

Seyfried *et al.*

Synergistic Activity of combined inhibition of anti-apoptotic molecules in B-Cell Precursor ALL

Supplementary Methods:

BCP-ALL cell lines

RS4;11, KOPN-8, REH, EU-3, NALM-6 and RCH-ACV cells were purchased from DSMZ (Deutsche Sammlung für Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen, Germany) and UoCB6 cells were provided by J. Rowley (USA). Lines were authenticated (STR profiling), mycoplasma contamination excluded (DAPI staining) and cultured in RPMI-1640 medium with 20% fetal bovine serum, 1% L-Glutamine and 1% Penicillin/Streptomycin (all Gibco) at 5% CO₂ and 37°C.

BCP-ALL patient-derived xenograft samples

Primary leukemia samples were collected from bone marrow or peripheral blood of pediatric patients with BCP-ALL after written informed consent of all patients and/or their representatives in accordance with the institution's ethical review board. Patient-derived xenograft samples were generated by intravenous transplantation of ALL cells into female NOD/SCID mice (NOD.CB17-Prkdcscid, Charles River) as previously described (1). Engraftment was monitored by staining peripheral blood and cell suspensions from organ compartments using anti-mCD45 (PE, #553081, BD), anti-huCD19 (APC, #555415, BD) and anti-huCD45 (PerCp, #345809, BD). Immunophenotyping was carried out according to standard protocols using an LSR-II flow cytometer (BD Biosciences). Genetic alterations were detected by Multiplex Ligation-dependent Probe Amplification (MLPA) and RT-PCR as previously described

(2). PDX cells were cultured in AIM-V (Gibco) at 5% CO₂ and 37°C. Animal experiments were approved by the responsible authorities (Regierungspräsidium Tübingen, Tierversuch Nr. 1260).

Cell viability assays

To determine half maximal effective concentration (EC₅₀) curves of BCP-ALL samples to BH3-mimetics, cells were exposed to ascending concentrations of venetoclax (#CT-A199, Chemietek), S63845 (#CT-S63845, Chemietek) and A-1331852 (#S7801, Selleckchem). Cell death rates were analyzed either according to propidium iodide (PI, #P3566, Invitrogen) positivity (cell lines) or forward/side scatter criteria (EC₅₀ curves of PDX samples). Comparison of both methods yielded identical results of cell death detection as shown for RS4;11 (Supplementary Figure 1). EC₅₀ values of seven cell lines were assessed after inhibitor exposure (2.5, 5, 25, 50, 250, 500 and 2500 nM) for 48h. EC₅₀ values of 27 PDX samples were assessed after inhibitor exposure (1, 5, 10, 50, 100, 250, 500 nM, 1, 5 and 10 µM) for 24h.

Combination effects were analyzed by dose-response matrix analyses upon exposure to the three inhibitors (2.5, 5, 25, 50, 250, 500 and 2500 nM) for 48h (cell lines) or 24h (PDX samples) followed by cell death determination (PI staining). Compounds were dispensed in 384-well plates (automated Liquid Handling Station, Brand). Apoptosis of ALL cells was assessed by staining of Annexin V (APC, #550475, BD Pharmingen) and PI. All viability assays were measured on an Attune NxT Flow Cytometer with Autosampler (Thermo Fisher), data were analyzed using FlowJo 10.7.1 software.

Dynamic BH3 profiling

Dynamic BH3 profiling experiments were performed as described before (3, 4). In brief, cells were exposed to venetoclax for 2h (RS4;11, KOPN-8) or 4h (all others) and permeabilized (0.002% digitonin, #D5628, Sigma). Cells were exposed to pro-apoptotic BH3-peptides at increasing concentrations for 90 minutes, followed by fixation in formaldehyde for 10 minutes and incubation in a neutralization buffer for 10 min. Cells were stained with Dapi (#422801, Biolegend) and anti-cytochrome c antibody (#612308, Biolegend). Samples were measured using an Attune NxT Flow Cytometer (Thermo Fisher) and analyzed by FlowJo 10.7.1 software. Median fluorescence intensity (MFI) values of cytochrome c were determined and normalized to the MFIs of a negative (DMSO) and a positive control (Alamethicin, #BML-A150-0005, Enzo).

Intracellular protein staining

Cells were permeabilized (0.002% digitonin), fixed (formaldehyde), incubated in a neutralizing buffer, and stained with mouse anti-BCL-2 (Alexa Fluor 488, #59422, CST), rabbit anti-BCL-XL (Alexa Fluor 647, #86387, CST), rabbit anti-MCL-1 (Alexa Fluor 647, #78471, CST), mouse IgG1 Isotype Control (Alexa Fluor 488, #4878, CST) and rabbit IgG Isotype Control (Alexa Fluor 488, #4340, CST) in triplicates. Samples were measured (flow cytometry, Attune NxT, Thermo Fisher) and analyzed (FlowJo 10.7.1). MFIs were normalized to respective isotype controls.

Immunoprecipitation and immunoblotting

Cells were lysed (lysis buffer: 30 mM Tris-HCL, 150 mM NaCl, 2 mM KCl, 2 mM EDTA, 10% Glycerol, 1% Triton X, pH 7.4, supplemented with EDTA-free protease inhibitors

(Roche)) and protein concentrations were assessed (BCA protein assay, Thermo Fisher). Lysates were incubated with 88 ng of BIM Rabbit mAb (#2933, CST; overnight, 4°C) followed by Protein A Agarose beads (#9863S, CST; 2h, 4°C). Beads were washed 5x with lysis buffer and precipitates were subjected to western blot analyses. Lysates were mixed with Bolt™ LDS sample buffer (Invitrogen) and Bolt™ sample reducing agent (Invitrogen), heated (10 min, 70°C), separated in Bolt™ 4-12% Bis-Tris Plus gels and transferred to a nitrocellulose membrane (iBlot Gel Transfer Device, Invitrogen). BCL-2 Mouse mAb (#15071, CST), BCL-XL Rb mAb (#2764, CST), MCL-1 Rb mAb (#94296, CST), BIM Rb mAb (#2933, CST), BID Rb Ab (#2002, CST), BAX Rb mAb (#5023, CST), BAK Rb mAb (#12105, CST), BAD Rb Ab (#9292, CST), BMF Rat mAb (ALX-804-343-C300, CST), PUMA Rb Ab (#P4743, Sigma), Noxa Mouse mAb (ALX-804-408-C100, Enzo), GAPDH Mouse mAb (#ADI-CSA-335-E, Enzo) and alpha-Tubulin Mouse mAb (#CP06, Calbiochem) were used as primary antibodies and mouse anti-rabbit IgG-HRP (sc-2357, Santa Cruz Biotechnology), mouse IgGk BP-HRP (#sc-516102, Santa Cruz Biotechnology), goat anti-mouse IgG₁-HRP (#1070-05, Southern Biotech) or goat anti-rat IgG-HRP (#3050-05, Southern Biotech) as secondary antibodies. Immunoblots were developed using Western Lightning Plus-ECL (Perkin Elmer) and the Chemidoc Gel Imaging System (Bio-Rad). ImageJ software was used for densitometric quantification of immunoblots.

