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(54) **RNA-INTERFERENCE FOR ZNFN3A1-GENE AS A METHOD FOR INHIBITING CANCER CELL GROWTH**

RNA-INTERFERENZ FÜR DAS GEN ZNFN3A1 ALS VERFAHREN ZUR HEMMUNG DES WACHSTUMS VON KREBSZELLEN

INTERFÉRENCE DE L'ARN POUR LE GÈNE ZNFN3A1 COMME MÉTHODE POUR D'INHIBITION DE LA CROISSANCE DE CELLULES CANCEREUSES

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- **HAMAMOTO R ET AL: "ZNFN3A1, A NOVEL GENE THAT PROMOTES CELL GROWTH IN HEPATOCELLULAR CARCINOMA" PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR CANCER RESEARCH, NEW YORK, NY, US, vol. 43, no. 13, March 2002 (2002-03), page 13, XP001146350 ISSN: 0197-016X**
- **ANONYMOUS: "siRNA Design: It's All in the Algorithm" INTERNET ARTICLE, [Online] 2004, pages 1-4, XP002299086 Retrieved from the Internet: URL:HTTP://WWW.AMBION.COM/TECHLIB/TN/113/1 4.HTML> [retrieved on 2004-10-03] cited in the application**

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**Description**Technical Field

5 **[0001]** The present invention relates to the field of biological science, more specifically to the field of cancer research. In particular, the present invention relates a composition comprising a ZNFN3A1 small interfering RNA (siRNA).

Background Art

10 **[0002]** Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is among the five most frequent cancers and is the fourth leading cause of cancer death in the world. Although recent medical advances have made great progress in diagnosing the disease, a large number of patients with HCCs are still diagnosed at advanced stages. Most of the patients are not cured by surgical resection because of severe liver dysfunction, widespread and/or multiple tumors, or high incidence of recurrence. Therefore development of highly effective chemotherapeutic drugs and preventive strategies are matters of pressing  
15 concern.

Disclosure of the Invention

20 **[0003]** The present invention based on the surprising discovery that small interfering RNAs (siRNAs) selective for ZNFN3A1 are effective for inhibiting the cellular growth of various cancer cells, including those involved in HCC.

**[0004]** The invention provides methods for inhibiting cell growth. Among the methods provided are those comprising contacting a cell with a composition comprising a ZNFN3A1 small interfering RNA (siRNA). The invention also provides methods for inhibiting tumor cell growth. Such methods include use of a composition comprising a ZNFN3A1 small interfering RNA (siRNA). Another aspect of the invention provides methods for inhibiting the expression of the ZNFN3A1  
25 gene in a cell of a biological sample. Expression of the gene may be inhibited by introduction of a double stranded ribonucleic acid (RNA) molecule into the cell in an amount sufficient to inhibit expression of the ZNFN3A1 gene. Another aspect of the invention relates to products including nucleic acid sequences and vectors as well as to compositions comprising them, useful, for example, in the provided methods. Among the products provided are siRNA molecules having the property to inhibit expression of the ZNFN3A1 gene when introduced into a cell expressing said gene. Among  
30 such molecules are those that comprise a sense strand and an antisense strand, wherein the sense strand comprises a ribonucleotide sequence corresponding to a ZNFN3A1 target sequence, and wherein the antisense strand comprises a ribonucleotide sequence which is complementary to said sense strand. The sense and the antisense strands of the molecule hybridize to each other to form a double-stranded molecule.

**[0005]** As used herein, the term "organism" refers to any living entity comprised of at least one cell. A living organism can be as simple as, for example, a single eukaryotic cell or as complex as a mammal, including a human being.  
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**[0006]** As used herein, the term "biological sample" refers to a whole organism or a subset of its tissues, cells or component parts (e.g. body fluids, including but not limited to blood, mucus, lymphatic fluid, synovial fluid, cerebrospinal fluid, saliva, amniotic fluid, amniotic cord blood, urine, vaginal fluid and semen). "Biological sample" further refers to a homogenate, lysate, extract, cell culture or tissue culture prepared from a whole organism or a subset of its cells, tissues  
40 or component parts, or a fraction or portion thereof. Lastly, "biological sample" refers to a medium, such as a nutrient broth or gel in which an organism has been propagated, which contains cellular components, such as proteins or polynucleotides.

**[0007]** The invention features methods of inhibiting cell growth. Cell growth is inhibited by contacting a cell with a composition of a ZNFN3A1 small interfering RNA (siRNA). ZNFN3A1 is a zinc finger protein that is overexpressed in  
45 tumors such as hepatocellular carcinoma or colorectal adenocarcinoma. Growth of the cell expressing ZNFN3A1 can be inhibited by the present invention. The cell is further contacted with a transfection-enhancing agent. The cell is provided *in vitro*, *in vivo* or *ex vivo*. The subject is a mammal, e.g., a human, non-human primate, mouse, rat, dog, cat, horse, or cow. The cell is a hepatic cell or a colon cell. Alternatively, the cell is a tumor cell (*i.e.*, cancer cell) such as a colorectal cancer cell or a liver cancer cell. For example, the cell is a colorectal adenocarcinoma cell or a hepatocellular  
50 carcinoma cell. By inhibiting cell growth is meant that the treated cell proliferates at a lower rate or has decreased viability than an untreated cell. Cell growth is measured by proliferation assays known in the art.

**[0008]** By the term "siRNA" is meant a double stranded RNA molecule which prevents translation of a target mRNA. Standard techniques of introducing siRNA into the cell are used, including those in which DNA is a template from which RNA is transcribed. The siRNA includes a sense ZNFN3A1 nucleic acid sequence, an anti-sense ZNFN3A1 nucleic acid sequence or both. The siRNA is constructed such that a single transcript has both the sense and complementary  
55 anti-sense sequences from the target gene, e.g., a hairpin.

**[0009]** The method is used to alter gene expression in a cell in which expression of ZNFN3A1 is upregulated, e.g., as a result of malignant transformation of the cells. Binding of the, siRNA to an ZNFN3A1 transcript in the target cell

results in a reduction in ZNFN3A1 production by the cell. The length of the oligonucleotide is at least 10 nucleotides and may be as long as the naturally-occurring ZNFN3A1 transcript. Preferably, the oligonucleotide is 19-25 nucleotides in length. Most preferably, the oligonucleotide is less than 75, 50, or 25 nucleotides in length. Examples of ZNFN3A1 siRNA oligonucleotides which inhibit ZNFN3A1 expression in mammalian cells include oligonucleotides containing target sequences, for example, nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1.

**[0010]** Methods for designing double stranded RNA having the ability to inhibit gene expression in a target cell are known. (See for example, US Patent No. 6,506,559. For example, a computer program for designing siRNAs is available from the Ambion website ([http://www.ambion.com/techlib/misc/siRNA\\_finder.html](http://www.ambion.com/techlib/misc/siRNA_finder.html)).

The computer program selects nucleotide sequences for siRNA synthesis based on the following protocol.

Selection of siRNA Target Sites

**[0011]**

1. Beginning with the AUG start codon of the transcript, scan downstream for AA dinucleotide sequences. Record the occurrence of each AA and the 3' adjacent 19 nucleotides as potential siRNA target sites. Tuschl et al. recommend against designing siRNA to the 5' and 3' untranslated regions (UTRs) and regions near the start codon (within 75 bases) as these may be richer in regulatory protein binding sites. UTR-binding proteins and/or translation initiation complexes may interfere with binding of the siRNA endonuclease complex.

2. Compare the potential target sites to the appropriate genome database (human, mouse, rat, etc.) and eliminate from consideration any target sequences with significant homology to other coding sequences. We suggest using BLAST, which can be found on the NCBI server at: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/BLAST/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/BLAST/)

3. Select qualifying target sequences for synthesis. Selecting several target sequences along the length of the gene to evaluate is typical.

**[0012]** Also included in the invention are isolated polynucleotides that include the nucleic acid sequence of target sequences, for example, nucleotides 451-471 (SEQ NO:58), 532-552 (SEQ ID NO:60), 623-643 (SEQ ID NO:61), 625-645 (SEQ ID NO:62), 636-656 (SEQ ID NO:63), 726-746 (SEQ ID NO:64), 923-943 (SEQ ID NO:66), 1065-1085 (SEQ ID NO:68), and 1258-1278 (SEQ ID NO:69) of SEQ ID NO:1 or a polynucleotide that is complementary to the nucleic acid sequence of nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1. As used herein, an "isolated nucleic acid" is a nucleic acid removed from its original environment (e.g., the natural environment if naturally occurring) and thus, synthetically altered from its natural state. In the present invention, isolated nucleic acid includes DNA, RNA, and derivatives thereof. When the isolated nucleic acid is RNA or derivatives thereof, base "t" should be replaced with "u" in the nucleotide sequences. As used herein, the term "complementary" refers to Watson-Crick or Hoogsteen base pairing between nucleotide units of a polynucleotide, and the term "binding" means the physical or chemical interaction between two polypeptides or compounds or associated polypeptides or compounds or combinations thereof. Complementary nucleic acid sequences hybridize under appropriate conditions to form stable duplexes containing few or no mismatches. Furthermore, the sense strand and antisense strand of the isolated nucleotide of the present invention, can form double stranded nucleotide or hairpin loop structure by the hybridization. In a preferred embodiment, such duplexes contain no more than 1 mismatch for every 10 matches. In an especially preferred embodiment, where the strands of the duplex are fully complementary, such duplexes contain no mismatches. The polynucleotide is less than 1622 nucleotides in length. For example, the polynucleotide is less than 500, 200, or 75 nucleotides in length. Also included in the invention is a vector containing one or more of the nucleic acids described herein, and a cell containing the vectors. The isolated nucleic acids of the present invention are useful for siRNA against ZNFN3A1 or DNA encoding the siRNA. When the nucleic acids are used for siRNA or coding DNA thereof, the sense strand is preferably longer than 19 nucleotides, and more preferably longer than 21 nucleotides.

**[0013]** The invention is based in part on the discovery that the gene encoding a zinc finger protein, ZNFN3A1 is overexpressed in hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) compared to non-cancerous liver tissue. The ZNFN3A1 cDNA is 1622 nucleotides in length. The 1284 ORF encodes a 428-amino acid protein with a zinc finger motif. The nucleic acid and polypeptide sequences of ZNFN3A1 are shown in Tables 1 and 2. In Table 1, the 5' and 3' untranslated region is shown in italic, the start and stop codons are in bold. The subcellular localization of ZNFN3A1 protein is altered during cell cycle progression and by the density of cultured cells. ZNFN3A1 protein accumulates in the nucleus when cells are in middle to late S phase or cultured in sparse conditions. Whereas, ZNFN3A1 protein localizes in the cytoplasm as well as in the nucleus when cells are in other phases of the cell cycle or grown in a dense condition. ZNFN3A1 forms a ternary complex with KIAA0054 protein and RNA polymerase II *in vivo*, which activates transcription of downstream genes including epidermal growth factor receptor (*EGFR*) through a direct binding of the complex with an element of

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"5'-CCCTCC-3'" in the 5' flanking region.

Table 1 Nucleic Acid Sequence of ZNFN3A1 (SEQ ID No:1)

5	<i>gtgcgcgag gggcagggc cgggggtccc ggcagcccgt gagacgcccg ctgctggacg</i>	60
	<i>cgggtagccg tctgaggtgc cggagctgcg ggagg atg gag ccg ctg aag gtg</i>	113
	<i>gaa aag ttc gca acc gcc aac agg gga aac ggg ctg cgc gcc gtg acc</i>	161
	<i>ccg ctg cgc ccc gga gag cta ctc ttc cgc tcg gat ccc ttg gcg tac</i>	209
	<i>acg gtg tgc aag ggg agt cgt ggc gtc gtc tgc gac cgc tgc ctt ctc</i>	257
	<i>ggg aag gaa aag ctg atg cga tgc tct cag tgc cgc gtc gcc aaa tac</i>	305
10	<i>tgt agt gct aag tgt cag aaa aaa gct tgg cca gac cac aag cgg gaa</i>	353
	<i>tgc aaa tgc ctt aaa agc tgc aaa ccc aga tat cct cca gac tcc gtt</i>	401
	<i>cga ctt ctt ggc aga gtt gtc ttc aaa ctt atg gat gga gca cct tca</i>	449
	<i>gaa tca gag aag ctt tac tca ttt tat gat ctg gag tca aat att aac</i>	497
	<i>aaa ctg act gaa gat aag aaa gag ggc ctc agg caa ctc gta atg aca</i>	545
	<i>ttt caa cat ttc atg aga gaa gaa ata cag gat gcc tct cag ctg cca</i>	593
15	<i>cct gcc ttt gac ctt ttt gaa gcc ttt gca aaa gtg atc tgc aac tct</i>	641
	<i>ttc acc atc tgt aat gcg gag atg cag gaa gtt ggt gtt ggc cta tat</i>	689
	<i>ccc agt atc tct ttg ctc aat cac agc tgt gac ccc aac tgt tcg att</i>	737
	<i>gtg ttc aat ggg ccc cac ctc tta ctg cga gca gtc cga gac atc gag</i>	785
	<i>gtg gga gag gag ctc acc atc tgc tac ctg gat atg ctg atg acc agt</i>	833
20	<i>gag gag cgc egg aag cag ctg agg gac cag tac tgc ttt gaa tgt gac</i>	881
	<i>tgt ttc cgt tgc caa acc cag gac aag gat gct gat atg cta act ggt</i>	929
	<i>gat gag caa gta tgg aag gaa gtt caa gaa tcc ctg aaa aaa att gaa</i>	977
	<i>gaa ctg aag gca cac tgg aag tgg gag cag gtt ctg gcc atg tgc cag</i>	1025
	<i>gcg atc ata agc agc aat tct gaa cgg ctt ccc gat atc aac atc tac</i>	1073
	<i>cag ctg aag gtg ctc gac tgc gcc atg gat gcc tgc atc aac ctc ggc</i>	1121
25	<i>ctg ttg gag gaa gcc ttg ttc tat ggt act cgg acc atg gag cca tac</i>	1169
	<i>agg att ttt ttc cca gga agc cat ccc gtc aga ggg gtt caa gtg atg</i>	1217
	<i>aaa gtt ggc aaa ctg cag cta cat caa ggc atg ttt ccc caa gca atg</i>	1265
	<i>aag aat ctg aga ctg gct ttt gat att atg aga gtg aca cat ggc aga</i>	1313
30	<i>gaa cac agc ctg att gaa gat ttg att cta ctt tta gaa gaa tgc gac</i>	1361
	<i>gcc aac atc aga gca tcc taa ggggaacgcag tcagagggaa atacggcgtg</i>	1412
	<i>tgtctttggt gaatgcctta ttgaggtcac acactctatg ctttgttagc tgtgtgaacc</i>	1472
	<i>tctcttattg gaaattctgt tccgtgtttg tgtaggtaaa taaaggcaga catggtttgc</i>	1532
	<i>aaaccacaag aatcattagt tgtagagaag cacgattata ataaattcaa aacatttggc</i>	1592
35	<i>tgaggatgcc aaaaaaaaaa aaaaaaaaaa</i>	1622

