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**EXPRESSION OF MICRORNA-122 CONTRIBUTES TO APOPTOSIS IN H9C2 MYOCYTES**

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**Objectives** The microRNAs (miRNAs) can post-transcriptionally regulate gene expression and heart development. Pax-8 gene knockout mice have apparent heart abnormalities. This study investigated the role of miRNAs in regulation of cardiac apoptosis and development in the knockout mice.

**Methods** microRNA microarrays demonstrated differential expression of microRNAs between Pax-8<sup>-/-</sup> and Pax-8<sup>+/-</sup> mice, confirmed by real-time PCR.

**Results** miR-122 was up-regulated by 1.92 folds in Pax-8<sup>-/-</sup> mice. There were ventricular septum defects in Pax-8<sup>-/-</sup> mice, and increased numbers of apoptotic cells in the left ventricular wall and interventricular septum in Pax-8<sup>-/-</sup> mice. In H9C2 myocytes, treatment with miR-122 mimics or miR-122 inhibitor affect the expression of CCK-8 and activity of Caspase-3.

**Conclusions** The miR-122 is upregulated in the myocytes of Pax-8<sup>-/-</sup> mice and may participate in the apoptotic gene expression and pathogenesis of heart development defect.