Reviewer’s report

Title: Evaluation of Corticosteroid-induced resistance to chemotherapy in surgical resections, xenografts and established cell lines of pancreatic cancer

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Reviewer: Reinhard Kofler

Reviewer’s report:

General
Zhang et al. address the clinically important issue of whether GC co-medication in pancreatic cancer treatment might affect the efficacy of cytotoxic drugs and conclude that GC induces therapy resistance in pancreatic carcinoma cells. This is an important issue, the work is well done and clearly presented.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
There is, however, a major problem that needs to be resolved between the authors and the editors. The majority of the data has simultaneously been submitted elsewhere. More specifically, I received the invitation to review this manuscript while I was reviewing another manuscript by the same group (same first and last author) submitted to PLoS. Figures 1, 2, 4 and 5 of the BMC manuscript are identical to the ones contained in the supplement to the PLoS manuscript. Figure 6 of the BMC paper corresponds to the lower left panel of Figure 1a of the PLoS manuscript, and 4 of the 5 supplementary tables in the BMC manuscript are identical to the corresponding pages in the supplement to the PLoS paper. The Western analyses in Figure 7 are new and add some information related to our understanding of the protective GC effect.

The PLoS paper deals with GC-induced resistance in many different solid tumors including pancreatic tumors. Since the paper is very complex, it might indeed be useful to discuss and extend (e.g., by Western analysis) the data related to pancreatic cancer in a separate publication. However, the 2 papers should be cross-referenced and sentences like “These data show for the first time that DEX induces therapy resistance in pancreatic carcinoma cells …” (Abstract, Conclusion) should better be omitted to avoid confusion.

I suggest that the authors contact the editors of the 2 Journals to find out how to best deal with this issue.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.