180 against planktonic bacteria (Gill and Holley 2006, Sung and Lee 2008, Mandal 2011). Gill  
181 and Holley (2006) tested the ability of membrane disruption by some plant aromatic oil  
182 compounds. They evaluated the action of eugenol against *Escherichia coli*, *Listeria*  
183 *monocytogenes* and *Lactobacillus sakei*, and observed a non-specific antimicrobial action

184 of this compound apparently due to ATPase inhibition. Mandal (2011) tested the  
185 antimicrobial activity of three different ethanolic extracts from three different plants. They  
186 found antimicrobial action of cumin extracts, containing CUM, against methicillin-resistant  
187 *S. aureus* (MRSA), with a MIC range of 128-512 µg/ml. Sung and Lee (2008) assessed the  
188 antimicrobial activity of I3C against Gram negative (*E. coli* and *P. aeruginosa* strains) and  
189 Gram positive (*S. aureus* and *E. faecium* strains) bacteria finding MIC between 34 and 544  
190 µM.

191 The transmission of pathogens through environmental contaminated surfaces depends on  
192 their ability to survive on dry environments. *S. aureus* is able to survive on dry surfaces for  
193 several months (Boyce 1997, Neely and Maley, 2000, Wagenvoort *et al.* 2000, Weinstein  
194 and Hota 2004, Kramer *et al.* 2006). In this study, four distinct strains of *S. aureus*, three of  
195 them expressing characterized efflux pumps, were used. The expression of efflux has been  
196 recognized as a major driver in antimicrobial resistance and cross-resistance in bacteria  
197 (SCENHIR, 2009). Those strains were exposed to the natural-based and the synthetic  
198 biocides. BAC had the lowest MIC while EUG had the highest MIC for all the strains  
199 tested (Table 1). Among the synthetic biocides GTA had the highest overall MIC (for all  
200 strains tested). CUM, OPA and PAA showed similar MIC values ( $P > 0.05$ ). However,  
201 OPA and CUM had lower MIC against CECT976 and SA1199b strains, while PAA had  
202 lower MIC against XU212 and RN4220 strains. I3C showed values of MIC lower than  
203 those obtained by the high level disinfectants (GTA, OPA and PAA) for all the strains ( $P <$   
204  $0.05$ ). The MIC values clearly show variability in susceptibility of the diverse *S. aureus*  
205 strains: *S. aureus* expressing efflux pump were less susceptible to phytochemicals ( $P <$   
206  $0.05$ ). This behavior was also verified for BAC and EUG.

207 The extent of membrane damage induced by a compound can be related to its  
208 hydrophobicity, which can be determined by its partition coefficient in octanol/water (Log  
209 P) (Nostro *et al.*, 2007). This parameter was calculated for the selected compounds as cLog  
210 P using ChemDraw Ultra 12.0 software. I3C had the lowest cLog P (1.094), followed by  
211 CUM (1.993) and EUG (2.397). In this study, the natural-based compounds with lower  
212 cLog P were those with lower MIC. In fact, Kubo *et al.* (2002) observed that lipophilicity  
213 of compounds is important for antimicrobial action, even if lipophilicity cannot be  
214 considered the most important parameter to determine antimicrobial compound activity  
215 against MRSA. In fact, cLog P of the synthetic biocides (2.930 for BAC, 1.358 for OPA, -  
216 0.924 for PAA and -1.205 for GTA) do not allow to ascertain their antimicrobial potential.  
217 MIC values were used as guide to choose concentration against adhered bacteria on  
218 surfaces. Biocides were used at MIC, 10×MIC and 5500 mg/L recognizing that biocide  
219 efficacy of antimicrobials against planktonic bacteria is better than against sessile bacteria  
220 on surfaces (Chavant *et al.*, 2004). Significant variability on the adhesion ability of the  
221 selected *S. aureus* strains ( $P < 0.05$ ) was observed (Figure 1). Those adhered bacteria were  
222 exposed to the selected biocides for 30 min. As depicted in Figure 1, no bacteria were  
223 recovered when exposed to GTA, OPA and PAA regardless the biocide concentration, the  
224 test surface and the strain used. BAC at its MIC was not able to completely eliminate  
225 adhered bacteria, except CECT976 and SA1199b strains on SS. No *S. aureus* were  
226 recovered from the surface when applied at 10×MIC and at 5500 mg/L on silicone and SS  
227 ( $P > 0.05$ ). No bacteria were recovered with BAC at MIC against CECT976 and SA1199b  
228 on SS. BAC at MIC against RN4220 adhered on silicone did not reduce the number of  
229 CFU/cm<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, the MIC for BAC was around 1000 times lower than the in-use  
230 concentration for hospital disinfection (Table 1) (Al-Adhan, 2013). These results confirmed

