Reviewer's report

**Title:** ABT-737 increases treatment efficiency of paclitaxel against hepatoblastoma

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 26 July 2011

**Reviewer:** Antoine Galmiche

**Reviewer's report:**

In my initial review of the work by Lieber et al., I raised three major points that the authors needed to address together with a few, more minor comments. In my opinion, the revised manuscript is slightly improved, but two of the major points that I raised still need some consideration.

- I still think that the experiments of Fig. 1, reporting the synergy of ABT-737 + paclitaxel on hepatoblastoma cell lines, overlap with those reported in a previous manuscript. Reading the rebuttal letter from the authors, I find it surprising that the authors declare that they performed clonogenicity assays, but decide not to show the results on the basis of low plating efficiency of their cell lines. This low plating efficiency is probably a genuine observation, that probably reflects the low capacity of those cells to form metastases, and I do not understand how it could introduce any bias here. Clonogenicity remains the best assay to ensure cellular viability of cancer cells after treatment.

- My comments about this manuscript being entirely descriptive and providing little mechanistic insights into the reported findings were absolutely not addressed (the basis for the efficacy of ABT-737 as well as its toxicity). None of the experiments that were suggested were performed: in particular, a survey of the expression of BCL2 proteins in hepatoblastoma cells exposed to paclitaxel and / or ABT-737 is required in order to gain some insights into the efficacy of the combination ABT-737 / paclitaxel.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'