CRISPR/Cas9 mediated gene knockout

Two *MCL-1*-specific guide RNAs (5'-3' gRNA1: GCCTCGGCCCGGCGAGAGAT; gRNA2: GTAGCCAAAAGTCGCCCTCC) were designed based on the protocol by Ran et al. (5). These were cloned separately into the px335 backbone vector containing Cas9D10A. The vector was kindly provided by Feng Zhang (Addgene

plasmid: #42335). In order to exploit homology-directed repair for the selection of *MCL-1* knockout cells we designed an HDR-template consisting of two homology arms spanning 304nt upstream of gRNA1 and 541nt downstream of gRNA2 separated by EGFP and a BGH PolyA tail. Successful integration of the HDR-template resulted in in-frame integration of GFP at the *MCL-1* locus thereby allowing for GFP expression under the endogenous *MCL-1* promoter while abrogating *MCL-1* gene expression. BCP-ALL cells were co-transfected with Cas9D10A plasmids and the HDR-template using the NEON electroporation system (Invitrogen, USA) according to manufacturer's instructions. GFP+ cells were enriched two weeks after electroporation via flow cytometry and *MCL-1* knockout was confirmed by western blot analysis.

In vivo treatment

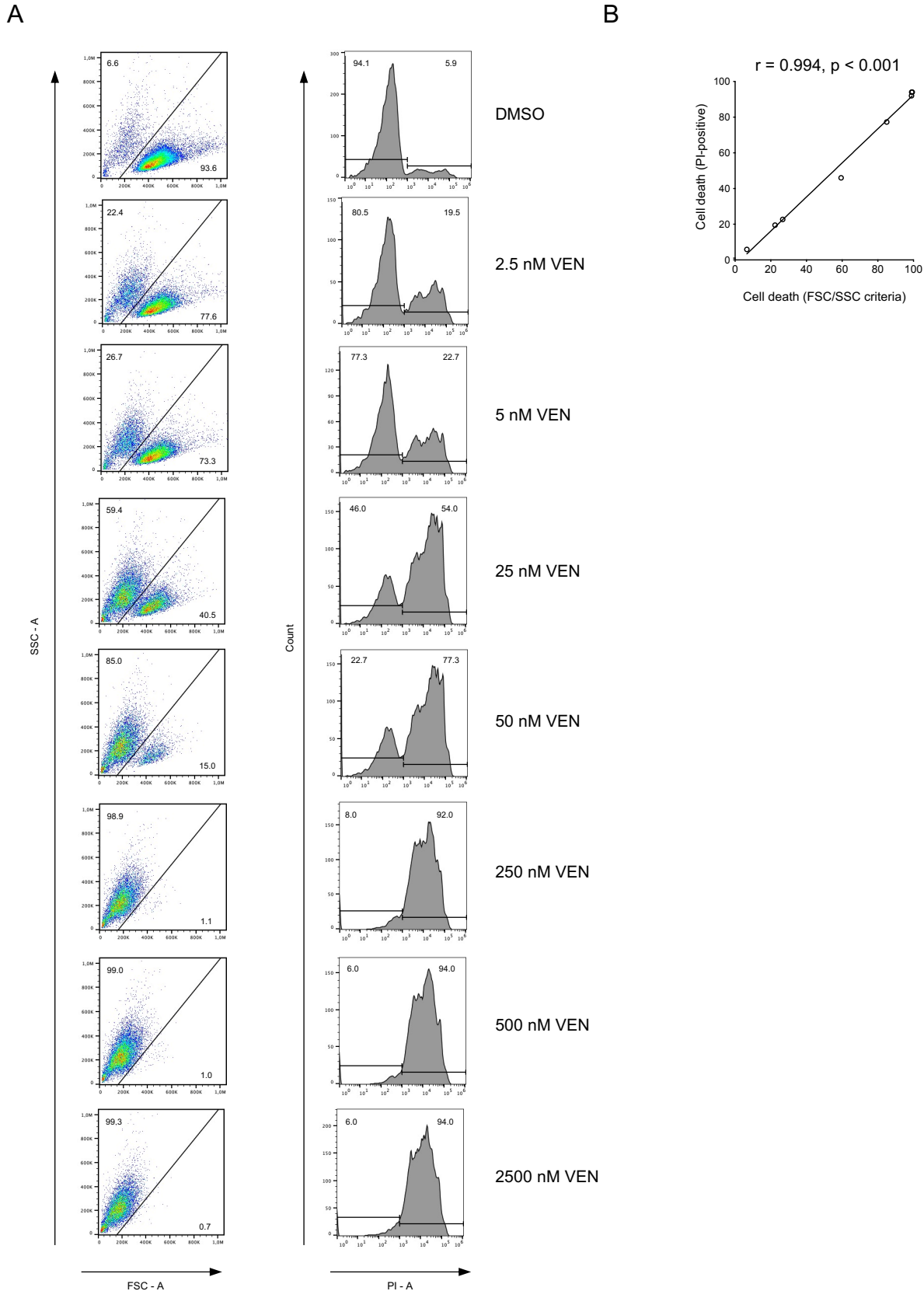
Mice were transplanted (1×10^7 ALL cells) and engraftment of human blasts was assessed in the peripheral blood by flow cytometry staining for mCD45, huCD19 and huCD45. Group sizes of five animals per condition had been estimated and upon engraftment of 5% human blasts in peripheral blood mice were randomly subdivided by consecutive numbering into groups of five animals per condition as determined before. Treatment was initiated with 25 mg/kg/d venetoclax orally (diluted in 10% Ethanol, 30% PEG, 60% Phosal 50 PG), 25 mg/kg/d S63845 intraperitoneally (diluted in 10% DMSO, 20% PEG, saline), combination or vehicle treatment (investigator non-blinded) five times per week for two consecutive weeks. After treatment mice were sacrificed and human leukemia burden was analyzed in recipient mice. Moribund animals with detection of strain-specific murine thymoma (mCD45 positive, huCD45 negative murine cells) were excluded from analysis, as specified before the experiment.

Statistical analysis

Statistical analyses were performed with GraphPad Prism 9 software and Microsoft Excel. Data obtained from three independent experiments carried out in triplicates (cell lines) or from one experiment performed in triplicate (PDX samples) were analyzed assuming equal variances. 3D scatter plots of EC₅₀ values were generated using Plotly software (6). Synergyfinder was used to analyze combination effects of the inhibitors and to calculate synergy scores based on the Bliss independence model (7-9).

Supplementary Figure 1: Comparison of strategies to assess cell death in ALL cells

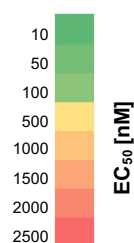
(A) Forward/side scatter analysis was investigated in parallel to propidium iodide (PI) staining (exemplary shown for RS4;11), showing similar results of cell death detection in ALL cell lines. **(B)** Spearman correlation of cell death assessed by forward/side scatter criteria and PI staining. Spearman correlation; *r*, correlation coefficient; *p*, significance.



Supplementary Figure 2: EC₅₀ values of BCP-ALL cell lines

B-cell precursor acute lymphoblastic leukemia (BCP-ALL) cell lines were exposed to venetoclax, S63845 or A-1331852 for 48 hours followed by assessment of cell death determined by propidium iodide staining. Half maximal effective concentrations (EC₅₀) were calculated for the three compounds. Sensitivities of the compounds are color-coded as shown in the legend.