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Table 2 Polypeptide Sequence of ZNFN3A1 (SEQ ID NO:2)

5	Met	Glu	Pro	Leu	Lys	Val	Glu	Lys	Phe	Ala	Thr	Ala	Asn	Arg	Gly	Asn	1	5	10	15
	Gly	Leu	Arg	Ala	Val	Thr	Pro	Leu	Arg	Pro	Gly	Glu	Leu	Leu	Phe	Arg	20	25	30	
10	Ser	Asp	Pro	Leu	Ala	Tyr	Thr	Val	Cys	Lys	Gly	Ser	Arg	Gly	Val	Val	35	40	45	
	Cys	Asp	Arg	Cys	Leu	Leu	Gly	Lys	Glu	Lys	Leu	Met	Arg	Cys	Ser	Gln	50	55	60	
15	Cys	Arg	Val	Ala	Lys	Tyr	Cys	Ser	Ala	Lys	Cys	Gln	Lys	Lys	Ala	Trp	65	70	75	80
	Pro	Asp	His	Lys	Arg	Glu	Cys	Lys	Cys	Leu	Lys	Ser	Cys	Lys	Pro	Arg	85	90	95	
20	Tyr	Pro	Pro	Asp	Ser	Val	Arg	Leu	Leu	Gly	Arg	Val	Val	Phe	Lys	Leu	100	105	110	
	Met	Asp	Gly	Ala	Pro	Ser	Glu	Ser	Glu	Lys	Leu	Tyr	Ser	Phe	Tyr	Asp	115	120	125	
25	Leu	Glu	Ser	Asn	Ile	Asn	Lys	Leu	Thr	Glu	Asp	Lys	Lys	Glu	Gly	Leu	130	135	140	
	Arg	Gln	Leu	Val	Met	Thr	Phe	Gln	His	Phe	Met	Arg	Glu	Glu	Ile	Gln	145	150	155	160
30	Asp	Ala	Ser	Gln	Leu	Pro	Pro	Ala	Phe	Asp	Leu	Phe	Glu	Ala	Phe	Ala	165	170	175	
	Lys	Val	Ile	Cys	Asn	Ser	Phe	Thr	Ile	Cys	Asn	Ala	Glu	Met	Gln	Glu	180	185	190	
35	Val	Gly	Val	Gly	Leu	Tyr	Pro	Ser	Ile	Ser	Leu	Leu	Asn	His	Ser	Cys	195	200	205	
40	Asp	Pro	Asn	Cys	Ser	Ile	Val	Phe	Asn	Gly	Pro	His	Leu	Leu	Leu	Arg	210	215	220	
	Ala	Val	Arg	Asp	Ile	Glu	Val	Gly	Glu	Glu	Leu	Thr	Ile	Cys	Tyr	Leu	225	230	235	240

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(continued)

Table 2 Polypeptide Sequence of ZNFN3A1 (SEQ ID NO:2)

5	Asp	Met	Leu	Met	Thr	Ser	Glu	Glu	Arg	Arg	Lys	Gln	Leu	Arg	Asp	Gln	245	250	255	
10	Tyr	Cys	Phe	Glu	Cys	Asp	Cys	Phe	Arg	Cys	Gln	Thr	Gln	Asp	Lys	Asp	260	265	270	
15	Ala	Asp	Met	Leu	Thr	Gly	Asp	Glu	Gln	Val	Trp	Lys	Glu	Val	Gln	Glu	275	280	285	
20	Ser	Leu	Lys	Lys	Ile	Glu	Glu	Leu	Lys	Ala	His	Trp	Lys	Trp	Glu	Gln	290	295	300	
25	Val	Leu	Ala	Met	Cys	Gln	Ala	Ile	Ile	Ser	Ser	Asn	Ser	Glu	Arg	Leu	305	310	315	320
30	Pro	Asp	Ile	Asn	Ile	Tyr	Gln	Leu	Lys	Val	Leu	Asp	Cys	Ala	Met	Asp	325	330	335	
35	Ala	Cys	Ile	Asn	Leu	Gly	Leu	Leu	Glu	Glu	Ala	Leu	Phe	Tyr	Gly	Thr	340	345	350	
40	Arg	Thr	Met	Glu	Pro	Tyr	Arg	Ile	Phe	Phe	Pro	Gly	Ser	His	Pro	Val	355	360	365	
45	Arg	Gly	Val	Gln	Val	Met	Lys	Val	Gly	Lys	Leu	Gln	Leu	His	Gln	Gly	370	375	380	
50	Met	Phe	Pro	Gln	Ala	Met	Lys	Asn	Leu	Arg	Leu	Ala	Phe	Asp	Ile	Met	385	390	395	400
55	Arg	Val	Thr	His	Gly	Arg	Glu	His	Ser	Leu	Ile	Glu	Asp	Leu	Ile	Leu	405	410	415	
60	Leu	Leu	Glu	Glu	Cys	Asp	Ala	Asn	Ile	Arg	Ala	Ser					420	425		

[0014] Exogenous expression of ZNFN3A1 in NIH3T3 cells resulted in increased cell growth. In contrast, suppression of its expression with antisense S-oligonucleotides resulted in a growth-inhibition of hepatoma cells.

#### Methods of inhibiting cell growth

[0015] The present invention relates to inhibiting cell growth, *i.e.*, cancer cell growth by inhibiting ZNFN3A1 expression. ZNFN3A1 expression is inhibited by small interfering RNA (siRNA) that specifically target of the ZNFN3A1 gene. A ZNFN3A1 target includes, for example, nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1.

[0016] In non-mammalian cells, double-stranded RNA (dsRNA) has been shown to exert a strong and specific silencing effect on gene expression, which is referred as RNA interference (RNAi) (3). dsRNA is processed into 20-23 nucleotides dsRNA called small interfering RNA (siRNA) by an enzyme containing RNase III motif. The siRNA specifically targets complementary mRNA with a multicomponent nuclease complex (4, 5). In mammalian cells, siRNA composed of 20 or 21-mer dsRNA with 19 complementary nucleotides and 3' terminal noncomplementary dimmers of thymidine or uridine, have been shown to have a gene specific knock-down effect without inducing global changes in gene expression (6). In addition, plasmids containing small nuclear RNA (snRNA) U6 or polymerase III H1-RNA promoter effectively produce such short RNA recruiting type III class of RNA polymerase III and thus can constitutively suppress its target mRNA (7, 8).

[0017] 13 different expression plasmids were constructed to express hairpin-looped ZNFN3A1-siRNA (See Example

2). The plasmids were tested for their ability to inhibit cell growth. Four plasmids (psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-4, -8, -12 and -13) markedly and five plasmids (psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-2, -5, -6, -7, and -10) moderately suppressed endogenous ZNFN3A1 expression, while the remaining four plasmids (psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-1, -3, -9 and -11) exhibited no or little effect on the expression. (Figure 1). Various human hepatoma and colorectal cancer cells transfected with psiU6BX-siZNFN3A1-12, showed reduced number of surviving cells compared to control plasmids. FACS analysis revealed that their death was due to apoptosis.

**[0018]** The growth of cells are inhibited by contacting a cell, with a composition containing a ZNFN3A1 siRNA. The cell is further contacted with a transfection agent. Suitable transfection agents are known in the art. By inhibition of cell growth is meant the cell proliferates at a lower rate or has decreased viability compared to a cell not exposed to the composition. Cell growth is measured by methods known in the art such as, the MTT cell proliferation assay.

**[0019]** The ZNFN3A1-siRNA is directed to a single target ZNFN3A1 gene sequence. Alternatively, the siRNA is directed to multiple target ZNFN3A1 gene sequences. For example, the composition contains ZNFN3A1-siRNA directed to two, three, four, or five or more ZNFN3A1 target sequences. By ZNFN3A1 target sequence is meant a nucleotide sequence that is identical to a portion of the ZNFN3A1 gene. The target sequence can include the 5' untranslated (UT) region, the open reading frame (ORF) or the 3' untranslated region of the human ZNFN3A1 gene. Alternatively, the siRNA is a nucleic acid sequence complementary to an upstream or downstream modulator of ZNFN3A1 gene expression. Examples of upstream and downstream modulators include, a transcription factor that binds the ZNFN3A1 gene promoter, a kinase or phosphatase that interacts with the ZNFN3A1 polypeptide, a ZNFN3A1 promoter or enhancer.

**[0020]** ZNFN3A1-siRNA which hybridize to target mRNA decrease or inhibit production of the ZNFN3A1 polypeptide product encoded by the ZNFN3A1 gene by associating with the normally single-stranded mRNA transcript, thereby interfering with translation and thus, expression of the protein. The siRNA is less than 500, 200, 100, 50, or 25 nucleotides in length. Preferably the siRNA is 19-25 nucleotides in length. Exemplary nucleic acid sequence for the production of ZNFN3A1-siRNA include the sequences of nucleotides 451-471 (SEQ ID NO:58), 532-552 (SEQ ID NO:60), 623-643 (SEQ ID NO:61), 625-645 (SEQ ID NO:62), 636-656 (SEQ ID NO:63), 726-746 (SEQ ID NO:64), 923-943 (SEQ ID NO:66), 1065-1085 (SEQ ID NO:68), or 1258-1278 (SEQ ID NO:69) of SEQ ID NO:1 as the target sequence. Furthermore, in order to enhance the inhibition activity of the siRNA, nucleotide "u" can be added to 3' end of the antisense strand of the target sequence. The number of "u"s to be added is at least 2, generally 2 to 10, preferably 2 to 5. The added "u"s form single strand at the 3' end of the antisense strand of the siRNA.

**[0021]** The cell is any cell that expresses or over-expresses ZNFN3A1. The cell is a hepatic cell or an epithelial cell such as a colon cell. Alternatively, the cell is a tumor cell such as a carcinoma, adenocarcinoma, blastoma, leukemia, myeloma, or sarcoma. The cell is a hepatocellular carcinoma or a colorectal adenocarcinoma cell.

**[0022]** An ZNFN3A1-siRNA is directly introduced into the cells in a form that is capable of binding to the mRNA transcripts. Alternatively, the DNA encoding the ZNFN3A1-siRNA is in a vector.

**[0023]** Vectors are produced for example by cloning a ZNFN3A1 target sequence into an expression vector operatively-linked regulatory sequences flanking the ZNFN3A1 sequence in a manner that allows for expression (by transcription of the DNA molecule) of both strands (Lee, N.S., Dohjima, T., Bauer, G., Li, H., Li, M.-J., Ehsani, A., Salvaterra, P., and Rossi, J. (2002) Expression of small interfering RNAs targeted against HIV-1 rev transcripts in human cells. *Nature Biotechnology* 20 : 500-505.). An RNA molecule that is antisense to ZNFN3A1 mRNA is transcribed by a first promoter (e.g., a promoter sequence 3' of the cloned DNA) and an RNA molecule that is the sense strand for the ZNFN3A1 mRNA is transcribed by a second promoter (e.g., a promoter sequence 5' of the cloned DNA). The sense and antisense strands hybridize *in vivo* to generate siRNA constructs for silencing of the ZNFN3A1 gene. Alternatively, two constructs are utilized to create the sense and anti-sense strands of a siRNA construct. Cloned ZNFN3A1 can encode a construct having secondary structure, e.g., hairpins, wherein a single transcript has both the sense and complementary antisense sequences from the target gene.

