Reviewer's report

Title: Anticancer activity of extracts derived from the mature roots of Scutellaria baicalensis on human malignant brain tumor cells

Version: 2 Date: 12 June 2006

Reviewer: Franky Chan

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Comments from the reviewer:
(1) Results: In this revised manuscript, the authors added the missing Figure 4b to show the floating cells after treatment with the crude extract from Scutellaria baicalensis. The authors claimed that the floating cells with condensed nuclei represent the apoptotic cells. This is Not a convincing morphological evidence as the cells with condensed nuclei could also be the necrotic cells. To demonstrate the floating cells with condensed nuclei represent apoptotic cells, the authors should present evidence showing that either the floating cells contain the characterized fragmented nuclei which represent the morphological characteristics of apoptotic cells (staining with DAPI) or positive labelling by TUNEL.

(2) Discussion (Page 13): The authors discuss about the efficacy of a Chinese herbal mixture PC-SPEC toward prostate cancer, small cell lung cancer and leukemia. It has been claimed originally by a Chinese scientist who owned the manufacturing right to this product that this herbal mixture contains the saw palmetto and seven Chinese herbs, including the S. baicalensis. However, this herbal mixture has been turned out to be a scandal as it was tested to contain estrogen (by contamination or being added purposely??). The manufacturer has already closed the door. Therefore, discussion regarding PC-SPEC will mislead the readers who my not fully aware of this issue. It is advised that the authors should pay attention to this and should be very careful on discussing this herbal mixture (better to omit this or add a comment on this).

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

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No