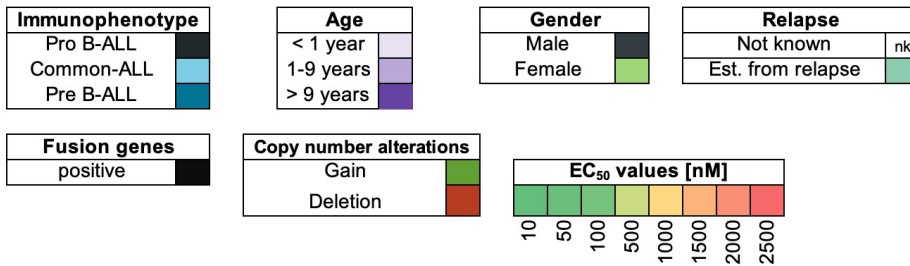
ID	EC ₅₀ [nM]		
	Venetoclax	S63845	A-1331852
RS4;11	32	325	1195
KOPN-8	46	10	390
UoCB6	216	37	441
REH	75	55	1520
EU-3	157	92	930
RCH-ACV	2362	233	544
NALM-6	31302	2137	138
Median	157	92	544



Supplementary Figure 3: Characteristics of BCP-ALL cell lines

Association of characteristics of BCP-ALL cell lines (10-13) with their sensitivities towards BH3-mimetics. nk, not known.

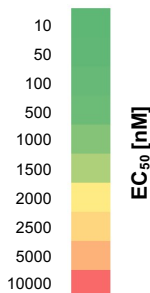
Sample	RS4;11	KOPN-8	UoCB6	REH	EU-3	RCH-ACY	NALM-6
Venetoclax (EC ₅₀)	Green	Green	Light Green	Green	Green	Red	Red
S63845 (EC ₅₀)	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Light Green	Red
A-1331852 (EC ₅₀)	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Light Green
Immunophenotype	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Age at diagnosis	Light Purple	Light Purple	Light Purple	Light Purple	Light Purple	Light Purple	Light Purple
Gender	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
Relapse	nk	nk					
KMT2A-AFF1	Black						
KMT2A-MLL1		Black					
ETV6-RUNX1			Black				
P2RY8-CRLF2				Black			
TCF3-PBX1					Black		
TCF3-HLF							
IGH@CRLF2							
BCR-ABL							
CDKN2A	Red		Red	Red			Red
CDKN2B	Red		Red	Red			Red
PAX5							
ETV4							
ETV6				Red			
BTG1				Red			
RB1							
JAK2							
IKZF1	Red						
EBF1	Light Green		Light Green		Light Green		



Supplementary Figure 4: EC₅₀ values of BCP-ALL patient-derived xenograft samples

Cell death was analyzed after exposure of cell lines to venetoclax, S63845 or A-1331852 for 24 hours. Half maximal effective concentrations (EC₅₀) were calculated for the three compounds. Sensitivities of the compounds are color-coded as shown in the legend.

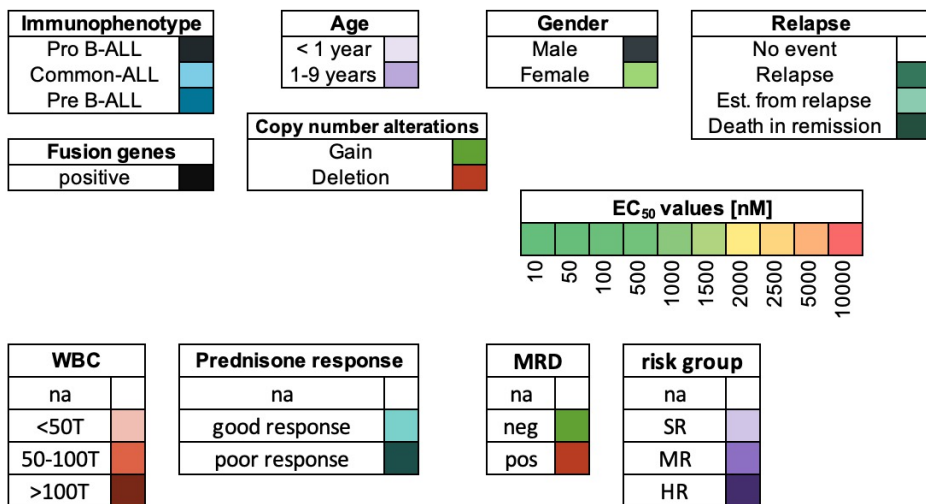
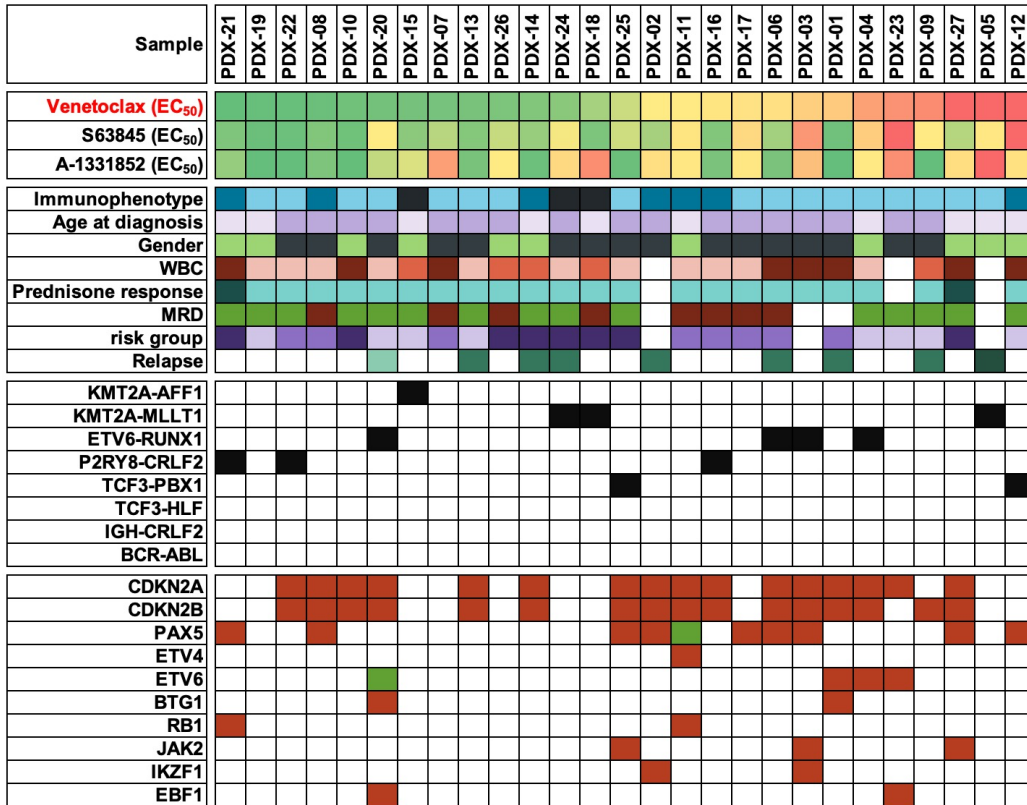
ID	EC ₅₀ [nM]		
	Venetoclax	S63845	A-1331852
PDX-21	18	190	325
PDX-19	27	49	14
PDX-22	35	74	6
PDX-08	54	204	176
PDX-10	102	84	16
PDX-20	111	1052	622
PDX-15	113	273	773
PDX-07	122	546	6336
PDX-13	136	221	135
PDX-26	170	634	1061
PDX-14	198	341	73
PDX-24	249	944	2313
PDX-18	439	169	7552
PDX-25	667	693	50
PDX-02	1028	425	1883
PDX-11	1100	1430	1211
PDX-16	1444	200	140
PDX-17	1637	2285	1243
PDX-06	1800	409	156
PDX-03	2967	6827	4069
PDX-01	3247	89	10
PDX-04	6209	3107	1166
PDX-23	7195	11584	7413
PDX-09	7677	1107	10
PDX-27	13694	526	2064
PDX-05	13883	1297	13892
PDX-12	34929	11038	1756
Median	667	526	773