A loop sequence consisting of an arbitrary nucleotide sequence can be located between the sense and antisense sequence in order to form the hairpin loop structure. Thus, the present invention also provides siRNA having the general formula 5'-[A]-[B]-[A']-3', wherein [A] is a ribonucleotide sequence corresponding to a sequence selected from the group consisting of nucleotides 451-471 (SEQ ID NO:58), 532-552 (SEQ ID NO:60), 623-643 (SEQ ID NO:61), 625-645 (SEQ ID NO:62), 636-656 (SEQ ID NO:63), 726-746 (SEQ ID NO:64), 923-943 (SEQ ID NO:66), 1065-1085 (SEQ ID NO:68), and 1258-1278 (SEQ ID NO:69) of SEQ ID NO:1,

[B] is a ribonucleotide sequence consisting of 3 to 23 nucleotides, and

[A'] is a ribonucleotide sequence consisting of the complementary sequence of [A]

**[0024]** The region [A] hybridizes to [A'], and then a loop consisting of region [B] is formed. The loop sequence may be preferably 3 to 23 nucleotide in length. The loop sequence, for example, can be selected from group consisting of following sequences ([http://www.ambion.com/techlib/tb/tb\\_506.html](http://www.ambion.com/techlib/tb/tb_506.html)). Furthermore, loop sequence consisting of 23 nucleotides also provides active siRNA (Jacque, J.-M., Triques, K., and Stevenson, M. (2002) Modulation of HIV-1 replication by RNA interference. *Nature* 418 : 435-438.).

**[0025]** AUG :Sui, G., Soohoo, C., Affar, E.B., Gay, F., Shi, Y., Forrester, W.C., and Shi, Y. (2002) A DNA vector-based

RNAi technology to suppress gene expression in mammalian cells. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. US A 99(8): 5515-5520.

**[0026]** CCC, CCACC or CCACACC: Paul, C.P., Good, P.D., Winer, I., and Engelke, D.R. (2002) Effective expression of small interfering RNA in human cells. Nature Biotechnology 20 : 505-508.

**[0027]** UUCG: Lee, N.S., Dohjima, T., Bauer, G., Li, H., Li, M.-J., Ehsani, A., Salvaterra, P., and Rossi, J. (2002) Expression of small interfering RNAs targeted against HIV-1 rev transcripts in human cells. Nature Biotechnology 20 : 500-505.

**[0028]** CTCGAG or AAGCUU: Editors of Nature Cell Biology (2003) Whither RNAi? Nat Cell Biol. 5:489-490.

**[0029]** UUCAAGAGA: Yu, J.-Y., DeRuiter, S.L., and Turner, D.L. (2002) RNA interference by expression of short-interfering RNAs and hairpin RNAs in mammalian cells. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 99(9): 6047-6052.

**[0030]** For example, preferable siRNAs having hairpin loop structure of the present invention are shown below. In the following structure, the loop sequences can be selected from group consisting of AUG, CCC, UUCG, CCACC, CTCGAG, AAGCUU, CCACACC, and UUCAAGAGA. Preferable loop sequence is UUCAAGAGA ("ttcaagaga" in DNA).

aaucagagaagcuuuacucau-[B]-augaguaaagcuucugauu (for target sequence of SEQ ID NO:58)

aacucguaaugacauuucaac-[B]-guugaaaugucuuacgaguu (for target sequence of SEQ ID NO:60)

aaaagugaucugcaacucuuu-[B]-aaagaguugcagaucauuuu (for target sequence of SEQ ID NO:61)

aagugaucugcaacucuuuca-[B]-ugaaagaguugcagaucauu (for target sequence of SEQ ID NO:62)

aacucuuuaccacucuguaau-[B]-auuacagauggugaaagaguu (for target sequence of SEQ ID NO:63)

aacuguuugauuguguucaa-[B]-auugaacacaucgaacaguu (for target sequence of SEQ ID NO:64)

aacuggugaugagcaaguau-[B]-cauacuugcucaucaccaguu (for target sequence of SEQ ID NO:66)

aacaucaccagcugaaggug-[B]-cacuucagcugguagaguu (for target sequence of SEQ ID NO:68)

aagcaauagaaucaucugagac-[B]-gucucagauucuucauugcuu (for target sequence of SEQ ID NO:69)

**[0031]** The regulatory sequences flanking the ZNFN3A1 sequence are identical or are different, such that their expression can be modulated independently, or in a temporal or spatial manner. siRNAs are transcribed intracellularly by cloning the ZNFN3A1 gene templates into a vector containing, e.g., a RNA pol III transcription unit from the small nuclear RNA (snRNA) U6 or the human H1 RNA promoter. For introducing the vector into the cell, transfection-enhancing agent can be used. FuGENE (Rochediagnostices), Lipofectamin 2000 (Invitrogen), Oligofectamin (Invitrogen), and Nucleofactor (Wako pure Chemical) are useful as the transfection-enhancing agent.

**[0032]** Oligonucleotides and oligonucleotides complementary to various portions of ZNFN3A1 mRNA were tested *in vitro* for their ability to decrease production of ZNFN3A1 in tumor cells (e.g., using the Alexander and HepG2 hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) cell line and the HCT116 and SW948 colorectal cancer cell line) according to standard methods. A reduction in ZNFN3A1 gene product in cells contacted with the candidate siRNA composition compared to cells cultured in the absence of the candidate composition is detected using ZNFN3A1-specific antibodies or other detection strategies. Sequences which decrease production of ZNFN3A1 in *in vitro* cell-based or cell-free assays are then tested for their inhibitory effects on cell growth. Sequences which inhibit cell growth in *in vitro* cell-based assay are test in *in vivo* in rats or mice to confirm decreased ZNFN3A1 production and decreased tumor cell growth in animals with malignant neoplasms.

#### Methods of treating malignant tumors

**[0033]** Patients with tumors characterized as over-expressing ZNFN3A1 are treated by administering ZNFN3A1-siRNA. siRNA therapy is used to inhibit expression of ZNFN3A1 in patients suffering from or at risk of developing, for example, hepatocellular carcinomas, or colorectal cancer. Such patients are identified by standard methods of the particular tumor type. Hepatocellular carcinoma is diagnosed for example, by enlargement of the liver, tomography, ultrasound or biopsy. Colorectal cancer is diagnosed for example, by blood in stool, colonoscopy, flexible sigmoidoscopy, CEA Assay, double contrast barium enema CT Scan, tomography or biopsy.

**[0034]** Treatment is efficacious if the treatment leads to clinical benefit such as, a reduction in expression of ZNFN3A1, or a decrease in size, prevalence, or metastatic potential of the tumor in the subject. When treatment is applied prophylactically, "efficacious" means that the treatment retards or prevents tumors from forming or prevents or alleviates a symptom of clinical symptom of the tumor. Efficaciousness is determined in association with any known method for diagnosing or treating the particular tumor type.

**[0035]** siRNA therapy is carried out by administering to a patient a siRNA by standard vectors and/or gene delivery systems. Suitable gene delivery systems may include liposomes, receptor-mediated delivery systems, or viral vectors such as herpes viruses, retroviruses, adenoviruses and adeno-associated viruses, among others. A reduction in ZNFN3A1 production results in a decrease ZNFN3A1 complex formation with KIAA0054 protein and RNA polymerase II or a decrease in ZNFN3A1 protein expression. A therapeutic nucleic acid composition is formulated in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier. The therapeutic composition may also include a gene delivery system as described above. Pharmaceutically acceptable carriers are biologically compatible vehicles which are suitable for administration to an animal, e.g., physiological saline. A therapeutically effective amount of a compound is an amount which is capable of producing a medically desirable result such as reduced production of a ZNFN3A1 gene product, reduction of cell growth,

e.g., proliferation, or a reduction in tumor growth in a treated animal.

**[0036]** Parenteral administration, such as intravenous, subcutaneous, intramuscular, and intraperitoneal delivery routes, may be used to deliver ZNFN3A1-siRNA compositions. For treatment of hepatic tumors, direct infusion the portal vein is useful.

5 **[0037]** Dosages for any one patient depends upon many factors, including the patient's size, body surface area, age, the particular nucleic acid to be administered, sex, time and route of administration, general health, and other drugs being administered concurrently. Dosage for intravenous administration of nucleic acids is from approximately  $10^6$  to  $10^{22}$  copies of the polynucleotide.

10 **[0038]** The polynucleotides are administered by standard methods, such as by injection into the interstitial space of tissues such as muscles or skin, introduction into the circulation or into body cavities or by inhalation or insufflation. Polynucleotides are injected or otherwise delivered to the animal with a pharmaceutically acceptable liquid carrier, e.g., a liquid carrier, which is aqueous or partly aqueous. The polynucleotides are associated with a liposome (e.g., a cationic or anionic liposome). The polynucleotide includes genetic information necessary for expression by a target cell, such as a promoters.

15 **[0039]** Unless otherwise defined, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art to which this invention belongs. Although methods and materials similar or equivalent to those described herein can be used in the practice or testing of the present invention, suitable methods and materials are described below. In case of conflict, the present specification, including definitions, will control. In addition, the materials, methods, and examples are illustrative only and not intended to be limiting.

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Brief Description of the Drawings

**[0040]**

25 Fig. 1 is a photograph of an immunoblot showing the effect of ZNFN3A1 siRNAs on exogenous ZNFN3A1 expression in COS7 cells.

Fig. 2 is a photograph of an immunoblot showing the expression of ZNFN3A1 protein in hepatoma and colon cancer cell lines.

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Fig. 3 is a photograph of an immunoblot showing the effect of ZNFN3A1-siRNAs on endogenous ZNFN3A1 expression in SNU475 cell transfected with psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-1, -4, -12 or psiU6BX-mock plasmids.

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Fig. 4A-B are bar charts showing the effect of ZNFN3A1-siRNAs on cell growth in SNU475 cells. Viability of transfected cells was measured by MTT assay 6 (Panel A) and 9 (panel B) days after the transfection.

Fig. 5 are bar charts showing growth suppressive effect of ZNFN3A1-siRNAs in various human hepatoma and colon cancer cells. Viability of transfected cells was measured by MTT assay, 9 to 12 days after the transfection.

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Figure 6 is an illustration showing cell death in response to ZNFN3A1-siRNAs in SNU475 cell detected by FACS analysis.

Best Mode for Carrying out the Invention

45 **[0041]** The invention will be further described in the following examples, which do not limit the scope of the invention described in the claims.

[Example 1] General Methods

50 Cell lines and tissue specimens

**[0042]** Human hepatoma cell lines Alexander and HepG2, human colon cancer lines HCT116 and SW948, and monkey fibroblast cell line COS7 were obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC). Human hepatoma cell line Huh7 was obtained from Japanese Collection of Research Bioresources (JCRB). Human hepatoma cell lines, SNU398, SNU423, SNU449 and SNU475 were obtained from the Korea cell-line bank. All these cells are publicly available.

55 **[0043]** All cell lines were grown in monolayers in appropriate media: Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium for Alexander, Huh7, HepG2 and COS7; McCoy's 5A for HCT116; Leibovitz's L-15 for SW948; RPMI1640 for SNU398, SNU423, SNU449 and SNU475 supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum and 1% antibiotic/antimycotic solution (Sigma). All

cells were maintained at 37°C in humid air with 5% CO<sub>2</sub>. (Alexander, Huh7, HepG2, SNU348, SNU423, SNU449, SNU475, HCT116, and COS7) or without CO<sub>2</sub>(SW948).

Cloning of ZNFN3A1

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**[0044]** Cloning of *ZNFN3A1* was done by PCR using KOD-plus (TOYOBO). For E. Coli expression, coding region of *ZNFN3A1* was cloned in the *EcoR* I-*Kpn* I site of pET21a. For mammalian cell expression, coding region of *ZNFN3A1* was cloned in the *EcoR* I-*Kpn* I site of pcDNA3.1 (+) and (-) (Invitrogen), *EcoR* I-*Kpn* I site of pFLAG and *EcoR* I-*Kpn* I site of pEGFP (Clontech). Coding region of *KIAA0054* was cloned in the *EcoR* I-*Xho* I site of pCMV-HA (Clontech).  
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ZNFN3A1 Polyclonal Antibody Production

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**[0045]** Rabbit anti-ZNFN3A1 polyclonal antibody was generated. Full coding sequence of *ZNFN3A1* was amplified by PCR reaction using testis cDNA as a template and cloned in pET21 a (Novagen). The cloned vector was transfected into BL21-CodonPlus® competent cells (Stratagene). Recombinant ZNFN3A1 protein was induced by 1.0 mM IPTG at 30°C for 6 h. His-ZNFN3A1 fusion protein was purified using Pro Bond™ Resin (Invitrogen). Rabbits were immunized ten times with purified His-ZNFN3A1. Immunoblotting with this polyclonal antibody showed single 50 kD band of FLAG-tagged ZNFN3A1, which was identical pattern to that detected using anti-FLAG monoclonal antibody (Sigma) (data not shown).  
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RNA preparation and RT-PCR

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**[0046]** Total RNA was extracted with Trizol reagent (Life technologies) according to the manufacturer's protocol. Ten-microgram aliquots of total RNA were reversely transcribed for single-stranded cDNAs using poly dT<sub>12-18</sub> primer (Amersham Biosciences) with Superscript II reverse transcriptase (Life Technologies). Each single-stranded cDNA was diluted for subsequent PCR amplification. Standard RT-PCR was carried out in a 20 μl volume of PCR buffer (TAKARA), and amplified for 4 min at 94°C for denaturing, followed by 20 (for *GAPDH*) or 30 (for *ZNFN3A1*) cycles of 94°C for 30 s, 56°C for 30 s, 72°C for 30 s, in the Gene Amp PCR system 9700 (Perkin-Elmer). Primer sequences were as follows, for *GAPDH*  
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forward; 5'-ACAACAGCCTCAAGATCATCAG-3' (SEQ ID No: 29) and  
 reverse; 5'-GGTCCACCACTGACACGTTG-3' (SEQ ID No: 30),

for or *ZNFN3A1*

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 forward; 5'-TTCCCGATATCAACATCTACCAG-3' (SEQ ID No: 31) and  
 reverse; 5'-AGTGTGTGACCTCAATAAGGCAT-3' (SEQ ID No: 32).