231 that antimicrobial planktonic tests are not reliable predictor on the action of BAC against  
232 adhered bacteria. Previous studies showed the role of efflux pumps in antimicrobial  
233 resistance, particularly to BAC (Huet *et al.* 2008, Pagedar *et al.* 2012, Costa 2013). This is  
234 a probable reason why strains carrying efflux pumps were less susceptible to BAC at MIC  
235 level. Smith and Hunter (2008) also found that BAC at 10000 mg/L could not completely  
236 inactivate biofilms formed by MRSA and *P. aeruginosa* on SS, Teflon and polyethylene  
237 surfaces. In the present work BAC at 5500 mg/L was efficient in eliminating monolayer  
238 adhered bacteria from SS and silicone surfaces.

239 Concerning the natural-based biocides, CUM and EUG showed similar performances on  
240 the control of monolayer bacteria adhered on silicone. No bacteria were recovered  
241 following CUM exposure at 10×MIC and at 5500 mg/L for CECT976 and SA1199b on SS,  
242 and at 5500 mg/L on SS for RN4220. There was no bacterial survivor for CECT976 and  
243 RN4220 on silicone surface with CUM treatment at 10×MIC. Less than 2 log CFU/cm<sup>2</sup>  
244 reductions were obtained with CUM at MIC against CECT976, RN4220 and SA1199b  
245 adhered on SS. No significant reduction was observed following CUM treatment against  
246 XU212 on SS for all tested concentrations ( $P > 0.05$ ). CUM at all concentrations tested had  
247 no biocidal effect on silicone against SA1199b and at MIC and 10×MIC against XU212.  
248 For the other conditions tested, CUM produced less than 2 log CFU/cm<sup>2</sup>. The antimicrobial  
249 activity of *Cuminum cyminum* extracts against planktonic cells has been demonstrated  
250 elsewhere (Shetty *et al.*,1994). Our results demonstrates the inadequacy of CUM to control  
251 sessile *S. aureus* when adhered on silicone surfaces. A possible limitation on the  
252 disinfecting efficacy of CUM can be related to its specific mode of action. Mandal (2011)  
253 proposed that *C. cyminum* extracts may affect the synthesis of the peptidoglycan layer of  
254 the cell wall, indicating the need for active growth. Although *C. cyminum* extracts can be a

255 promising alternative and/or complement for antibiotic chemotherapy, there are no studies  
256 describing the action of CUM on sessile bacteria.