Supplementary Figure 5: Patient-derived xenograft samples and corresponding characteristics ordered according to BH3-mimetic sensitivity

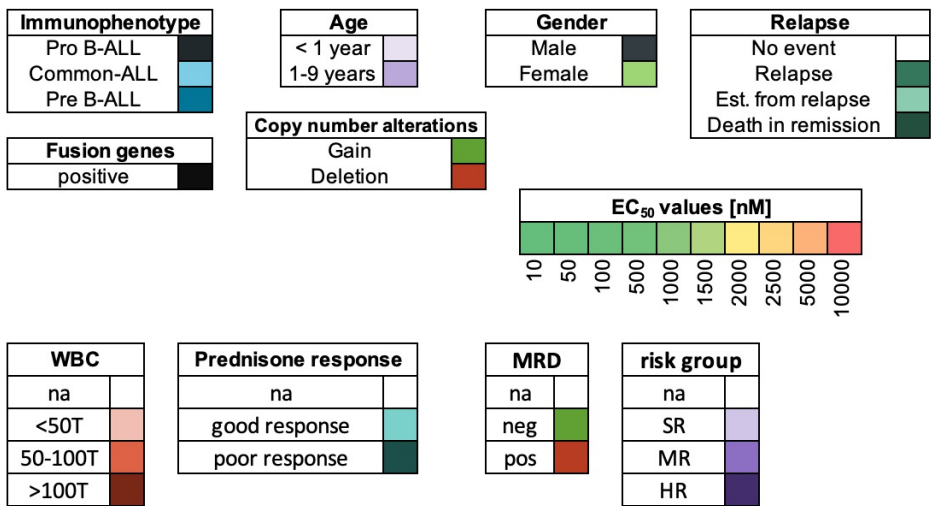
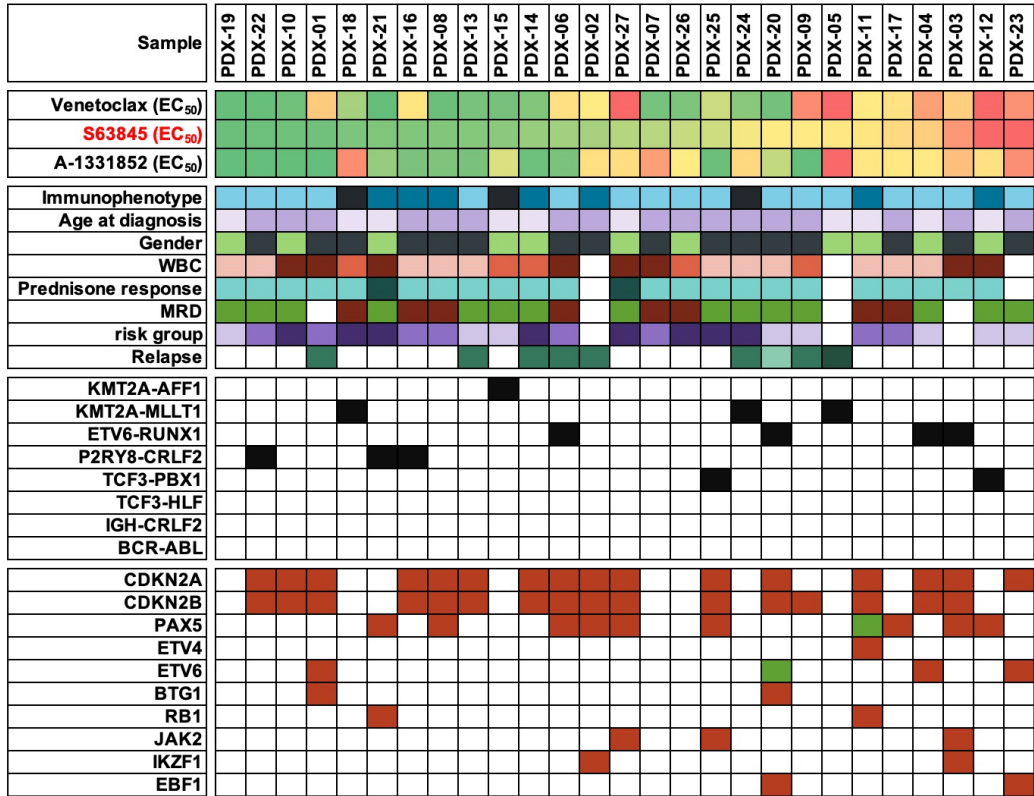
5A: Venetoclax

PDX samples are sorted according to venetoclax EC₅₀ values from left (sensitive) to right (insensitive).



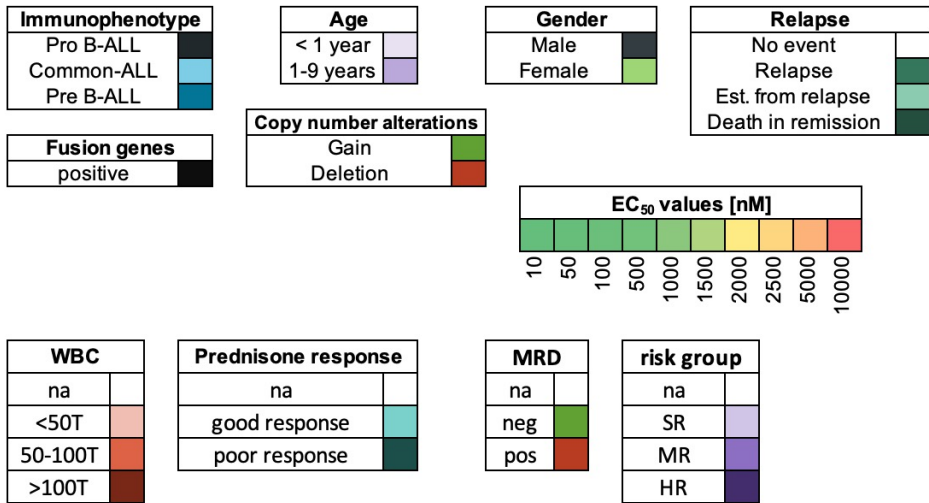
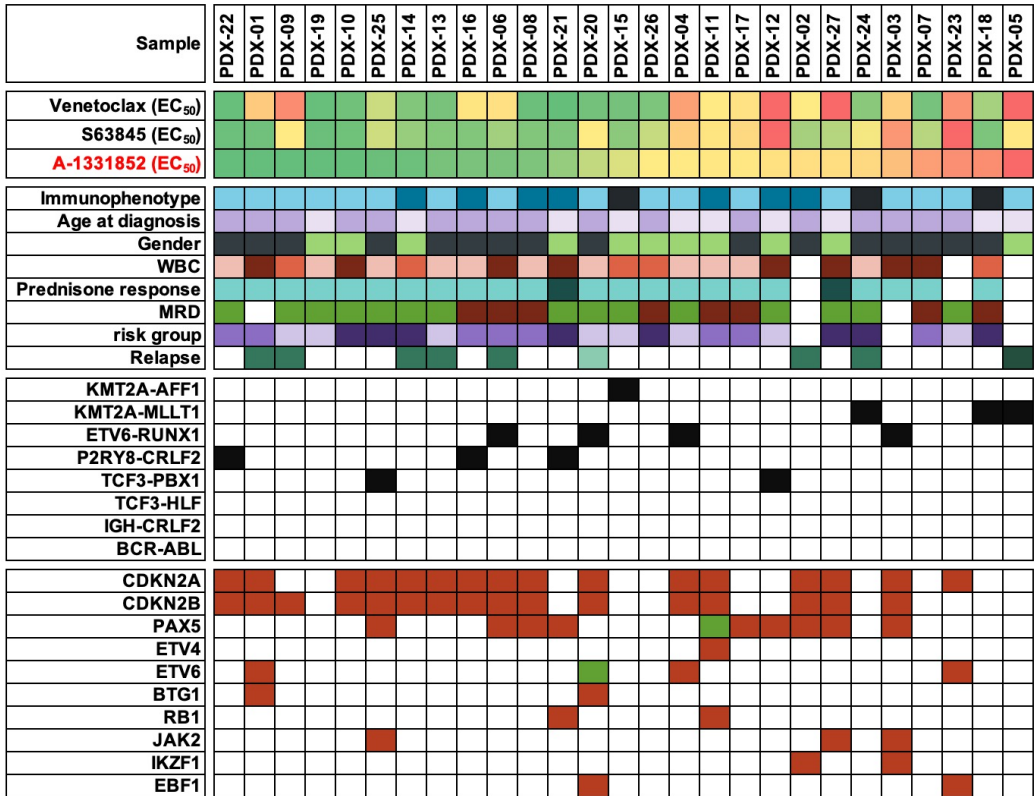
5B: S63845