Construction of psiU6BX6 Plasmid

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**[0047]** The DNA fragment encoding siRNA was inserted into the GAP at nucleotide 485-490 as indicated (-) in the following plasmid sequence (SEQ ID No: 33).  
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GACGGATCGGGAGATCTCCCGATCCCCTATGGTGCACTCTCAGTACAATCTGCTCTGGAT  
CCACTAGTAACGGCCGCCAGTGTGCTGGAATTCGGCTTGGGGATCAGCGTTTGAGTAAGA  
GCCCCGCTCTGAACCTCCGCGCCGCCCGGCCAGTGGAAAGACGCGCAGGCCAAAACG  
CACCACGTGACGGAGCGTGACCGCGCGCCGAGCGCGCCCAAGGTCGGGCAGGAAGAGGG  
CCTATTTCCCATGATTCCTTCATATTTGCATATACGATACAAGGCTGTTAGAGAGATAAT  
TAGAATTAATTTGACTGTAAACACAAAGATATTAGTACAAAATACGTGACGTAGAAAGTA  
ATAATTTCTTGGGTAGTTTGCAGTTTTAAAATTATGTTTTAAAATGGACTATCATATGCT  
TACCGTAACTTGAAAGTATTTTCGATTTCTTGGCTTTATATATCTTGTGGAAGGACGAAA  
CACC-----TTTTTACATCAGGTTGTTTTTCTGTTTGGTTTTTTTTTTTACACCACGTTT  
ATACGCCGGTGCACGGTTTACCACTGAAAACACCTTTCATCTACAGGTGATATCTTTTAA  
CACAAATAAAATGTAGTAGTCTTAGGAGACGGAATAGAAGGAGGTGGGGCCTAAAGCCGA  
ATTCTGCAGATATCCATCACACTGGCGGCCGCTCGAGTGAGGCGGAAAGAACCAGCTGGG  
GCTCTAGGGGGTATCCCCACGCGCCCTGTAGCGGCGCATTAGCGCGGGGGTGTGGTGG  
TTACGCGCAGCGTGACCGCTACACTTGCCAGCGCCCTAGCGCCCGCTCCTTTTCGCTTTCT  
TCCCTTCCTTTCTCGCCACGTTTCGCCGGCTTTCCTCCGTCAGCTCTAAATCGGGGGCTCC  
CTTTAGGGTTCCGATTTAGTGCTTTACGECACCTCGACCCCAAAAACCTTGATTAGGGTG  
ATGGFTCACGTAGTGGCCATCECCCTGATAGACGGTTTTTTCECCCTTTGACGTTGAGT  
CCACGTTCTTTAATAAGTGGACTCTTGTTCCAAACGGAACAACACTCAACCCTATCTCGE  
TCTATTCCTTTGATTTATAAGGGATTTTCCTCCGATTTCCGCCCTATTGCTTAAAAAATGACC  
TGATTTAACAAAAATTTAACGCGAATTAATTCGTGGAATGTGTGTGTCAGTTAGGGTGTGG  
AAAGTCCCCAGGCTCCCCAGCAGGCAGAAGTATGCAAAGCATGCATCTCAATTAGTCAGC

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AACCAGGTGTGGAAAGTCCCCAGGCTCCCCAGCAGGCAGAAGTATGCAAAGCATGCATCT  
 CAATTAGTCAGCAACCATAGTCCCGCCCCTAAC TCCGCCCATCCCGCCCCTAAC TCCGCC  
 CAGT TCCGCCCAT TCCCGCCCCAT GGC T GAC TAAT T T T T T T A T T T A T G C A G A G G C C G A  
 G C C C C C C T C T C C C C T G A B C T A T T C C A G A A E T A G T C A G C A G C C T F F F F T T G A G C C C T A G G  
 C T T T T G C A A A A A G C T C C C G E A G C T T G T A T A T C C A T T T T C G G A T C T G A T C A A G A E A C A G G  
 A T G A G G A T C G T T T C C C A T G A T T E A A C A A G A T G C A T T E C A C G C A G E T T C T C C G C C C E C T T G  
 G G T G G A G A G G C T A T T C G G C T A T G A C T G G G C A C A A C A G A C A A T C G G C T G C T C T G A T C C C G C  
 C G T G T T C C G C T G T C A G C G C A G G G G C C C C G G T C T T T T T G T C A A G A C C G A C C T G T C C E G  
 T E C C C T G A A T G A A C T G C A G G A C G A G G C A G C C G C G C T A T C G T G C C T E C C A C E A C G G G C E T  
 T C C T T C C G C A G C T G T G C T C G A C G T T G T C A C T G A A G C G G A A G G G A C T G G C T G C T A T T G G G  
 C G A A G T C C C G G E C C A G G A T C T C C T G T C A T C T C A C C T G C C T C C T G C C G A G A A A G T A T C C A T  
 C A T G G C T G A T G C A A T G C G G C G G C T G C A T A C G C T T G A T C C G G C T A C C T G C C C A T T C G A C C A  
 C C A A G C G A A A C A T C G C A T C G A G C G A G C A C G T A C T C G G A T G G A A G C C G G T C T T G T C G A T C A  
 G G A T G A T C T G G A C G A A G A G C A T C A G G G G C T C G C G C C A G C C G A A C T G T T C G C C A G G C T C A A  
 G G C G C G C A T G C C C G A C G G C G A G G A T C T C G T C G T G A C C C A T G G C G A T G C C T G C T T G C C G A A  
 T A T C A T G G T G G A A A T G G C C G C T F F T T C T G G A T T C A T C G A C T G T G G C C G G C T G G G T G T G G C  
 G G A C C G C T A T C A G G A C A T A G C G T T G G C T A C C C G T G A T A T T G C T G A A G A G C T T G G C G G C G A  
 A T G G G C T G A C C G C T T C C T C G T G C T T T A C G G T A T C G C C G C T C C C G A T T C G C A G C G C A T C G C  
 C T T C T A T C G C C T T C T T G A C G A G T T C T T C T G A G C G G G A C T C T G G G G T T C G A A A T G A C C G A C  
 C A A G C G A C G C C C A A C C T G C C A T C A C G A G A T T T C G A T T C C A C C G C C G C C T T C T A T G A A A G G  
 T T G G G C T T C G G A A T C G T T T T C C G G G A C G C C G G C T G G A T G A T C C T C C A G C G C G G G G A T C T C  
 A T G C T G G A G T T C T T C G C C C A C C C A A C T T G T T T A T T G C A G C T T A T A A T G G T T A C A A A T A A  
 A G C A A T A G C A T C A C A A A T T T C A C A A A T A A A G C A T T F F F T T T C A C T G C A T T C T A G T T G T G G T  
 T T G T C C A A A C T A T C A A T G T A T C T T A T C A T G T C T G T A T A C C G T C G A C C T C T A G C T A G A G C  
 T T G G C G T A A T C A T G G T C A T A G C T G T T T C C T G T G T G A A A T T G T T A T C C G C T C A C A A T T C C A  
 C A C A A C A T A C G A G C C G G A A G C A T A A A G T G T A A A G C C T G G G G T G C C T A A T G A G T G A G C T A A  
 C T C A C A T T A A T T G C G T T G C G C T C A C T G C C C G C T T T C C A G T C G G G A A A C C T G T C G T G C C A G  
 C T G C A T T A A T G A A T C G G C C A A C G C G C G G G A G A G G C G G T T T G C G T A T T G G G C G C T C T T C C  
 G C T T C C T C G C T C A C T G A C T C G C T G C G C T C G G T C G T T C G G C T G C G G C G A G C G G T A T C A G C T  
 C A C T C A A A G G C G G T A A T A C G G T T A T C C A C A G A A T C A G G G G A T A A C G C A G G A A G A A C A T G  
 T G A G C A A A A G G C C A G C A A A A G G C C A G G A A C C G T A A A A A G G C C G C G T T G C T G G C G T T T T T C  
 C A T A G G C T C C G C C C C C T G A C G A G C A T C A C A A A A T C G A C G C T C A A G T C A G A G G T G G C G A  
 A A C C C G A C A G G A C T A T A A A G A T A C C A G G C G T T T C C C C T G G A A G C T C C C T C G T G C G C T C T  
 C C T G T T C C G A C C C T E C C E C T T A C C G G A T A C C T G T C C G C C T T T C T C C C T T C G G G A A C C E T G  
 G C E C T T T C T A T A E C T C A C C C T G T A G G T A T C T C A G T T C E G T E T A G E T C G T T C E C T C C A A G  
 C T G G C C T G T G T E C A C G A A C C C C C G T T C A G C C C G A C C C C T E C G C C T T A T C C G G T A A C T A T  
 C G T T T G A C T C C A A C C C E T A R G A C A C G A C T T A T C C C C A C T E C C A G C A G C C A C T E G T A A C  
 A G G A T T A G C A G A G C G A G G T A T G T A G G C G G T G C T A C A G A G T T C T T G A A G T G G T G G C C T A A C  
 T A C G G C T A C A C T A G A A G A A C A G T A T T T G G T A T C T G C G C T C T G C T G A A G C C A G T T A C C T T C

GGAAAAAGAGTTGGTAGCTCTTGATCCGGCAAACAACCACCGCTGGTAGCGGTTTTTTT  
 GTTTGCAAGCAGCAGATTACCCAGAAAAAAGGATCTCAAGAAGATCCTTTGATCTTT  
 5 TCTACGGGGTCTGACCCCTCACTGGAACGAAAACTCACGTTAAGGGATTTTGGTCATGAGA  
 TTATCAAAAAGGATCTTCACTTACATCCCTTTTAAATTAAAAATGAAGTTTAAATCAATC  
 TAAAGTATATATGACTAAACTTGGTCTGACAGTTACCAATGCTTAATCACTGAECCACCT  
 10 ATCTCAGCGATCTGCTATTTCCTCATCCATAGTTCCCTGACTCCCCCTCGTGTAGATA  
 ACTACGATACGGGAGGGCTTACCATCTGCCCCAGTCTGCAATGATAACCGCGAGACCCA  
 CCTCACCGGCTCCAGATTTATCAGCAATAAACAGCCAGCCGGAAAGGGCCGACCCGAGA  
 AETGGTCTTCAACTTTATCCGCCATCCAGTCTATTAAATGTTCCCGGAAAGCTAGA  
 15 GTAAGTACTTCCCCAGTTAATAGTTTGCCEAACGTTGTTGCCATTGCTACAGGCATCGTG  
 GTGTACGCTCGTCTTGGTATGCTTTCATTACAGCTCCGGTCCCAACGATCAAGGCEA  
 GTTACATGATCCCCATGTTGTGCAAAAAGCGGTTAGCTCCTTCCGGTCTCCGATCGTT  
 20 GTCAGAAGTAAGTTGGCCGAGTGTATCACTCATGGTTATGGCAGCACTGCATAATTCT  
 CTTACTGTGATGCCATCCGTAAGATGCTTTTCTGTGACTGGTGAGTACTCAACCAAGTCA  
 TTCTGAGAAATAGTGTATGCGGCGACCGAGTTGCTCTTGCCCGGCGTCAATACGGGATAAT  
 ACCGCGCCACATAGCAGAACTTTAAAAGTGCTCATCATTGAAAACGTTCTTCGGGGCGA  
 25 AACTCTCAAGGATCTTACCCTGTTGAGATCCAGTTCGATGTAACCCACTCGTGCACCC  
 AACTGATCTTCAAGATCTTTTACTTTCACCAGCGTTTCTGGGTGAGCAAAAACAGGAAGG  
 CAAAATGCCGCAAAAAGGGAATAAGGGCGACACGGAAATGTTGAATACTCATACTCTTC  
 30 CTTTTTCAATATTATTGAAGCATTTATCAGGGTTATTGTCTCATGAGCGGATACATATTT  
 GAATGTATTTAGAAAAATAAACAAATAGGGGTTCCGCGCACATTTCCCCGAAAAGTGCCA  
 CCTGACGTC

35 **[0048]** snRNA U6 gene is reported to be transcribed by RNA polymerase III, which produce short transcripts with uridines at the 3' end. The genomic fragment of the snRNA U6 gene containing the promoter region was amplified by PCR using a set of primers, 5'-GGGGATCAGCGTTTGGAGTAA-3' (SEQ ID No: 34), and 5'-TAGGCCCCACCTCCTTCTAT-3' (SEQ ID No: 35) and human placental DNA as a template. The product was purified and cloned into pCR plasmid vector using a TA cloning kit according to the supplier's protocol (Invitrogen). The *Bam*HI, *Xho*I fragment containing the siRNA U6 gene was purified and cloned into nucleotide 1257 to 56 fragment of pcDNA3.1 (+) plasmid, which was amplified by PCR with a set of primer, 5'-TGCGGATCCAGAGCAGATTGTAAGTACTGAGAGT-3' (SEQ ID No: 36) and 5'-CTCTATCTCGAGTGAGCGGAAAGAACCA-3' (SEQ No: 37). The ligated DNA was used for a template of PCR with primers, 45 5'-TTTAAGCTTGAAGACTATTTTACATCAGGTTGTTTTTCT-3' (SEQ ID No: 38) and 5'-TTTAAGCTTGAAGACACGGTGTTCCTTTCCACA-3' (SEQ ID No: 39). The product was digested with HindIII, which was subsequently self-ligated to produce psiU6BX vector plasmid. For the control, psiU6BX-EGFP was prepared by cloning double-stranded oligonucleotides of 5'-CACCGAAGCAGCAGCACTTCTTCTTCAAGAGAGAAGAAGTCGTGCT GCTTC-3' (SEQ ID No: 40) and 50 5'-AAAAGAAGCAGCAGCACTTCTTCTTCTTGAAGAAGAAGTCGTGCT GCTTC -3' (SEQ ID No: 41) into the BbsI site in the psiU6BX vector.

