

Aus der Klinik für Urologie  
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DISSERTATION

Deregulierte microRNAs und deren diagnostische und  
prognostische Bedeutung beim klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom

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von

Zofia Wotschofsky (geb. Kijas)

aus Knurow/Polen

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## 1. ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Dissertationsschrift liegen die drei folgenden Publikationen (ab Seite 23) zugrunde:

1. Wotschofsky Z, Meyer HA, Jung M, Fendler A, Wagner I, Stephan C, Busch J, Erbersdobler A, Disch AC, Mollenkopf HJ, Jung K. Reference genes for the relative quantification of microRNAs in renal cell carcinomas and their metastases. *Anal Biochem* 2011;417:233-41.
2. Wotschofsky Z\*, Liep J\*, Meyer HA, Jung M, Wagner I, Disch AC, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Busch J, Weikert S, Miller K, Erbersdobler A, Mollenkopf HJ, Jung K. Identification of metastamirs as metastasis-associated microRNAs in clear cell renal cell carcinomas. *Int J Biol Sci* 2012;8:1363-74.  
\*geteilte Erstautorenschaft
3. Wotschofsky Z, Busch J, Jung M, Kempkensteffen C, Weikert S, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Miller K, Kristiansen G, Erbersdobler A, Jung K. Diagnostic and prognostic potential of differentially expressed miRNAs between metastatic and non-metastatic renal cell carcinoma at the time of nephrectomy. *Clin Chim Acta* 2013;416:5-10.

Entsprechend der Promotionsordnung der Medizinischen Fakultät Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin vom 3.12.2012 zum Promotionsverfahren in Form einer Publikationspromotion mit mindestens drei Publikationen wird dazu auf den folgenden Seiten eine Zusammenfassung der drei Arbeiten einschließlich eines deutschen und englischen Abstrakts gegeben.

### Abstrakt (deutsch)

Hintergrund/Zielstellung: MicroRNAs (miRNAs) sind nicht-kodierende RNAs mit einer Basenlänge von ca. 22 Nukleotiden. Es wird angenommen, dass sie 30 % aller Gene regulieren und eine wichtige Rolle bei der Krebsentstehung und -progression spielen. Der Wissensstand zur Bedeutung der miRNAs im klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom war zu Beginn meiner Doktorarbeit sehr begrenzt, sodass die Aufgabe darin bestand, deren mögliches diagnostisches und prognostisches Potential für das Nierenzellkarzinom zu ermitteln.

Methodik: Microarray-Analysen von Proben aus Karzinom- und umgebenden Normalgewebe, die nach radikaler Nephrektomie gewonnen wurden, sowie von Knochenmetastasen-Gewebe von metastasierten Nierenzellkarzinom-Patienten wurden in einer exploratorischen Studie durchgeführt. Die folgenden Validierungen erfolgten mit der quantitativen reversen Transkriptions-Polymerase-Kettenreaktion (RT-qPCR). Verschiedene spezielle Software (geNorm, NormFinder, Prädiktionssuchmaschinen) und Statistikprogramme wurden für die Auswertung der Daten genutzt.

Ergebnisse: In der ersten Studie wurden die miR-28, miR-103 und die miR-106a als die in den verschiedenen Gewebeproben am stabilsten exprimierten miRNAs ermittelt. Die miRNA-Kombinationen aus der miR-28, miR-103 und miR-106a bzw. aus der miR-28 und miR-103 wurden als geeignete Referenz-miRNAs-Kombinationen für die relative Quantifizierung ermittelt. Bei Gewebematerialmangel kann auch die miR-28 als Einzel-miRNA eingesetzt werden; die oftmals genutzte RNU6B erwies sich als ungeeignetes Referenzgen. In der zweiten Studie wurden, basierend auf den o.g. Normalisierungsansätzen, 30 deregulierte miRNAs zwischen den Tumor- und den Normalgewebeproben identifiziert und mit der RT-qPCR validiert. Eine stufenweise verminderte miRNA-Expression vom Normalgewebe über das primäre Tumorgewebe zum Metastasengewebe war typisch. Nur sechs miRNAs zeigten eine erhöhte Expression im Metastasengewebe im Vergleich zum Normalgewebe. Siebzehn miRNAs wurden als neue miRNAs entdeckt, die mit der Metastasierung des Nierenzellkarzinoms assoziiert sind und bisher in anderen Studien nicht beschrieben wurden. Basierend auf diesen Daten und vorhergehenden Ergebnissen wurden jeweils im Vergleich zum Normalgewebe vier stark über- bzw. unterexprimierte miRNAs in Karzinomgewebeproben von Nephrektomiepräparaten bei Patienten ohne (n=89) und mit (n=22) Metastasen gemessen. Alle miRNAs erwiesen sich als geeignet, malignes von nicht-malignem Gewebe zu differenzieren. Die beiden miRNAs miR-122 und miR-514 korrelierten signifikant mit dem Auftreten eines Tumorrezidivs nach der Nephrektomie. Im Cox-Regressionsmodell mit klinisch-pathologischen Standardvariablen erwies sich die miR-514 als eine signifikante unabhängige Variable.

