Author's response to reviews

Title: Leptin as a critical regulator of hepatocellular carcinoma development through modulation of human telomerase reverse transcriptase

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Version: 4 Date: 9 June 2010

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June 9, 2010

Dear Dr. Neilan,

We would like to submit our manuscript entitled: “Leptin as a critical regulator of hepatocellular carcinoma development through modulation of human telomerase reverse transcriptase” for further consideration in BMC journal.

In our revised manuscript, we added a) Prof. Y. Furukawa, University of Tokyo, as he provided us with additional HCC samples, b) a very recent reference, that was just published in BBRC Febr. 2010 (new ref. 39), which strengthens our suggestion that hTERT is a target gene of leptin and c) the description of the immunohistochemistry method used for protein expression.

Below please find our answer to the comment raised by Reviewer No 3 (Young Nyun Park).

Thank you very much for your co-operation and hoping that you will find our revised manuscript suitable for publication in your journal.

Sincerely,

Aspasia Tsezou
Assoc.Prof.Med.Genetics
To Reviewer 3 (Young Nyun Park)

Thank you for the useful comment raised by you. Below please find our answer to your suggestion. We hope that you will find our answer satisfactory.

The authors answered that there was no difference in leptin expression levels between the HBV and HCV subgroups of the HCC group. Actually in this study, 13 HCC tissue samples were investigated and 12 cases were HCV related and only a case was HBV related. Therefore further study using more number of B viral HCC cases is highly recommended.

Following your suggestion, we increased the number of the HCC samples, as we included additional 10 samples, obtained from Prof. Y. Furukawa, University of Tokyo (3 HCC samples of HCV etiology and 7 HCC samples of HBV etiology). Therefore, we have included in our revised manuscript a total of 23 HCC samples (8 HBV and 15 HCV) and we did not observe any significant difference in leptin expression levels between the 2 subgroups of the HCC group. This observation was added in the Results, page 7, 1st paragraph.