#### Immunoblotting

55 **[0049]** The polyclonal antibody to ZNFN3A1 was previously purified from sera of immunized rabbits with recombinant His-tagged ZNFN3A1 protein. Proteins were separated by 10% SDS-PAGE and immunoblotted with the anti-ZNFN3A1 antibody. HRP-conjugated goat anti-rabbit IgG (Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Santa Cruz, CA) served as the secondary antibody for the ECL Detection System (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Piscataway, NJ). Immunoblotting with the anti-

ZNFN3A1 antibody showed single 50 kD band of FLAG-tagged ZNFN3A1, which was identical pattern to that detected using anti-FLAG antibody

3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide (MTT) assay

**[0050]** Cells were transfected with psiU6BX-siZNFN3A1 or control plasmids and maintained in the culture media supplemented with optimum concentration of geneticin. Six to twelve days after transfection, the medium was replaced with fresh medium containing 500  $\mu$ g/ml of MTT (3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyl tetrazolium bromide) (Sigma) and the plates were incubated for four hours at 37°C. Subsequently, the cells were lysed by the addition of 1 ml of 0.01 N HCl/10%SDS and absorbance of lysates was measured with an ELISA plate reader at a test wavelength of 570 nm (reference, 630 nm). The cell viability was represented by the absorbance compared to that of control cells.

Flow cytometry

**[0051]** The effect of ZNFN3A1 in cell cycle progression was determined by flow cytometry. Cells were plated at a density of  $1 \times 10^5$  cells/100 mm dish. The cells were trypsinized at the given time course, collected in PBS and fixed in 70% cold ethanol. After RNase treatment, cells were stained with propidium iodide (50  $\mu$ g/ml) in PBS. Flow cytometry was performed on a Becton Dickinson FACScan and analyzed by CellQuest and ModFit software (Verity Software House). The percentages of nuclei in G0/G1, S and G2/M phases of the cell cycle, and any sub-G1 population were determined from at least 20,000 ungated cells.

**[0052]** To examine the role of ZNFN3A1-siRNAs in cell cycle,  $1 \times 10^5$  of SNU475 cells transfected with psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1 or control plasmids were collected by trypsinization at 5 days after transfection. After fixation in 70% cold ethanol, cells were treated with RNase and propidium iodide (50  $\mu$ g/ml) in PBS, and analyzed by a FACScan (Becton Dickinson, San Jose, CA). The percentages of cells in G0/G1, S and G2/M phases of the cell cycle, and any sub-G1 population were determined from at least 20,000 ungated cells using ModFit software (Verity Software House)

[Example 2] Production and Characterization of Plasmids Expressing ZNFN3A1 siRNAs

**[0053]** The entire coding sequence of ZNFN3A1 was amplified with a set of primers, 5'-GGGGTACCAGGATGGAGCCGCTGAAGGTGG-3' (SEQ ID No: 42), and 5'-GGGAATTCTTAGGATGCTCTGATGTTGGCGTCG-3' (SEQ ID No: 43) and cloned into the appropriate cloning sites of pcDNA 3.1(+) vector (Invitrogen) (pcDNA-ZNFN3A1). Plasmids expressing ZNFN3A1-siRNAs were prepared by cloning of double-stranded oligonucleotides into psiU6BX vector.

**[0054]** The nucleotide sequence of the siRNAs were designed using an siRNA design computer program available from the Ambion website. ([http://www.ambion.com/techlib/misc/siRNA\\_finder.html](http://www.ambion.com/techlib/misc/siRNA_finder.html)). Briefly, nucleotide sequences for siRNA synthesis are selected using the following protocol.

*Selection of siRNA Target Sites:*

**[0055]**

1. Starting with the AUG start codon of the ZNFN3A1 transcript, scan downstream for an AA dinucleotide sequences. The occurrence of each AA and the 3' adjacent 19 nucleotides are recorded as potential siRNA target sites. Tuschl et al. recommend against designing siRNA to the 5' and 3' untranslated regions (UTRs) and regions near the start codon (within 75bases) as these may be richer in regulatory protein binding sites. UTR-binding proteins and/or translation initiation complexes may interfere with binding of the siRNA endonuclease complex.
2. The potential target sites are compared to the appropriate genome database (human, mouse, rat, etc.) to eliminate target sequences with significant homology to other coding sequences.
3. Qualifying target sequences are selected for synthesis. Several target sequences along the length of the gene are selected for evaluation.

The oligonucleotides used for ZNFN3A1 siRNAs are shown below. psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1 1-13 (siRNA 1-13) were prepared by cloning the following double-stranded oligonucleotide into the BbsI site of the psiU6 vector. The corresponding nucleotide position relative to the ZNFN3A1 nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 is listed for each oligonucleotide sequence. Each oligonucleotide is a combination of a sense nucleotide sequence and an antisense nucleotide sequence of the target sequence ZNFN3A1. The nucleotide sequences of the hairpin loop structure and target sequence of siRNA 1 to 13 are shown in SEQ ID NO:44 to SEQ ID NO:56 and SEQ ID NO:57 to SEQ ID NO:69, respectively (endonuclease recognition sites are eliminated from each hairpin loop structure sequence).

[0056] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-1 /siRNA1: (nucleotide numbers 426-446 of SEQ ID No: 1)

5 5'- CACCAAACCTTATGGATGGAGCACCTTTCAAGAGAAGGTGCTCCATCCATAA  
GTTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 3)

and

10 5'- AAAAAA ACTTATGGATGGAGCACCTTCTCTTGAAAGGTGCTCCATCCATAA  
GTTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 4)

15 [0057] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-2 /siRNA2: (nucleotide numbers 451-471 of SEQ ID No: 1)

20 5'-CACCAATCAGAGAAGCTTTACTCATTTC AAGAGAATGAGTAAAGCTTCTCTG  
ATT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 5)

and

25 5'-AAAAAATCAGAGAAGCTTTACTCATTCTCTTGAAATGAGTAAAGCTTCTCTG  
ATT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 6)

30 [0058] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-3/siRNA3: (nucleotide numbers 495-515 of SEQ ID No: 1)

35 siRNA2; 5'- CACCAACAAACTGACTGAAGATAAGTTCAAGAGACTTATCTTCAG  
TCAGTTTGTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 7)

and

40 5'-AAAAAACA AACTGACTGAAGATAAGTCTCTTGAACTTATCTTCAGTCAGTTT  
GTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 8)

45 [0059] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-4 /siRNA4: (nucleotide numbers 532-552 of SEQ ID No: 1)

50 5'- CACCAACTCGTAATGACATTTCAACTTCAAGAGAGTTGAAATGTCATTACG  
AGTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 9)

and

5'-AAAAAACTCGTAATGACATTTCAACTCTCTTGAAGTTGAAATGTCATTACGA  
GTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 10)

5

[0060] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-5 /siRNA5: (nucleotide numbers 623-643 of SEQ ID No: 1)

5'-CACCAAAGTGATCTGCAACTCTTTTTCAAGAGAAAAGAGTTGCAGATCAC  
TTTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 11);

10

and

15

5'-AAAAAAAAGTGATCTGCAACTCTTTTCTCTTGAAAAAGAGTTGCAGATCACT  
TTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 12)

20

[0061] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-6 /siRNA6: (nucleotide numbers 625-645 of SEQ ID No: 1)

5'-CACCAAGTGATCTGCAACTCTTTCATTCAGAGATGAAAGAGTTGCAGATC  
ACTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 13)

25

and

30

5'-AAAAAAGTGATCTGCAACTCTTTCATCTCTTGAATGAAAGAGTTGCAGATCA  
CTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 14)

35

[0062] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-7 /siRNA7: (nucleotide numbers 636-656 of SEQ ID No: 1)

5'-CACCAACTCTTTCACCATCTGTAATTTCAAGAGAATTACAGATGGTGAAAG  
AGTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 15)

40

and

45

5'-AAAAAACTCTTTCACCATCTGTAATTCTCTTGAAATTACAGATGGTGAAAGA  
GTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 16)

50

[0063] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-8 /siRNA8: (nucleotide numbers 726-746 of SEQ ID No: 1)

5'-CACCAACTGTTTCGATTGTGTTCAATTTCAAGAGAATTGAACACAATCGAACA  
GTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 17)

55

and

5'-AAAAAACTGTTTCGATTGTGTTCAATTCTCTTGAAATTGAACACAATCGAACA  
GTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 18)

5

[0064] psiU6BX-ZNFNA1-9 /siRNA9: (nucleotides numbers 906-926 of SEQ ID No: 1)

5'-CACCAAGGATGCTGATATGCTAACTTTCAAGAGAAGTTAGCATATCAGCAT  
CCTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 19)

10

and

15

5'-AAAAAAGGATGCTGATATGCTAACTTCTCTTGAAAGTTAGCATATCAGCATC  
CTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 20)

20

[0065] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-10 /siRNA10: (nucleotide numbers 923-943 of SEQ ID No: 1)

5'-CACCAACTGGTGATGAGCAAGTATGTTCAAGAGACATACTTGCTCATCACC  
AGTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 21)

25

and

30

5'-AAAAAACTGGTGATGAGCAAGTATGTCTCTTGAACATACTTGCTCATCACCA  
GTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 22)

35

[0066] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-11 /siRNA11: (nucleotide numbers 937-957 of SEQ ID No: 1)

5'-CACCAAGTATGGAAGGAAGTTCAAGTTCAAGAGACTTGAACTTCCTTCCAT  
ACTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 23)

40

and

45

5'-AAAAAAGTATGGAAGGAAGTTCAAGTCTCTTGAACTTGAACTTCCTTCCATA  
CTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 24)

50

[0067] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-12 /siRNA12: (nucleotide numbers 1065-1085 of SEQ ID No: 1)

5'-CACCAACATCTACCAGCTGAAGGTGTTCAAGAGACACCTTCAGCTGGTAGA  
TGTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 25)

55

and

5' -AAAAAACATCTACCAGCTGAAGGTGTCTCTTGAACACCTTCAGCTGGTAGAT  
5  
GTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 26)

[0068] psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-13 /siRNA13: (nucleotide numbers 1258-1278 of SEQ ID No: 1)

10  
5' - CACCAAGCAATGAAGAATCTGAGACTTCAAGAGAGTCTCAGATTCTTCATT  
GCTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 27)

15 and

20  
5' -AAAAAAGCAATGAAGAATCTGAGACTCTCTTGAAGTCTCAGATTCTTCATTG  
CTT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 28)

[0069] psiU6BX-siZNFN3A1 or psiU6BX-mock plasmids were transfected with pcDNA-ZNFN3A1 into COS7 cells using FuGENE6 reagent according to the supplier's recommendations (Roche). The plasmids were solely transfected into SNU479 cells expressing abundant amount of endogenous ZNFN3A1. Whole extracts of the cells were lysed 2 days after the transfection and utilized for immunoblot analysis.

[0070] Among the 13 different expression plasmids expressing ZNFN3A1 siRNAs, psiUGBX-ZNFN3A1-8, -12, and -13 most significantly reduced expression of exogenous ZNFN3A1 by western blot analysis, when they were transfected into COS7 cells together with pcDNA-ZNFN3A1. Among other plasmids, psiUGBX-ZNFN3A1-4 showed marked reduction, and psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-2, -5, -6, -7 and -10 exerted moderate suppression, whereas psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-1, -3, -9 and -11 had no or little effect on the expression (Figure 1). To further examine RNAi activity of ZNFN3A1 siRNAs, we transfected psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-1, -4, -12, or psiU6BX-mock into SNU475 cells that express abundant amount of ZNFN3A1 (Figure 2). Western blot analysis using the extracts of transfected cells demonstrated marked reduction of endogenous ZNFN3A1 by psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-12, and moderate suppression by psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-4 compared to cells transfected with psiU6BX-mock. On the other hand transfection with psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-1 did not affect expression of ZNFN3A1 (Figure 3).

[Example 3] Growth suppression of hepatoma and colon cancer cells by *ZNFN3A1* siRNA

[0071] To test whether suppression of *ZNFN3A1* may result in growth suppression of hepatoma cells, SNU475 cells were transfected with either psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-12, the vector that demonstrated the most knock down effect on the expression; psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-4 which demonstrated mild silencing effect; psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-1 which demonstrated no silencing effect, or psiU6BX-mock. MTT assays at both 6 days and 9 days of transfection showed that psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-12 has the highest growth inhibitory effect and that psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-1 did not change the number of surviving cells compared with cells transfected with psiU6BX-mock (Figure 4). The growth inhibitory effect of the plasmids was correlated to their gene silencing activity. To further demonstrate the growth inhibitory effect of ZNFN3A1-siRNAs, psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-12; psiU6BX-EGFP For the control, psiU6BX-EGFP was prepared by cloning the following double-stranded oligonucleotide

50  
5' - CACCGAAGCAGCACGACTTCTTCTTCAAGAGAGAAGAAGTCGTGCT  
GCTTC-3' (SEQ ID No: 40)

55 and

5' - AAAAGAAGCAGCACGACTTCTTCTTCTTGAAGAAGAAGTCGTGCT GCTTC -3' (SEQ ID No: 41) into the BbsI site of the psiU6BX vector. or psiU6BX-mock was transfected into various hepatoma cell lines including SNU398, SNU423, SNU449, Huh7, Alex-

5 ander, and HepG2 and two colon cancer cell lines, SW948 and HCT116. Transfection of psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-12 significantly reduced number of surviving cells compared with that of psiU6BX-EGFP or psiU6BX-mock (Figure 5). Furthermore, FACS analysis demonstrated that transfection of psiU6BX-ZNFN3A1-12 increased the number of cells in sub-G1 phase (Figure 6). These results indicate that ZNFN3A1 contributes to aberrant cell growth and/or survival in a wide range of human cancer cells.