PDX samples are sorted according to S63845 EC₅₀ values from left (sensitive) to right (insensitive).



5C: A-1331852

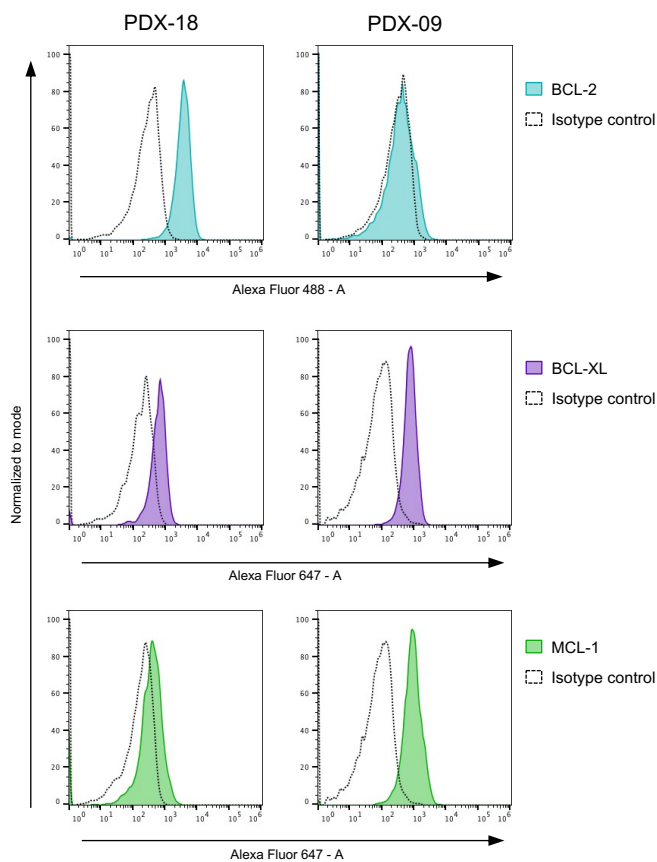
PDX samples are sorted according to A-1331852 EC₅₀ values from left (sensitive) to right (insensitive).



Supplementary Figure 6: Protein expression levels of BCL-2, BCL-XL and MCL-1

Basal protein levels of the three target proteins (BCL-2, MCL-1 and BCL-XL) of venetoclax, S63845 and A-1331854 were determined by FACS staining. **(A)** Representative FACS plots are shown for PDX-18 (high BCL-2, low BCL-XL and MCL-1) and PDX-09 (low BCL-2, high BCL-XL and MCL-1). Filled histograms represent the proteins indicated and dotted lines are the isotype controls. **(B)** Calculated mean fluorescence intensity ratios (MFIR) of BCL-2 (Alexa Fluor 488), BCL-XL (Alexa Fluor 647) and MCL-1 (Alexa Fluor 647) normalized to their isotype controls are shown for all samples. All values shown are mean values from triplicates.

