Reviewer's report

Title: Dexamethasone inhibits the HSV-tk/ ganciclovir bystander effect in malignant glioma cells

Version: 3 Date: 21 January 2005

Reviewer: Marc Mesnil

Reviewer's report:

General
This second version of the manuscript has been improved if we compare with the first one. The use of two more cell lines reinforces the conclusions drawn by the authors. Actually, I really think that the real capacity of communication of the two new cell lines should be shown in this paper.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
Since gap junctional intercellular communication is believed to play an important role in the regulation of the bystander effect, I think it is necessary that the authors do show all the results concerning this capacity in the manuscript. The appearance of confluent cultures of U87 and LN18 cells after iontophoresis of Lucifer yellow should be shown in figure 2. Similarly, the FACS analysis of calcein dye transfer between LN18 cells should be shown also. These data seem important to me because it reinforces the fact that dexamethasone acts on the bystander extent independently of the communication capacity of the cells (since dexamethasone acts whatever the cell line is).

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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)

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’ below