257 EUG is a clove essential oil commonly used as antiseptic on oral infections (Nuñez and D'  
258 Aquino, 2012). No bacteria (all strains) were recovered following exposure to EUG at MIC,  
259 10×MIC and at 5500 mg/L on SS. However, there was no CFU reduction when EUG was  
260 used against SA1199b and XU212 adhered on silicone, and when EUG at the MIC was  
261 used against RN4220 on silicone. No bacteria were recovered when treating CECT976  
262 strain on silicone with EUG at 10×MIC (around 9500 mg/L) a concentration significantly  
263 higher than the in-use one. EUG at 10×MIC caused a reduction  $> 2.5 \log \text{CFU/cm}^2$  against  
264 RN4220 on silicone. The other treatments on silicone caused CFU reduction  $< 2.5 \log$   
265  $\text{CFU/cm}^2$ . Gill and Holley (2006) demonstrated that EUG antimicrobial activity is caused  
266 by membrane disruption and by non-specific permeabilization of cytoplasmic membrane,  
267 which correlate favorably with its cLog P (2.397). This possible non-specific action of  
268 EUG makes it interesting to apply on disinfection processes, despite its high MIC. Yadav *et*  
269 *al.* (2015) also demonstrated the efficiency of EUG to inhibit and eradicate biofilms of  
270 MRSA and MSSA clinical strains. These authors found that EUG was able to damage cell  
271 membrane, to disrupt the cell-to-cell connections in biofilms, to kill *S. aureus* within  
272 biofilms and to interfere in the expression of some biofilm-related genes, decreasing  
273 accumulation of polysaccharides and bacterial adhesion (Yadav *et al.* 2015). The common  
274 use of EUG in toothpaste at concentrations between 100 to 100 000 mg/L (Banerjee *et al.*  
275 2013) as well as its effectiveness on removal *in vitro* and *in vivo* biofilms (Yadav *et al.*  
276 2015) demonstrates the non-toxic effects of EUG and its possible efficiency on hospital  
277 disinfection, even against antibiotic resistant bacteria.

278 I3C showed to be efficient in reducing bacteria from both surfaces, particularly at 10×MIC  
279 and at 5500 mg/L, for which no bacteria were recovered. CECT976 were not recovered  
280 when I3C was applied at MIC, 10×MIC and 5500 mg/L on silicone and SS. Likewise there  
281 was no bacteria recovery on SS for RN4220, and silicone for SA1199b at 10×MIC, and at  
282 10×MIC, and at 5500 mg/L against XU212 on silicone and SS. No bacteria recovery was  
283 also achieved with SA199b on SS and with RN4220 on silicone. However, there was no  
284 CFU reduction when I3C was used at MIC against RN4220 and XU212 on silicone. For the  
285 remaining treatments  $< 2 \log \text{ CFU/cm}^2$  reduction was observed. I3C showed high  
286 efficiency (total CFU reduction) for the disinfection of silicone and SS contaminated with  
287 *S. aureus* strains, including strains expressing efflux pumps, using concentrations lower  
288 than 5500 mg/L (the value assumed in this study as a concentration normally applied in  
289 hospitals, particularly of OPA – Rutala *et al.* (2008)). Lee *et al.* (2011) observed that I3C at  
290 100 µg/mL was able to decrease the ability of *E. coli* O157:H7 to form biofilms. Monte *et*  
291 *al.* (2014) also showed that I3C was able to inactivate biofilms of *S. aureus* and *E. coli*.  
292 This phytochemical is also of potential interest on the reversal of antibiotic resistance, as a  
293 previous study demonstrated the synergistic effects on the combination of I3C with diverse  
294 antibiotics (Sung and Lee 2008). For those cases where phytochemicals demonstrate  
295 therapeutic potential as effective antibiotic resistance modifiers, it is unlikely their use as  
296 hospital disinfectants. However, there is no present therapeutic strategy using I3C as  
297 antibiotic resistance modifiers as well as no previous studies are available on the role of  
298 I3C as surface disinfectant.