A



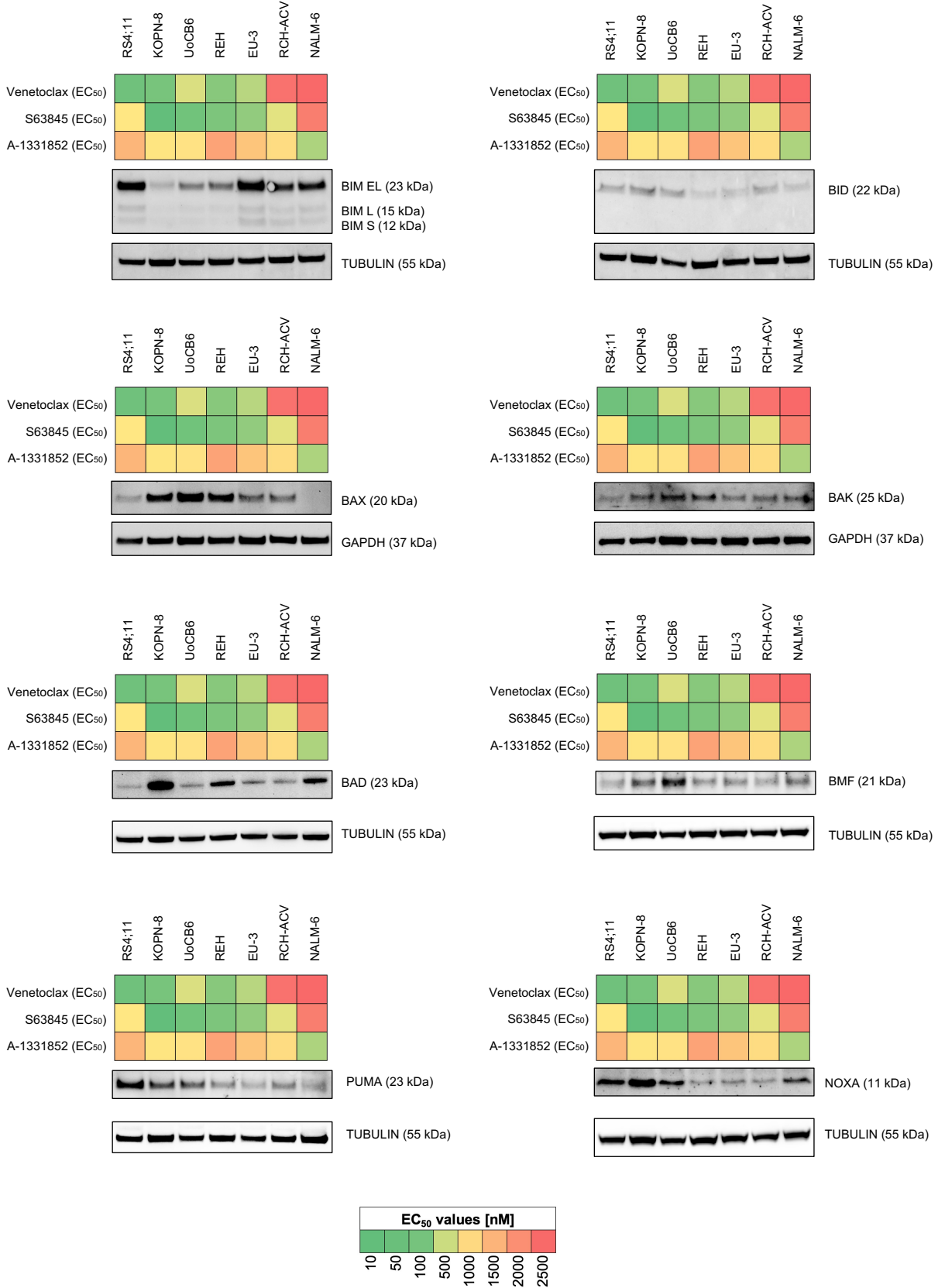
B

ID	Protein level [MFIR]		
	BCL-2	BCL-XL	MCL-1
PDX-21	na	na	na
PDX-19	6.01	3.12	2.11
PDX-22	na	na	na
PDX-08	17.99	7.15	2.54
PDX-10	9.61	6.06	2.62
PDX-20	8.51	4.15	2.19
PDX-15	12.11	7.14	5.29
PDX-07	5.50	7.48	5.55
PDX-13	12.64	5.29	2.77
PDX-26	13.64	3.26	2.07
PDX-14	8.23	4.06	1.84
PDX-24	11.66	2.92	2.89
PDX-18	17.58	2.13	1.15
PDX-25	8.98	4.64	2.77
PDX-02	na	na	na
PDX-11	8.03	8.51	5.20
PDX-16	7.62	5.16	4.81
PDX-17	10.84	7.60	7.28
PDX-06	9.23	9.20	5.80
PDX-03	8.50	5.62	4.52
PDX-01	2.48	7.84	5.88
PDX-04	8.80	4.05	2.38
PDX-23	13.22	5.71	5.28
PDX-09	1.51	17.15	12.62
PDX-27	5.16	4.29	4.32
PDX-05	4.49	3.43	3.49
PDX-12	2.77	6.19	6.22

Supplementary Figure 7: Protein expression levels of pro-apoptotic regulators are not associated with inhibitor sensitivities

(A) Basal protein levels of the pro-apoptotic regulator proteins (BIM, BID, BAX, BAK, BAD, BMF, PUMA and Noxa) in the seven BCP-ALL cell lines determined by western blot analysis. Sensitivities of the compounds are color-coded as shown in the legend.

A



Supplementary Figure 7: Protein expression levels of pro-apoptotic regulators are not associated with inhibitor sensitivities

(B) Expression levels of BIM, BID, BAX, BAK, BAD, BMF, PUMA and Noxa were quantified by densitometry (ImageJ) and correlated to the EC₅₀ values of the respective inhibitors.

B

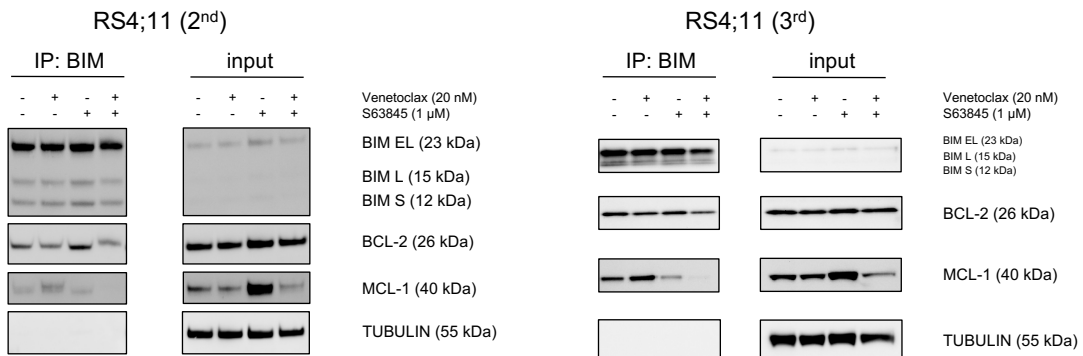
	Venetoclax		S63845		A-1331852	
	r _s	p	r _s	p	r _s	p
BIM	0.071	0.906	0.750	0.066	0.321	0.498
BID	0.250	0.595	-0.536	0.236	-0.607	0.167
BAX	-0.214	0.662	-0.893	0.012	0.214	0.662
BAK	-0.071	0.906	-0.500	0.267	-0.500	0.200
BAD	-0.464	0.302	-0.250	0.595	-0.071	0.906
BMF	0.643	0.139	-0.250	0.595	-0.857	0.024
PUMA	-0.357	0.444	-0.071	0.783	-0.143	0.783
NOXA	-0.464	0.302	-0.036	0.963	-0.321	0.498

Spearman correlation of EC₅₀ values of BH3-mimetics with the protein levels indicated. N=7 cell lines; p, significance; Bonferroni-adjusted significance level: $P \leq 0.05/24 = P \leq 0.002$.

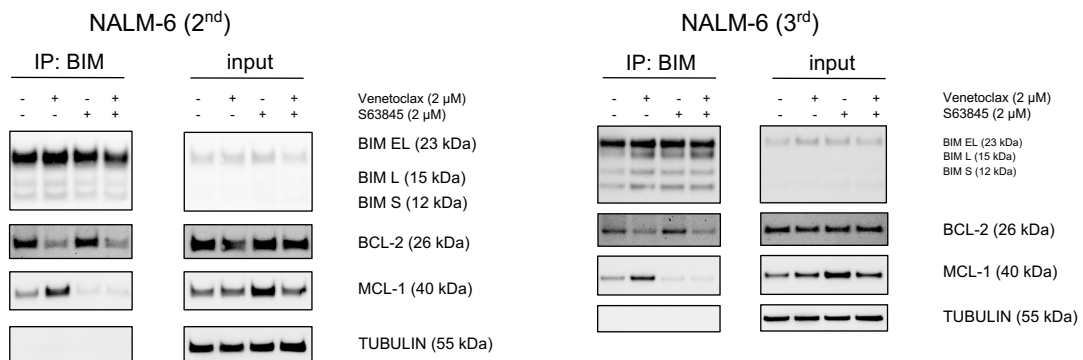
Supplementary Figure 8: Alternate binding of BIM upon BCL-2 and MCL-1 inhibition

Independent second and third BIM co-immunoprecipitation experiments for RS4;11 (A), NALM-6 (B) and RCH-ACV (C, D) showing co-precipitated/BIM-bound BCL-2 or MCL-1 upon venetoclax or S63845 exposure at the concentrations indicated for four hours. See also Figure 3.