Industrial Applicability

10 **[0072]** The present inventors have shown that the cell growth is suppressed by small interfering RNA (siRNA) that specifically target the ZNFN3A1 gene. Thus, this novel siRNAs are useful target for the development of anti-cancer pharmaceuticals. For example, agents that block the expression of ZNFN3A1 or prevent its activity may find therapeutic utility as anti-cancer agents, particularly anti-cancer agents for the treatment of liver cancer or colon cancer, such as HCC or colorectal adenocarcinoma.

15 **[0073]** While the invention has been described in detail and with reference to specific embodiments thereof, it will be apparent to one skilled in the art that various changes and modifications can be made therein without departing from the scope of the invention.

Reference

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45 SEQUENCE LISTING

**[0075]**

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JAPAN AS REPRESENTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

<120> COMPOSITIONS AND METHODS OF INHIBITING CELL GROWTH

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 <223> An artificially synthesized target sequence for siRNA

<400> 62  
 35 aagtgatctg caactcttc a      21

<210> 63  
 <211> 21  
 <212> DNA  
 40 <213> Artificial

<220>  
 <223> An artificially synthesized target sequence for siRNA

<400> 63  
 45 aactcttca ccatctgtaa t      21

<210> 64  
 <211> 21  
 <212> DNA  
 50 <213> Artificial

<220>  
 <223> An artificially synthesized target sequence for siRNA

55 <400> 64  
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<210> 65

<211> 21  
 <212> DNA  
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5 <220>  
 <223> An artificially synthesized target sequence for siRNA

<400> 65  
 aaggatgctg atatgctaac t 21

10 <210> 66  
 <211> 21  
 <212> DNA  
 <213> Artificial

15 <220>  
 <223> An artificially synthesized target sequence for siRNA

<400> 66  
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20 <210> 67  
 <211> 21  
 <212> DNA  
 <213> Artificial

<220>  
 <223> An artificially synthesized target sequence for siRNA

<400> 67  
 aagtatggaa ggaagttcaa g 21

30 <210> 68  
 <211> 21  
 <212> DNA  
 <213> Artificial

<220>  
 <223> An artificially synthesized target sequence for siRNA

<400> 68  
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40 <210> 69  
 <211> 21  
 <212> DNA  
 <213> Artificial

<220>  
 <223> An artificially synthesized target sequence for siRNA

<400> 69  
 aagcaatgaa gaatctgaga c 21

55 **Claims**

1. A composition comprising a ZNFN3A1 small interfering RNA (siRNA) for use in treating a tumor **characterized by**

over-expressing ZNFN3A1 in a subject, wherein said siRNA comprises a sense ZNFN3A1 nucleic acid and an anti-sense ZNFN3A1 nucleic acid, and wherein said siRNA is specific for a ZNFN3A1 target selected from the group consisting of nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1, wherein said ZNFN3A1 siRNA is between 19 and 25 nucleotides in length.

- 5
2. Use of a composition comprising a ZNFN3A1 small interfering RNA (siRNA) for the preparation of a pharmaceutical composition for treating a tumor **characterized by** over-expressing ZNFN3A1 in a subject, wherein said siRNA comprises a sense ZNFN3A1 nucleic acid and an anti-sense ZNFN3A1 nucleic acid, and wherein said siRNA is specific for a ZNFN3A1 target selected from the group consisting of nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1, wherein said ZNFN3A1 siRNA is between 19 and 25 nucleotides in length.
  - 10
  3. The composition for use of claim 1 or the use of claim 2, wherein said siRNA has the general formula 5'-[A]-[B]-[A']-3', wherein [A] is a ribonucleotide sequence corresponding to a sequence selected from the group consisting of nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1, [B] is a ribonucleotide sequence consisting of 3 to 23 nucleotides, and [A'] is a ribonucleotide sequence consisting of the complementary sequence of [A].
  - 15
  4. The composition for use of claim 3 or the use of claim 3, wherein said composition comprises a transfection-enhancing agent.
  - 20
  5. A polynucleotide for use in treating a tumor **characterized by** over-expressing ZNFN3A1, wherein the polynucleotide comprises a combination of a sense strand nucleic acid and an antisense strand nucleic acid, wherein said sense strand nucleic acid comprises a nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1, and said antisense strand nucleic acid consists of the complementary sequence of said nucleotide sequence, wherein said polynucleotide is an oligonucleotide which is between 19 and 25 nucleotides in length.
  - 25
  6. The polynucleotide for use of claim 5, wherein said sense strand nucleic acid and antisense strand nucleic acid are on the same strand.
  - 30
  7. A vector for use in treating a tumor **characterized by** over-expressing ZNFN3A1, wherein the vector comprises a polynucleotide comprising a sequence combination of a sense strand nucleic acid and an antisense strand nucleic acid, wherein said sense strand nucleic acid comprises a nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1, and said antisense strand nucleic acid consists of the complementary sequence of said nucleotide sequence, wherein said polynucleotide is an oligonucleotide which is between 19 and 25 nucleotides in length.
  - 35
  8. The vector of claim 7, wherein said polynucleotide has the general formula 5'-[A]-[B]-[A']-3', wherein [A] is a nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1, [B] is a nucleotide sequence consisting of 3 to 23 nucleotides, and [A'] is a nucleotide sequence consisting of the complementary sequence of [A].
  - 40
  9. A composition for use in treating a tumor **characterized by** over-expressing ZNFN3A1, wherein the composition comprises at least one siRNA comprising a combination of a sense strand nucleic acid and an antisense strand nucleic acid, wherein said sense strand nucleic acid comprises a ribonucleotide sequence corresponding to a sequence selected from the group consisting of nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1, and said antisense strand sequence consists of the complementary sequence of said nucleotide sequence, wherein said siRNA is between 19 and 25 nucleotides in length.
  - 45
  - 50
  10. A double-stranded molecule for use in treating a tumor **characterized by** over-expressing ZNFN3A1, wherein the double-stranded molecule comprises a sense strand and an antisense strand, wherein the sense strand comprises a ribonucleotide sequence corresponding to a ZNFN3A1 target sequence, and wherein the antisense strand comprises a ribonucleotide sequence which is complementary to said sense strand, wherein said sense strand and said antisense strand hybridize to each other to form said double-stranded molecule, wherein said double-stranded molecule, when introduced into a cell expressing the ZNFN3A1 gene, inhibits expression of said gene, and wherein
  - 55

said ZNFN3A1 target sequence is selected from the group consisting of nucleotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, and 1258-1278 of SEQ ID NO:1, wherein said double-stranded molecule is an oligonucleotide of between 19 and 25 nucleotides in length.

- 5 11. The double-stranded molecule for use of claim 10, wherein a single ribonucleotide transcript comprises the sense strand and the antisense strand, said double-stranded molecule further comprising a single-stranded ribonucleotide sequence linking said sense strand and said antisense strand.
- 10 12. A vector encoding the double-stranded molecule of claim 10 or 11 for use of claim 10.
13. The vector for use of claim 12, wherein the vector encodes a transcript having a secondary structure, wherein the transcript comprises the sense strand and the antisense strand.
- 15 14. The vector for use of claim 13, wherein the transcript further comprises a single-stranded ribonucleotide sequence linking said sense strand and said antisense strand.
15. The composition for use of claim 1 or 9, the use of claim 2, the polynucleotide for use of claim 5, the vector for use of claim 7 or the double-stranded molecule for use of claim 10, wherein said tumor is a colorectal cancer or liver cancer.
- 20 16. The composition for use, the use, the polynucleotide for use, the vector for use or the double-stranded molecule for use of claim 15, wherein
- (a) the colorectal cancer is an adenocarcinoma; or
- (b) the liver cancer is a hepatocellular carcinoma.
- 25

#### Patentansprüche

- 30 1. Zusammensetzung, umfassend eine ZNFN3A1-kurze interferierende RNA (siRNA) zur Behandlung eines Tumors, welcher durch ZNFN3A1-Überexpression charakterisiert ist, in einem Individuum, wobei die siRNA eine Sense-ZNFN3A1-Nucleinsäure und eine Antisense-ZNFN3A1-Nucleinsäure umfasst, und wobei die siRNA spezifisch für ein ZNFN3A1-Ziel ist, welches ausgewählt ist aus der Gruppe bestehend aus den Nucleotiden 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085 und 1258-1278 der SEQ ID NO: 1, wobei die ZNFN3A1-siRNA zwischen 19 und 25 Nucleotide lang ist.
- 35 2. Verwendung einer Zusammensetzung umfassend eine ZNFN3A1-kurze interferierende RNA (siRNA) für die Herstellung eines Arzneimittels zur Behandlung eines Tumors, welcher durch ZNFN3A1-Überexpression charakterisiert ist, in einem Individuum, wobei die siRNA eine Sense-ZNFN3A1-Nucleinsäure und eine Antisense-ZNFN3A1-Nucleinsäure umfasst, und wobei die siRNA spezifisch ist für ein ZNFN3A1-Ziel, welches ausgewählt ist aus der Gruppe bestehend aus den Nucleotiden 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085 und 1258-1278 der SEQ ID NO: 1, wobei die ZNFN3A1-siRNA zwischen 19 und 25 Nucleotide lang ist.
- 40 3. Zusammensetzung zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 1 oder Verwendung nach Anspruch 2, wobei die siRNA die allgemeine Formel 5'-[A]-[B]-[A']-3' hat, wobei [A] eine Ribonucleotidsequenz ist, die einer Sequenz entspricht, welche ausgewählt ist aus der Gruppe bestehend aus den Nucleotiden 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085 und 1258-1278 der SEQ ID NO: 1, [B] eine Ribonucleotidsequenz ist, die aus 3 bis 23 Nucleotiden besteht, und [A'] eine Ribonucleotidsequenz ist, welche aus der komplementären Sequenz zu [A] besteht.
- 45 4. Zusammensetzung zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 3 oder Verwendung nach Anspruch 3, wobei die Zusammensetzung ein Transfektions-verstärkendes Mittel umfasst.
- 50 5. Polynucleotid zur Verwendung in der Behandlung eines Tumors, welcher durch ZNFN3A1-Überexpression charakterisiert ist, wobei das Polynucleotid eine Kombination eines Sense-Nucleinsäurestrangs und eines Antisense-Nucleinsäurestrangs umfasst, wobei der Sense-Nucleinsäurestrang eine Nucleotidsequenz umfasst, welche ausgewählt ist aus der Gruppe bestehend aus den Nucleotiden 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085 und 1258-1278 der SEQ ID NO: 1, und der Antisense-Nucleinsäurestrang aus der komplementären Sequenz zu der Nucleotidsequenz besteht, wobei das Polynucleotid ein Oligonucleotid ist, das zwischen
- 55

19 und 25 Nucleotide lang ist.