299 Our data on silicone and SS disinfection demonstrated that the surface material can affect  
300 significantly the antimicrobial efficacy of biocides. Bacteria adhered on silicone appeared  
301 to be less susceptible to the action of natural-based biocides than those adhered on SS. It is

302 known that porous surfaces can confer higher protection to microorganisms (Rogers *et al.*  
303 2005, Grand *et al.* 2010) and this may help to explain the results obtained in this study  
304 using silicone. I3C was the only natural-based biocide able to completely disinfect silicone  
305 surfaces. *S. aureus* CECT976, the collection strain, was the most susceptible to the action  
306 of natural-based biocides. Total CFU reduction from SS surfaces was observed for all the  
307 tested compounds at 10×MIC and at 5500 mg/L, and even at MIC for EUG and I3C.  
308 Moreover, CUM, EUG and I3C were not efficient for all tested conditions, remaining some  
309 viable bacteria after treatment, particularly of those strains expressing efflux pumps and  
310 adhered on silicone. This result can be related with a possible resistance mechanism.  
311 Nevertheless, specific experiments need to be performed in order to assess putative  
312 mechanisms of resistance to the phytochemicals.

313 Our study demonstrated that under the test conditions applied, BAC, GTA, OPA and PAA  
314 caused total CFU reduction of *S. aureus* adhered on silicone and SS. The use of natural-  
315 based compounds at concentrations close to those in-use for traditional biocides were  
316 efficient in the disinfection of SS surfaces, although their modest efficiency for lower  
317 concentrations. CUM and EUG showed similar behavior on silicone disinfection. I3C was  
318 the natural biocide with the most promising disinfection potential. This investigation adds  
319 support for the use of natural-based biocides in disinfectant formulations, helping the  
320 development of green-based antimicrobial strategies and contributing to the potential  
321 recycling of older biocides through the combination of active molecules.

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324

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339

## 340 **Conflict of interests**

341 None to declare.

342

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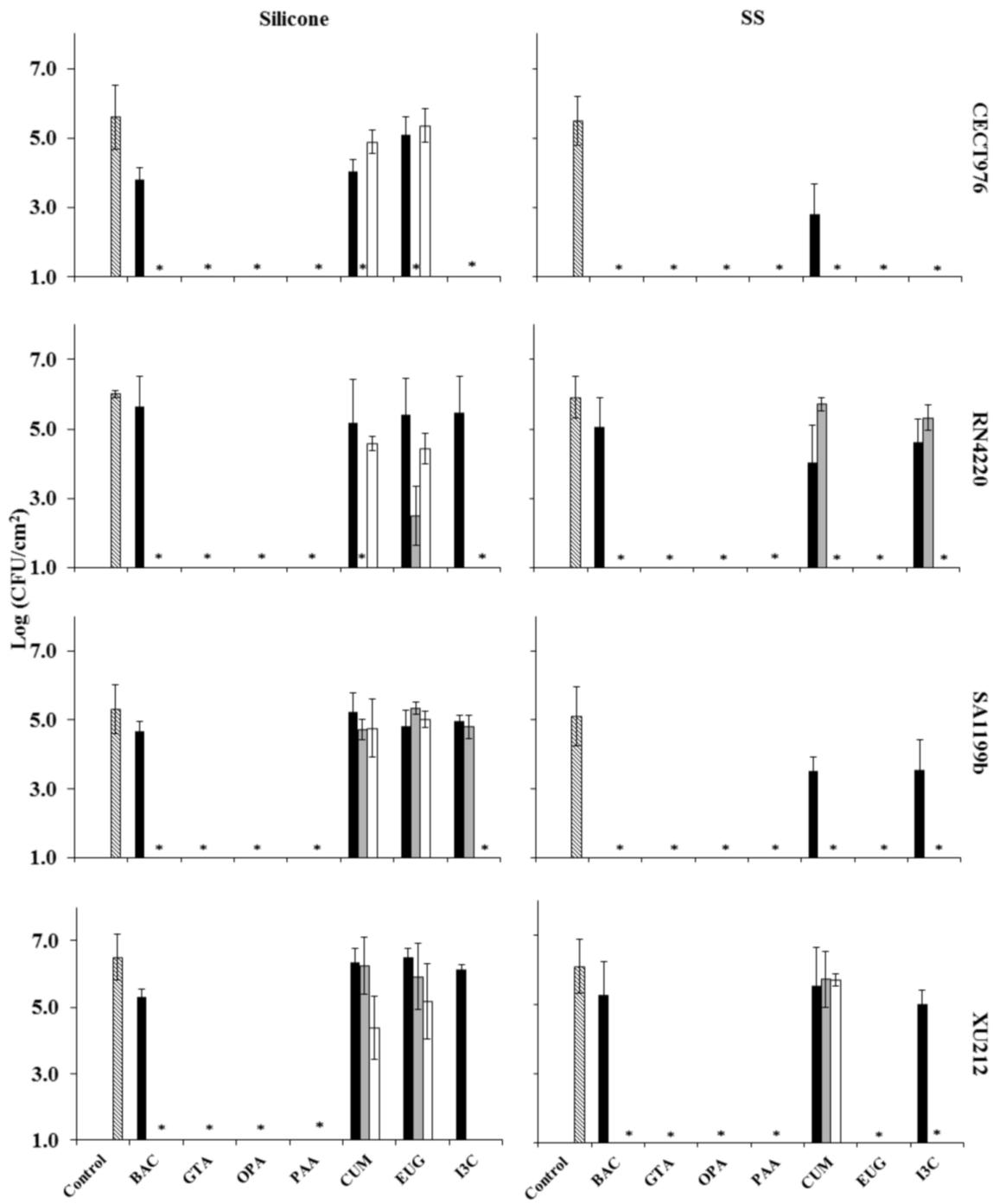
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### Figure legend