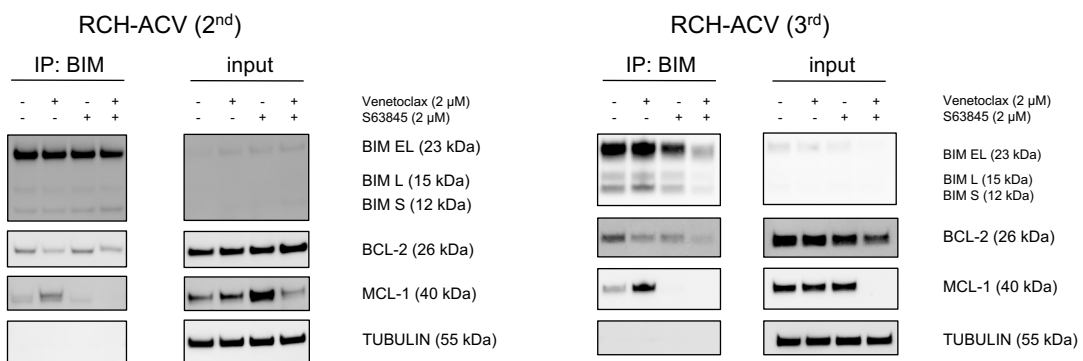
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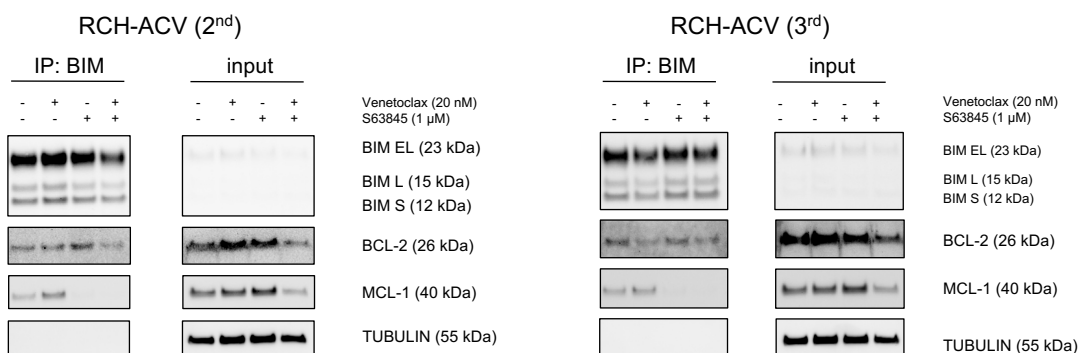
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C



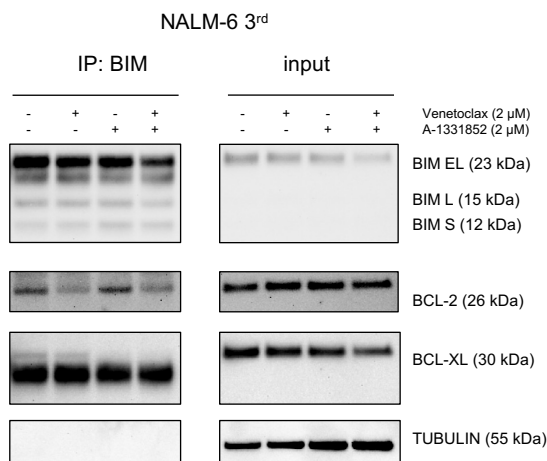
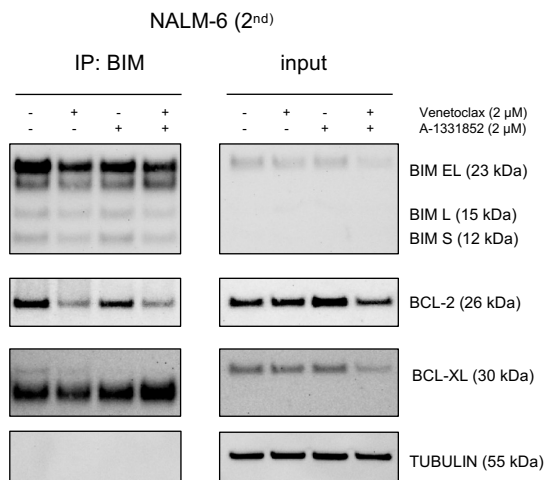
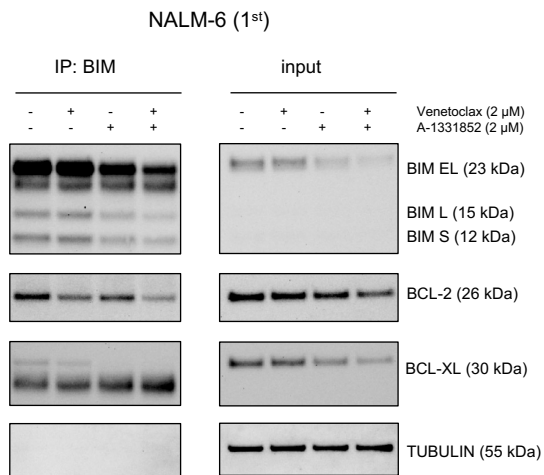
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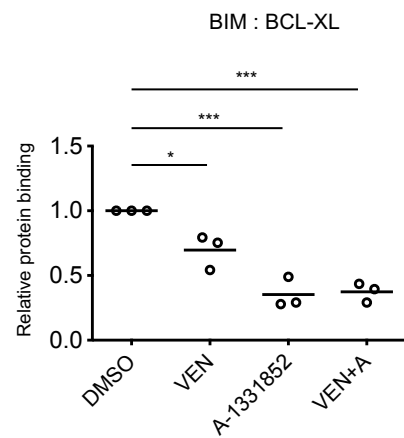
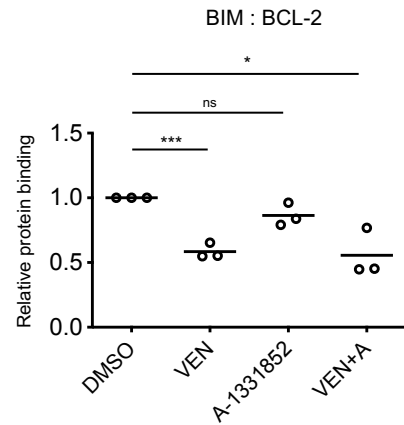
Supplementary Figure 9: Alternate binding of BIM upon BCL-2 and BCL-XL inhibition

(A) BIM co-precipitation in NALM-6 cells. Detection of co-precipitated/BIM-bound BCL-2 and BCL-XL (upper band corresponding to BCL-XL) upon exposure to venetoclax and/or A-1331852 (both 2 μ M, four hours). **(B)** Densitometric quantification of co-precipitated BCL-2 or BCL-XL (upper band) in the respective condition relative to no inhibitor control summarizing the three independent experiments. Unpaired two-tailed Student's T-test; significance ***, $p < .001$; **, $p < .01$; *, $p < .05$; ns, not significant.