- 5
6. Polynucleotid zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 5, wobei der Sense-Nucleinsäurestrang und der Antisense-Nucleinsäurestrang auf demselben Strang sind.
7. Vektor zur Verwendung in der Behandlung eines Tumors, welcher durch ZNFN3A1-Überexpression charakterisiert ist, wobei der Vektor ein Polynucleotid umfasst, welches eine Sequenzkombination eines Sense-Nucleinsäurestrangs und eines Antisense-Nucleinsäurestrangs umfasst, wobei der Sense-Nucleinsäurestrang eine Nucleotidsequenz umfasst, welche ausgewählt ist aus der Gruppe bestehend aus den Nucleotiden 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085 und 1258-1278 der SEQ ID NO: 1, und der Antisense-Nucleinsäurestrang aus der komplementären Sequenz zu der Nucleotidsequenz besteht, wobei das Polynucleotid ein Oligonucleotid ist, das zwischen 19 und 25 Nucleotide lang ist.
- 10
8. Vektor zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 7, wobei das Polynucleotid die allgemeine Formel 5'-[A]-[B]-[A']-3' hat, wobei [A] eine Nucleotidsequenz ist, welche ausgewählt ist aus der Gruppe bestehend aus den Nucleotiden 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085 und 1258-1278 der SEQ ID NO: 1, [B] eine Nucleotidsequenz ist, die aus 3 bis 23 Nucleotiden besteht, und [A'] eine Nucleotidsequenz ist, welche aus der komplementären Sequenz zu [A] besteht.
- 15
9. Zusammensetzung zur Verwendung in der Behandlung eines Tumors, welcher durch ZNFN3A1-Überexpression charakterisiert ist, wobei die Zusammensetzung mindestens eine siRNA umfasst, die eine Kombination eines Sense-Nucleinsäurestrangs und eines Antisense-Nucleinsäurestrangs umfasst, wobei der Sense-Nucleinsäurestrang eine Ribonucleotidsequenz umfasst, die einer Sequenz entspricht, welche ausgewählt ist aus der Gruppe bestehend aus den Nucleotiden 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085 und 1258-1278 der SEQ ID NO: 1, und der Antisense-Strang aus der komplementären Sequenz zu der Nucleotidsequenz besteht, wobei die siRNA zwischen 19 und 25 Nucleotide lang ist.
- 20
10. Doppelsträngiges Molekül zur Verwendung in der Behandlung eines Tumors, welcher durch ZNFN3A1-Überexpression charakterisiert ist, wobei das doppelsträngige Molekül einen Sense-Strang und einen Antisense-Strang umfasst, wobei der Sense-Strang eine Ribonucleotidsequenz umfasst, die einer ZNFN3A1-Zielsequenz entspricht, und wobei der Antisense-Strang eine Ribonucleotidsequenz umfasst, welche komplementär zu dem Sense-Strang ist, wobei der Sense-Strang und der Antisense-Strang miteinander hybridisieren unter Bildung des doppelsträngigen Moleküls, wobei das doppelsträngige Molekül, wenn es in eine Zelle, welche das ZNFN3A1-Gen exprimiert, eingeführt wird, die Expression des Gens hemmt, und wobei die ZNFN3A1-Zielsequenz ausgewählt ist aus der Gruppe bestehend aus den Nucleotiden 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085 und 1258-1278 der SEQ ID NO: 1; wobei das doppelsträngige Molekül ein Oligonucleotid mit einer Länge zwischen 19 und 25 Nucleotiden ist.
- 25
11. Doppelsträngiges Molekül zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 10, wobei ein einzelnes Ribonucleotid-Transkript den Sense-Strang und den Antisense-Strang umfasst, wobei das doppelsträngige Molekül ferner eine einzelsträngige Ribonucleotidsequenz umfasst, welche den Sense-Strang und den Antisense-Strang verbindet.
- 30
12. Vektor, welcher das doppelsträngige Molekül nach Anspruch 10 oder 11 codiert, zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 10.
13. Vektor zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 12, wobei der Vektor ein Transkript codiert, das eine Sekundärstruktur hat, wobei das Transkript den Sense-Strang und den Antisense-Strang umfasst.
- 35
14. Vektor zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 13, wobei das Transkript ferner eine einzelsträngige Ribonucleotidsequenz umfasst, welche den Sense-Strang und den Antisense-Strang verbindet.
- 40
15. Zusammensetzung zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 1 oder 9, Verwendung nach Anspruch 2, Polynucleotid zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 5, Vektor zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 7 oder doppelsträngiges Molekül zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 10, wobei der Tumor ein Kolorektalkrebs oder Leberkrebs ist.
- 45
16. Zusammensetzung zur Verwendung, Verwendung, Polynucleotid zur Verwendung, Vektor zur Verwendung oder doppelsträngiges Molekül zur Verwendung nach Anspruch 15, wobei
- 50
- 55

(a) der Kolorektalkrebs ein Adenokarzinom; oder

(b) der Leberkrebs ein hepatozelluläres Karzinom ist.

## Revendications

- 5
1. Composition comprenant un petit ARN interférent (ARNsi) de ZNFN3A1, destinée à être utilisée dans le traitement d'une tumeur **caractérisée par** une surexpression de ZNFN3A1 chez un sujet, dans laquelle ledit ARNsi comprend un acide nucléique de ZNFN3A1 sens et un acide nucléique de ZNFN3A1 antisens, et dans laquelle ledit ARNsi est spécifique pour une cible de ZNFN3A1 sélectionnée dans le groupe consistant en les nucléotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, et 1258-1278 de SEQ ID NO: 1, où ledit ARNsi de ZNFN3A1 a une longueur comprise entre 19 et 25 nucléotides.
  - 10
  - 15
  2. Utilisation d'une composition comprenant un petit ARN interférent (ARNsi) de ZNFN3A1 pour la préparation d'une composition pharmaceutique destinée au traitement d'une tumeur **caractérisée par** une surexpression de ZNFN3A1 chez un sujet, où ledit ARNsi comprend un acide nucléique de ZNFN3A1 sens et un acide nucléique de ZNFN3A1 antisens, et où ledit ARNsi est spécifique pour une cible de ZNFN3A1 sélectionnée dans le groupe consistant en les nucléotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, et 1258-1278 de SEQ ID NO: 1, où ledit ARNsi de ZNFN3A1 a une longueur comprise entre 19 et 25 nucléotides.
  - 20
  - 25
  3. Composition destinée à une utilisation selon la revendication 1 ou la revendication 2, dans laquelle ledit ARNsi possède la formule générale 5'-[A]-[B]-[A']-3', où [A] est une séquence ribonucléotidique correspondant à une séquence sélectionnée dans le groupe consistant en les nucléotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, et 1258-1278 de SEQ ID NO: 1, [B] est une séquence ribonucléotidique consistant en 3 à 23 nucléotides, et [A'] est une séquence ribonucléotidique consistant en la séquence complémentaire de [A].
  - 30
  - 35
  4. Composition destinée à une utilisation selon la revendication 3, où ladite composition comprend un agent améliorant la transfection.
  - 40
  5. Polynucléotide destiné à être utilisé dans le traitement d'une tumeur **caractérisée par** une surexpression de ZNFN3A1, où le polynucléotide comprend une combinaison d'un acide nucléique de brin sens et d'un acide nucléique de brin antisens, où ledit acide nucléique de brin sens comprend une séquence de nucléotides sélectionnée dans le groupe consistant en les nucléotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, et 1258-1278 de SEQ ID NO: 1, et ledit acide nucléique de brin antisens consiste en la séquence complémentaire de ladite séquence de nucléotides, où ledit polynucléotide est un oligonucléotide ayant une longueur comprise entre 19 et 25 nucléotides.
  - 45
  6. Polynucléotide destiné à une utilisation selon la revendication 5, dans lequel les dits acides nucléiques du brin sens et acide nucléique de brin antisens sont sur le même brin.
  - 50
  7. Vecteur destiné à être utilisé dans le traitement d'une tumeur **caractérisée par** une surexpression de ZNFN3A1, où le vecteur comprend un polynucléotide comprenant une combinaison de séquences d'un acide nucléique de brin sens et d'un acide nucléique de brin antisens, où ledit acide nucléique de brin sens comprend une séquence de nucléotides sélectionnée dans le groupe consistant en les nucléotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, et 1258-1278 de SEQ ID NO: 1, et ledit acide nucléique de brin antisens consiste en la séquence complémentaire de ladite séquence de nucléotides, où ledit polynucléotide est un oligonucléotide ayant une longueur comprise entre 19 et 25 nucléotides.
  - 55
  8. Vecteur destiné à une utilisation selon la revendication 7, où ledit polynucléotide possède la formule générale 5'-[A]-[B]-[A']-3', où [A] est une séquence de nucléotides sélectionnée dans le groupe consistant en les nucléotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, et 1258-1278 de SEQ ID NO: 1, [B] est une séquence de nucléotides consistant en 3 à 23 nucléotides, et [A'] est une séquence de nucléotides consistant en la séquence complémentaire de [A].
  9. Composition destinée à une utilisation dans le traitement d'une tumeur **caractérisée par** une surexpression de ZNFN3A1, où la composition comprend au moins un ARNsi comprenant une combinaison d'un acide nucléique de brin sens et d'un acide nucléique de brin antisens, où ledit acide nucléique de brin sens comprend une séquence ribonucléotidique correspondant à une séquence sélectionnée dans le groupe consistant en les nucléotides 451-471,

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532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, et 1258-1278 de SEQ ID NO: 1, et ladite séquence de brin antisens consiste en la séquence complémentaire de ladite séquence de nucléotides, où ledit ARNsi a une longueur comprise entre 19 et 25 nucléotides.

- 5 **10.** Molécule double brin destinée à une utilisation dans le traitement d'une tumeur **caractérisée par** une surexpression de ZNFN3A1, où la molécule double brin comprend un brin sens et un brin antisens, où le brin sens comprend une séquence ribonucléotidique correspondant à une séquence cible de ZNFN3A1, et où le brin antisens comprend une séquence ribonucléotidique qui est complémentaire audit brin sens, où ledit brin sens et ledit brin antisens s'hybrident l'un à l'autre pour former ladite molécule double brin, où ladite molécule double brin, lorsqu'elle est  
10 introduite dans une cellule exprimant le gène ZNFN3A1, inhibe l'expression dudit gène, et où ladite séquence cible de ZNFN3A1 est sélectionnée dans le groupe consistant en les nucléotides 451-471, 532-552, 623-643, 625-645, 636-656, 726-746, 923-943, 1065-1085, et 1258-1278 de SEQ ID NO: 1, où ladite molécule double brin est un oligonucléotide ayant une longueur comprise entre 19 et 25 nucléotides.
- 15 **11.** Molécule double brin destinée à une utilisation selon la revendication 10, dans laquelle un seul transcrit de ribonucléotide comprend le brin sens et le brin antisens, ladite molécule double brin comprenant en outre une séquence ribonucléotidique simple brin liant ledit brin sens et ledit brin antisens.
- 12.** Vecteur codant pour la molécule double brin selon la revendication 10 ou 11, destinée à une utilisation selon la  
20 revendication 10.
- 13.** Vecteur destiné à une utilisation selon la revendication 12, où le vecteur code pour un transcrit ayant une structure secondaire, où le transcrit comprend le brin sens et le brin antisens.
- 25 **14.** Vecteur destiné à une utilisation selon la revendication 13, où le transcrit comprend en outre une séquence ribonucléotidique simple brin liant ledit brin sens et ledit brin antisens.
- 15.** Composition destinée à une utilisation selon la revendication 1 ou 9, utilisation selon la revendication 2, polynucléotide destiné à une utilisation selon la revendication 5, vecteur destiné à une utilisation selon la revendication 7  
30 ou molécule double brin destinée à une utilisation selon la revendication 10, où ladite tumeur est un cancer colorectal ou un cancer du foie.
- 16.** Composition destinée à une utilisation, utilisation, polynucléotide destiné à une utilisation, vecteur destiné à une utilisation ou molécule double brin destinée à une utilisation selon la revendication 15, où  
35 (a) le cancer colorectal est un adénocarcinome; ou  
(b) le cancer du foie est un carcinome hépatocellulaire.