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520 **Fig. 1.** *S. aureus* adhered on silicone and SS surfaces after 30 min of treatment with the  
521 natural-based (CUM - cuminaldehyde; EUG - eugenol; I3C - indole-3-carbinol) and  
522 synthetic (BAC - benzalkonium chloride; GTA - glutaraldehyde; OPA - *ortho*-  
523 phthalaldehyde; PAA - peracetic acid) biocides. The means  $\pm$  SD for at least three  
524 replicates are represented.  $\boxtimes$  - Untreated coupons (Control: DMSO 10% v/v),  $\blacksquare$  -  
525 MIC,  $\blacksquare$  - 10 $\times$ MIC,  $\square$  - 5500 mg/L. \* - No CFU detected, Limit of detection: 2.8  
526 Log CFU/cm<sup>2</sup>.

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530 **Table 1.** Minimum inhibitory concentrations (mg/L) of natural-based and synthetic  
 531 biocides (mean  $\pm$  SD of three independent experiments). The in-use concentrations (mg/L)  
 532 of synthetic biocides for hospital disinfection is provided (Rutala *et al.* 2008; Al-Adhan *et*  
 533 *al.* 2013). BAC - benzalkonium chloride; GTA - glutaraldehyde; OPA - *ortho*-  
 534 phthalaldehyde; PAA - peracetic acid; CUM - cuminaldehyde; EUG - eugenol; I3C -  
 535 indole-3-carbinol

	BAC	GTA	OPA	PAA	CUM	EUG	I3C
<i>S. aureus</i> CECT976	1.5 $\pm$ 0.5	750 $\pm$ 41	620 $\pm$ 21	750 $\pm$ 29	612 $\pm$ 25	950 $\pm$ 43	156 $\pm$ 43
<i>S. aureus</i> RN4220	3.0 $\pm$ 0.8	750 $\pm$ 29	700 $\pm$ 44	600 $\pm$ 20	700 $\pm$ 41	1000 $\pm$ 66	300 $\pm$ 59
<i>S. aureus</i> SA1199b	4 $\pm$ 0.4	800 $\pm$ 58	500 $\pm$ 61	750 $\pm$ 47	600 $\pm$ 43	1300 $\pm$ 82	400 $\pm$ 80
<i>S. aureus</i> XU212	3 $\pm$ 0.7	750 $\pm$ 20	700 $\pm$ 34	600 $\pm$ 42	700 $\pm$ 32	1200 $\pm$ 90	400 $\pm$ 65
In-use concentration	1000-2000	20000	5500	2000	-	-	-

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