A

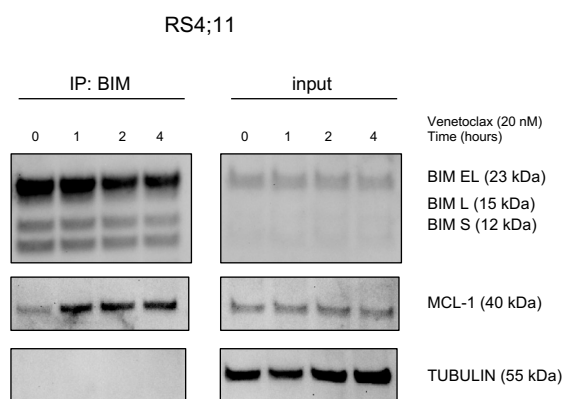


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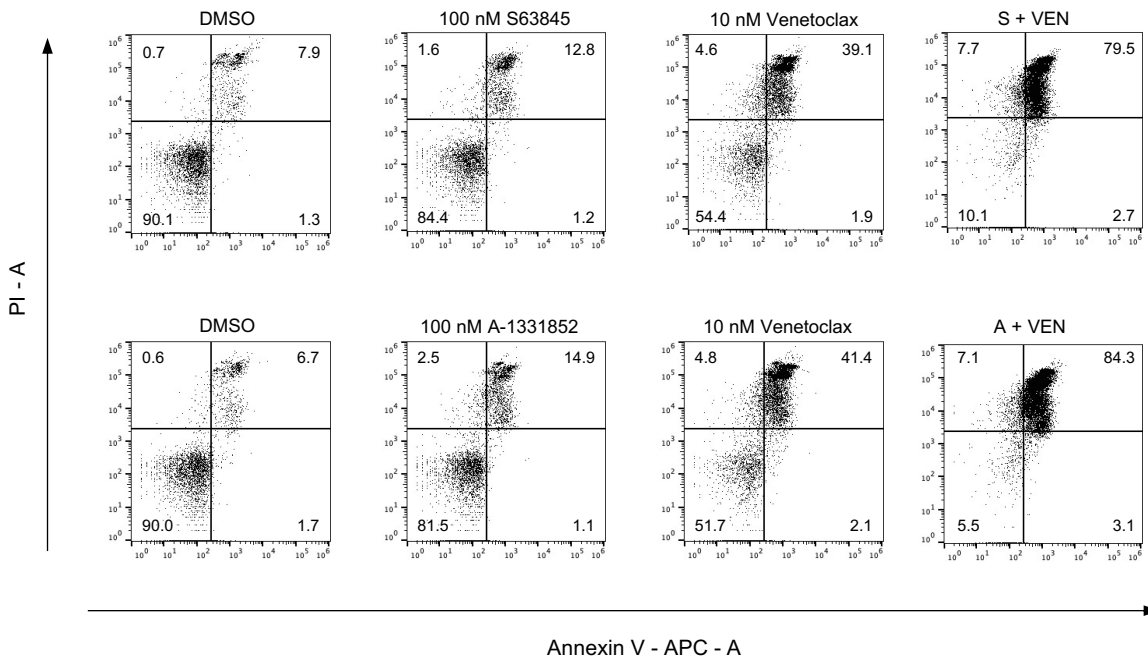
Supplementary Figure 10: BIM shuttling upon inhibitor treatment is a rapid process

In order to get insight into the chronological sequence of increased BIM protein binding to MCL-1, RS4;11 cells were exposed to 20 nM venetoclax for 1, 2 and 4 hours followed by immunoprecipitation (IP) analysis of BIM. The immunoprecipitation lanes show increased binding of BIM and MCL-1 at all time points investigated. Input lanes show whole protein lysates.



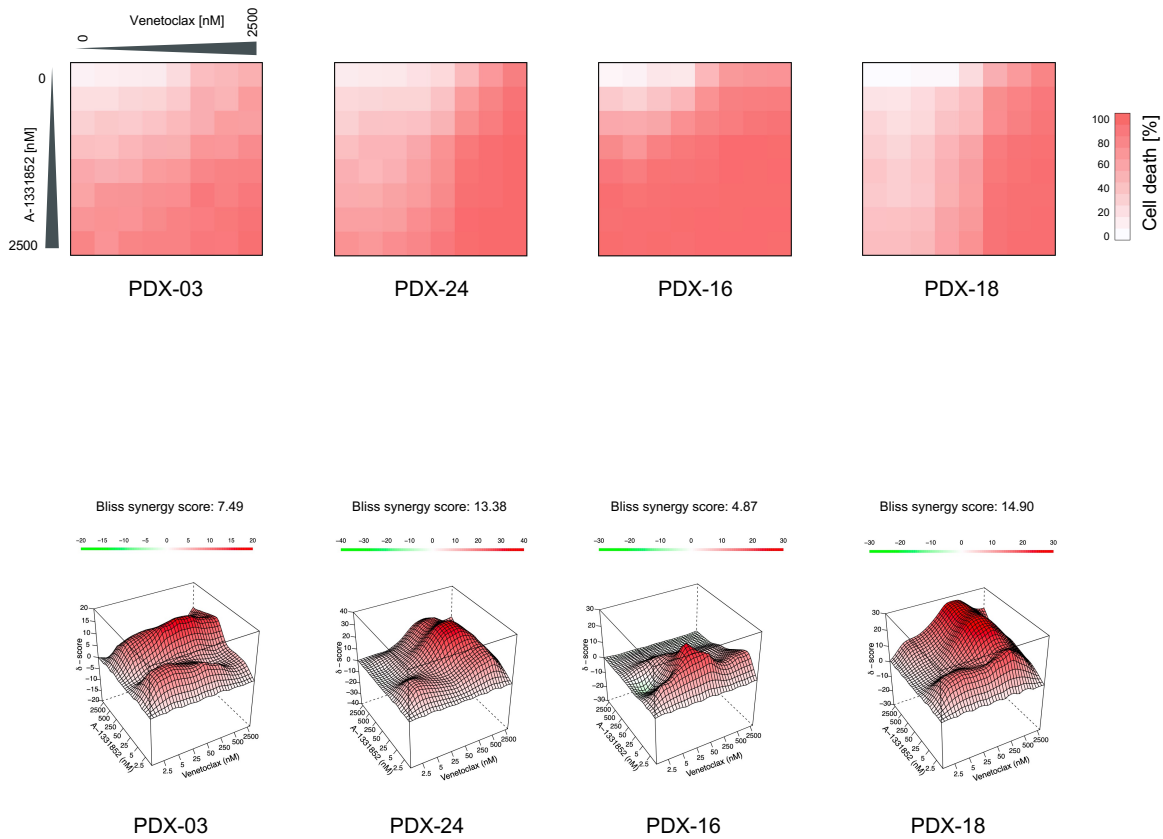
Supplementary Figure 11: Annexin V / PI staining

Exemplary plots showing Annexin V and PI staining in RS4;11 cells following exposure for 48 hours to 100 nM S63845 and/or 10 nM venetoclax or 100 nM A-1331852 and/or 10 nM venetoclax. Quantification of viable cells (Annexin V-/PI-), early apoptotic cells (Annexin V+/PI-), late apoptotic cells (Annexin V+/PI+) and necrotic cells (Annexin V-/PI+) was performed from three independent experiments in triplicates (shown in Figure 5D and 6D).



Supplementary Figure 12: Combination effects of venetoclax and A-1331852 in ALL patient-derived xenograft samples

Dose-response matrix analyses of cell death (propidium iodide staining) following exposure for 24 hours to 2.5, 5, 25, 50, 250, 500 and 2500 nM venetoclax and/or A-1331852 are shown. δ -scores were determined by synergyfinder and synergistic effects are shown in red, additive effects in white and antagonistic effects in green. The Bliss synergy score indicates the average synergy score over the dose-response matrix.



Supplementary References:

1. Meyer LH, Eckhoff SM, Queudeville M, Kraus JM, Giordan M, Stursberg J, *et al.* Early relapse in ALL is identified by time to leukemia in NOD/SCID mice and is characterized by a gene signature involving survival pathways. *Cancer cell* 2011 Feb 15; **19**(2): 206-217.
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