



Improving Clothes Care in the Home™

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Industry Leaders Launch New Research Alliance to Improve Clothes Care in the Home

GREENVILLE, SC, Every new innovation in textiles, apparel, and clothing care meets a moment of truth when a consumer washes a new shirt, irons a pair of pants, or introduces an errant drop of mustard to a favorite dress.

Five leading US companies representing every phase of home clothing care have joined with two top universities to study that moment of truth through a new research alliance dedicated to improving clothing care in the home.

The Clothes Care Research Center™ (CCRC™) is a cooperative effort among **Cotton Incorporated; GE Consumer Products; Milliken & Company; Procter & Gamble**, and **VF Imagewear**. The **University of Kentucky's Textile Testing Laboratory** and **Northwestern University's McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science** provide unbiased oversight to design and conduct CCRC's rigorous scientific testing.

CCRC's mission is to help consumers save time and money by identifying the best in-home cleaning and maintenance techniques to extend the life and performance of various fabrics. Its research is being presented publicly for the first time here at the American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists (AATCC) 2003 International Conference & Exhibition.

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"We have many new innovations in the textile world that will fade, shrink or be destroyed if they are not properly cared for," said Dr. Elizabeth P. Easter, director of the University of Kentucky's Textile Testing Laboratory and CCRC board member. "Every time we develop a new fabric or finish, we need to consider maintenance and care requirements to ensure consumer satisfaction with every aspect of our industry."

The alliance is unique for several reasons. First is the number of large well-known companies cooperating in the alliance. Second is the willingness of members to share their individual product development plans among one another in order to study how their advancements will affect the entire supply chain. These blue chip players have not previously worked together in such an open environment.

"We believed it was important to work together to ensure that consumers get the best fabric care performance overall," said George Grody, director of global strategic alliances for Procter & Gamble's Fabric and Home Care Division. "For instance, Procter & Gamble could be developing new cleaning care products for current fibers, which might not be as effective if textile manufacturers were about to introduce new technologies."

The third reason CCRC is exceptional is that the alliance is sharing its research findings with the textile industry through technical associations such as AATCC. The findings are not held as proprietary data among CCRC members. "CCRC must share its research with the other scientists to ensure consumer satisfaction with every aspect of our industry," Easter said.

At the AATCC Conference, Easter is presenting the findings of CCRC's first major study. CCRC investigated care techniques for casual khaki pants sold pretreated with stain-protection. For the most part, CCRC's research supported the care label recommendations for a well-known brand of fluorocarbon-treated pants. However, the care label calls for no fabric softener to be used and suggests that the consumer iron the pants after every fifth wash cycle. Since many consumers are unlikely to follow such specific instructions, CCRC compared the difference in performance between following the care label and ignoring it. CCRC found that although using fabric softener degrades the stain repellency, it improves colorfastness. It found that using a dryer sheet instead of a liquid fabric softener provides a compromise where color is better maintained and stain repellency is only slightly reduced.

Easter is presenting the findings, even as CCRC continues to research the issue. “While we still consider the results to be tentative because it was just one series of experiments, our results were statistically significant,” Easter said. “Industry researchers will want to consider this as they conduct their own experiments.”

The alliance members have been working together for about two years. Early studies were simple research projects designed to develop working protocols, establish a comfort level among the members, and confirm that CCRC could accomplish its stated mission. One such study provided BellSouth Corporation with improved care techniques for its employee uniforms.

Although research results are shared with the industry, CCRC members still benefit individually from the alliance. “Not only do we receive valuable information from the research, but also from CCRC meetings themselves,” said Jamey Cashman, director of marketing for the VF Imagewear division of VF Corporation.

“Any way that we can increase our knowledge base and help the consumer be more well-informed is a benefit for our membership,” said Ira Livingston, Cotton Incorporated’s senior vice president, consumer marketing.

GE recently launched its new Profile Harmony Clothes Care System where users select a wash setting based on what they throw into their load, not by pre-set fabric settings. The washer automatically communicates the settings to the dryer, so the user only has to enter the information once. GE established the variables for the settings from information shared among CCRC members.

CCRC members recently committed to continue semi-annual research studies through 2005. A business-to-business website is planned for launch early next year.

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