

A Gallon of Prevention?

After 11 years of R&D, a New York biotech company gets EPA approval to sell a non-toxic antimicrobial surface coating that fights microbes that cause asthma, allergies, Legionnaires' disease and other ailments.

By Christine Canning Esposito
Editor

With colors such as “serene harbor” and “twilight sentry” and a price tag of \$69 per gallon, Caliwel could easily be mistaken as the newest designer paint collection to hit the market. But there’s more to this coating than meets the eye. Caliwel goes beyond aesthetics; it battles bacteria, viruses and fungi.

After more than a decade of R&D, Alistagen Corp., a New York, NY-based biotechnology company, has received EPA retail clearance to sell its non-toxic anti-microbial surface coating. According to Alistagen, independent lab tests showed that Caliwel is 99.9% effective against more than 20 microbes that cause or contribute to asthma, allergies, staph infection, influenza, polio, hepatitis, cholera and Legionnaires’ disease. Caliwel has also been found to be effective against *Bacillus subtilis*, a bacteria said to be more resistant to antimicrobial activity than anthrax spores.

Caliwel’s bi-neutralizing agent (BNA) contains calcium hydroxide. Patented microencapsulation technology allows the coating to resist degradation for up to six years, according to Alistagen.

“We’ve taken an ancient ingredient (calcium hydroxide) and given it new

life,” said Alis Yeterian, Alistagen’s president.

Caliwel will be first sold as a pigmented liquid coating for walls, floors and other hard surfaces in hospitals, nursing homes and day care facilities. It is being offered in several shades and custom colors can be special ordered, according to the company, which farms out production of the coating to a firm in North Carolina.

The water-based formulation was tested at four Texas-based organizations, including the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio. The coating is best applied via airless sprayer according to Alistagen, which recommends waiting at least four weeks after application before washing the surface with water or a mild household cleaning solution and a soft cloth or sponge. Caliwel is sold in one-gallon and five-gallon containers for \$69 and \$295, respectively.

Alistagen has reportedly been shopping licensing agreements for its BNA technology and Caliwel at several top paint manufacturers, however Ms. Yeterian would not elaborate on which companies had been contacted or if any showed interest. She did confirm that a “couple of hospitals” have ordered Caliwel since EPA approval



was granted in March. Amerisource-Bergen, a drug distributor, has inked an agreement with Alistagen to distribute Caliwel and provide customer service support.

Buy a Gallon and Call Me in the Morning?

“The technology behind this product application represents a whole new category of preventative healthcare,” said William Mallow, chairman of Alistagen’s technical advisory board, who is the person responsible for much of the testing conducted at the Southwest Research Institute.

Ms. Yeterian said Alistagen is also seeking FDA approval for Caliwel.

One wonders, if FDA gives its okay, is there a chance doctors could prescribe Caliwel as a complementary treatment for patients with respiratory disorders or as means to combat cross contamination? More importantly would it be covered by insurance? ●