40

45

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55

Figure 1

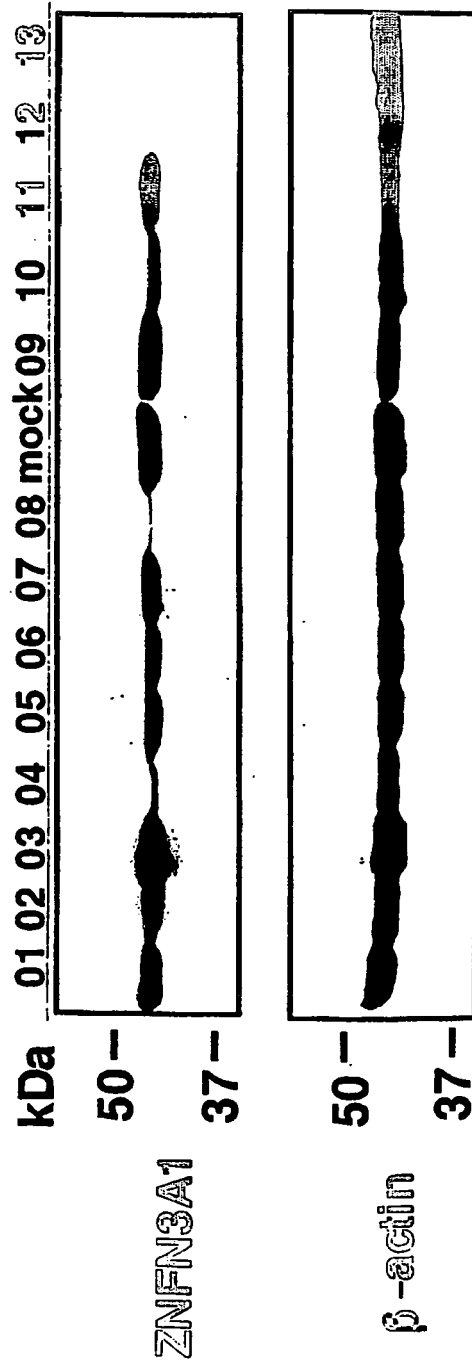


Figure 2

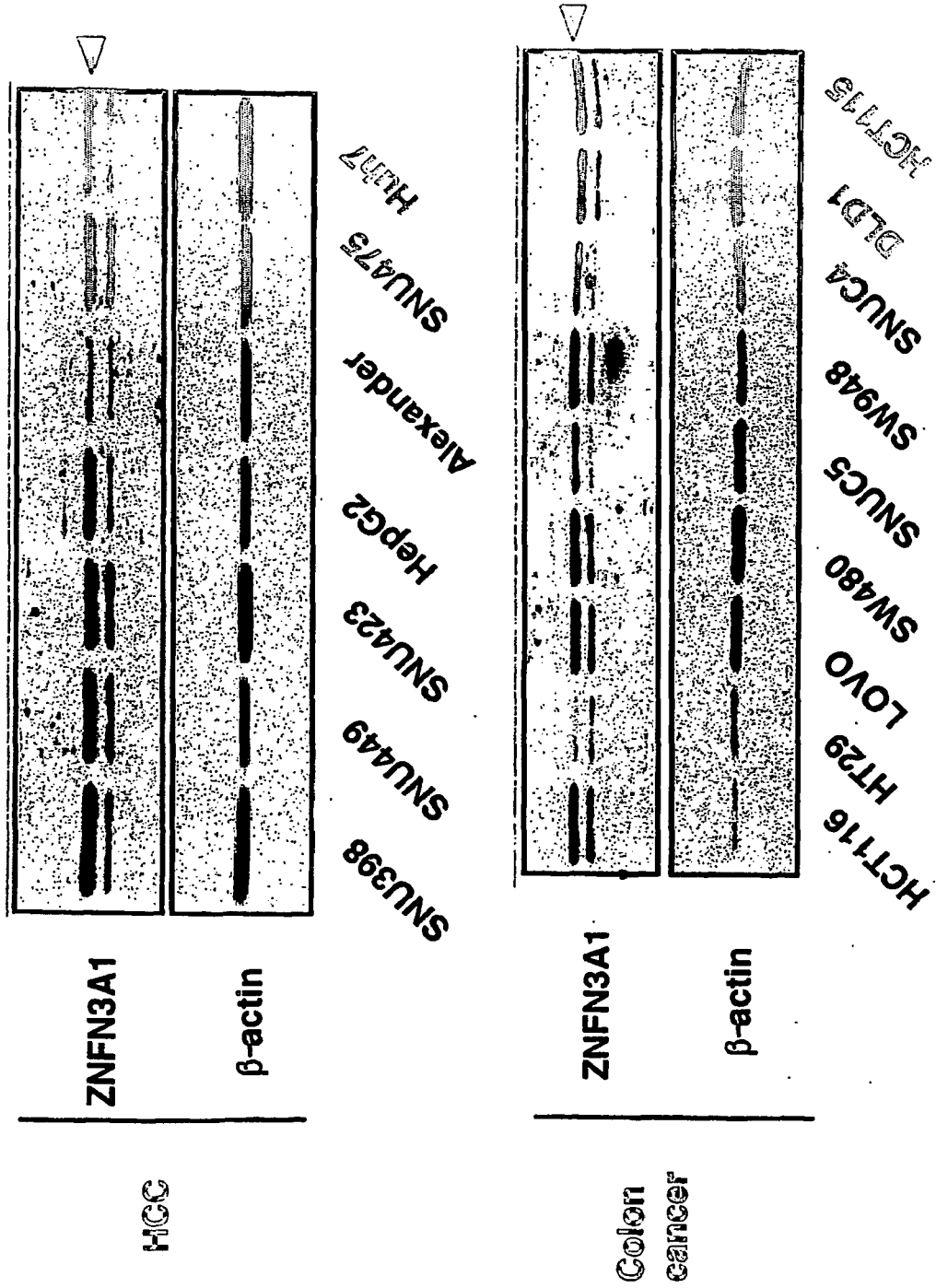


Figure 3

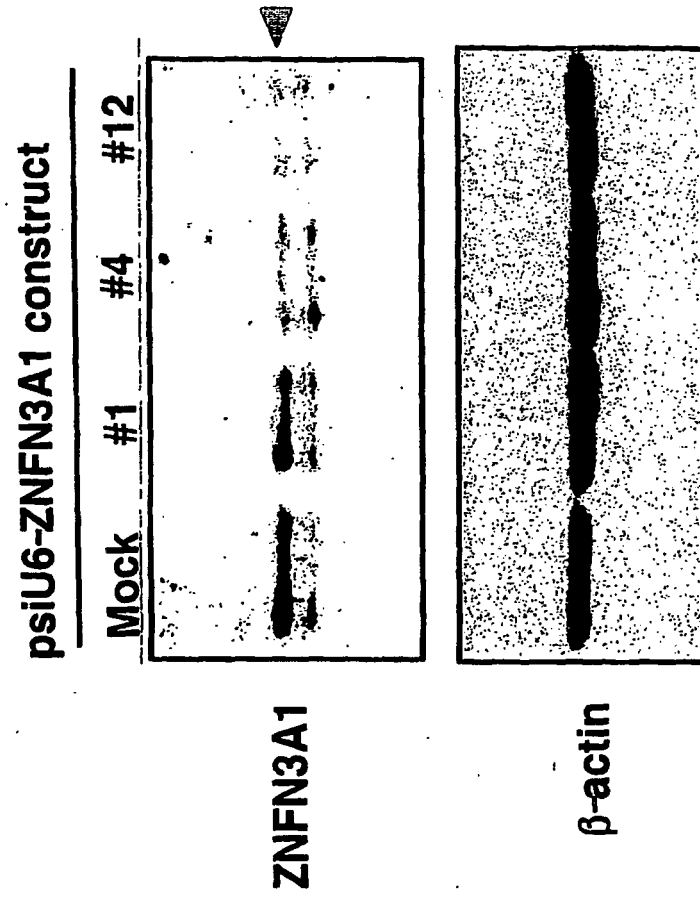


Figure 4

MTT assay

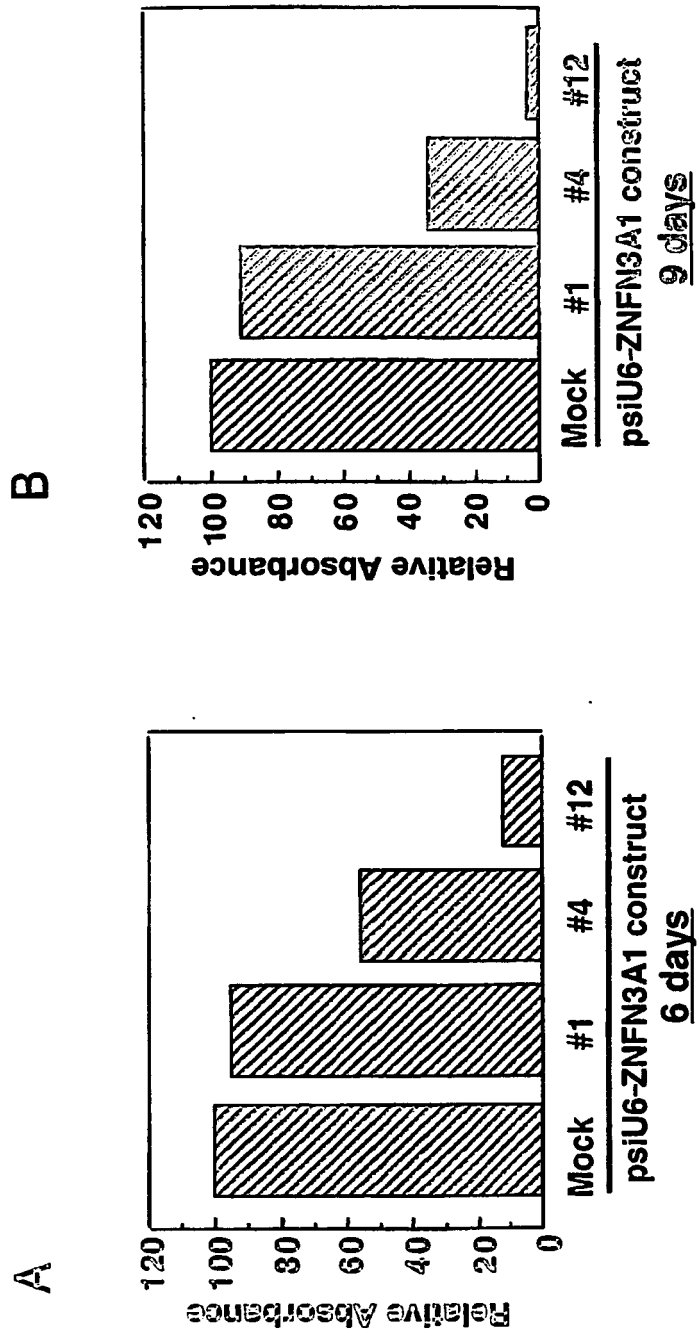
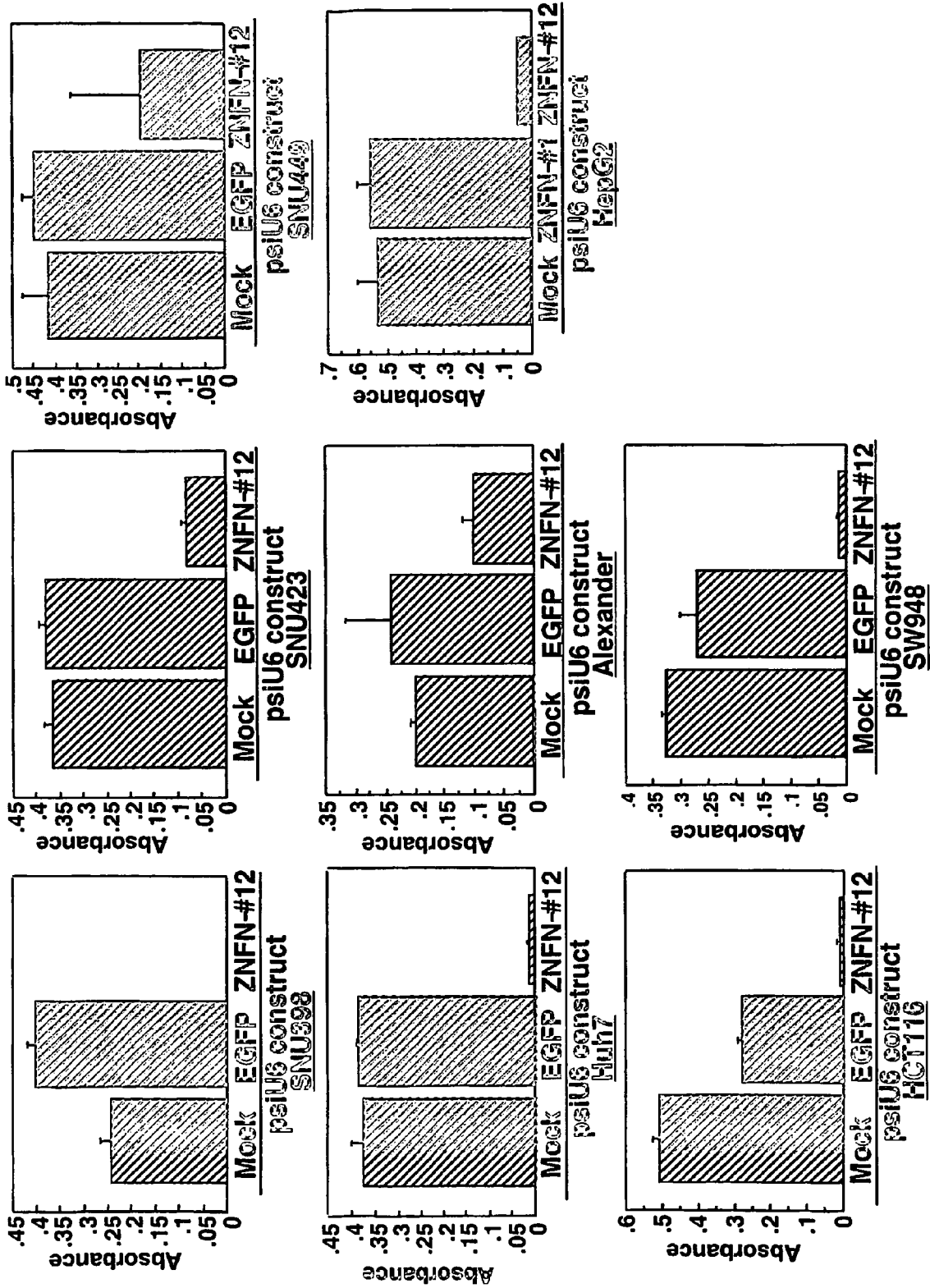
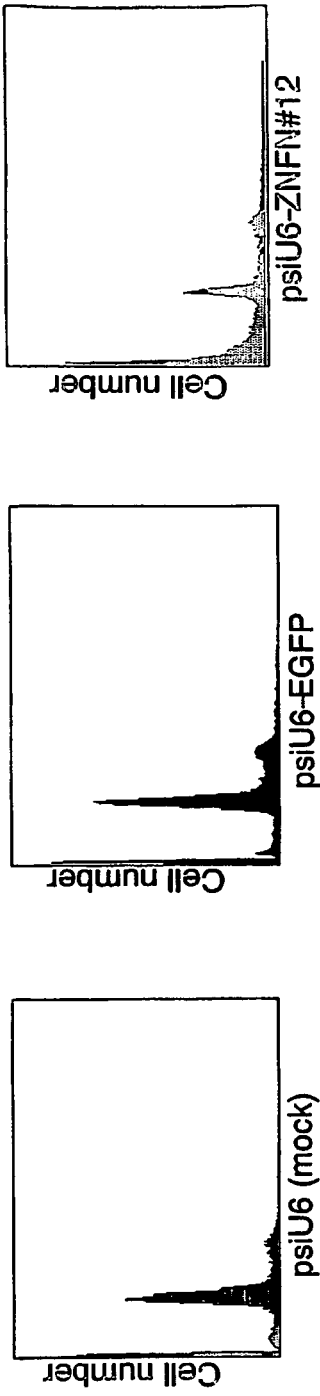


Figure 5



**Figure 6**

**FACS analysis**



Transfected plasmids	Region (%)			
	Sub-G1	G0/G1	S	G2/M
psiU6 (Mock)	16.01	71.18	5.07	7.15
psiU6-EGFP	16.32	58.87	10.91	12.43
psiU6-ZNFN#12	62.30	26.23	4.42	6.53

## REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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