Claims

1. A method of screening at least one agent for modulating HBV replication, comprising:

a) contacting a cell expressing the HBV virus with the at least one agent,

wherein the at least one agent modulates the expression of SNAI2, SOX7, or both;

b) obtaining a HBV expression profile of the cell contacted with the at least one agent; and

c) comparing the HBV expression profile of the cell in b) with an HBV expression profile of a control cell that has not been contacted with said at least one agent,

wherein a decrease or increase in the expression of the HBV virus in the cell, relative to the control cell, indicates a modulation of HBV replication by said at least one agent.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one agent is selected from the group consisting of a chemical compound, a small molecule, a oligonucleotide, a protein, a peptide, a stapled peptide, a peptidomimetic, an antibody and an antigen binding molecule; optionally wherein the oligonucleotide is a siRNA or shRNA.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the contacting step comprises transfecting the cell with the siRNA or shRNA: optionally wherein the cell is permissive of HBV replication; optionally wherein the cell is selected from the group consisting of a liver cell, colon cell, stomach cell, blood cell, kidney cell and lung cell; optionally wherein the cell is comprised in a biological sample; optionally wherein the biological sample has been obtained from an HBV infected subject; optionally wherein the cell is derived from a cell line selected from the group consisting of HepG2, HuH6, HuH7, HuH4, PLC/PRF/5, Kato III, AGS, HCT116,Caco-2, HL-60, HEK293 and A549.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the contacting step comprises culturing the cell in a suitable culture medium that promotes HBV replication; optionally wherein the contacting step comprises transfecting the cell with a HBV replicon.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein obtaining the HBV expression profile comprises measuring one or more markers of HBV replication; optionally wherein the one or more markers of HBV

replication are selected from the group consisting of pre-genomic RNA levels of the HBV replicon, hepatitis B surface antigen levels, and hepatitis B core antigen levels; optionally wherein obtaining the HBV expression profile comprises western blot analysis of the at least one factor in the cell and measuring a band intensity of the at least one factor; optionally wherein the band intensity of the at least one factor is normalized to a control, and wherein a relative difference of 1 to 35% or greater between the band intensity of the at least one factor and the control indicates a modulation of HBV replication by said at least one agent.