Schlussfolgerungen: Basierend auf den vorliegenden Studien kann geschlussfolgert werden, dass miRNA-Expressionsdaten nicht nur eine wichtige Ergänzung zu den diagnostischen und prognostischen Informationen durch die konventionellen klinisch-pathologischen Kenngrößen darstellen. Sie ermöglichen außerdem neue, bisher verborgene Einsichten in molekulare Prozesse der Krebsprogression und bieten damit neue Forschungsansätze auch in der Therapie.

### **Abstract (englisch)**

Background/Objective: MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are non-protein coding RNAs of approximately 22 nucleotides and are involved in the regulation of about 30% of all genes. They play an important role in cancerogenesis and cancer progression. Since their significance in clear cell renal cell carcinoma (ccRCC) was limited at the beginning

of my doctoral thesis, it was the aim to evaluate the diagnostic and prognostic potential of miRNAs in ccRCC.

**Methods:** Microarray analyses of miRNAs from normal and cancerous samples of ccRCC tissue collected after radical nephrectomy and from bone metastases of ccRCC patients were performed to identify both invariant miRNAs as potential reference-miRNAs for relative quantification and differentially expressed miRNAs as diagnostic and prognostic indicators. The validation studies were performed by quantitative reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-qPCR) analyses. Different special software (geNorm, NormFinder, prediction tools) and standard statistical programs were used for calculations.

**Results:** In the first study, miR-28, miR-103 and miR-106a were proved as the most stably expressed miRNAs in the different tissue samples. Consequently, the combinations of miR-28, miR-103, and miR-106a or miR-28 and miR-103 were recommended as preferred normalizer approaches for relative quantification. MiR-28 could be used as single normalizer in case of shortage of sample material while RNU6B that is frequently used was unsuitable as normalizer. In the second study, 30 miRNAs were identified to be particularly deregulated between tumor and normal tissue samples. A stepwise down-regulation of miRNA expression from normal over primary tumor to metastatic tissue was typical while only six miRNAs were up-regulated in metastatic tissue in comparison to normal tissue. Seventeen miRNAs were detected as novel miRNAs associated with ccRCC metastasis that were not recognized as such in previous studies. Based on these and previous findings, four up-regulated and four down-regulated miRNAs in malignant and non-malignant samples after nephrectomy from patients without ( $n=89$ ) and with ( $n=22$ ) metastases were measured. All miRNAs were found to be suitable indicators to differentiate malignant from non-malignant tissue. MiR-122 and miR-514 were significantly related to the recurrence risk after nephrectomy and miR-514 was an independent prognostic variable in a final Cox-regression model together with clinicopathological variables.

**Conclusions:** Based on these studies, it could be shown that miRNA expression data not only results in promising diagnostic and prognostic information in completion to conventional clinicopathological data. They also provide novel insights in yet unknown molecular processes of cancer progression and offer new therapeutic strategies.

## 1.1 Einführung und Zielstellung

Nierenzellkarzinome repräsentieren 3-5 % aller malignen Tumore weltweit (1, 2). Der klarzellige Subtyp des Nierenzellkarzinoms stellt dabei mit etwa 80% die häufigste Form der Nierentumore dar, gefolgt vom papillären Typ mit ca. 15 % und dem chromophoben mit ca. 5 % (3). In Deutschland wird, basierend auf den ausgewerteten Krebsregisterdaten bis 2008, für das Nierenzellkarzinom mit etwa 15 100 Neuerkrankungs- und 5000 Sterbefällen pro Jahr gerechnet (2). Zum Zeitpunkt der Erstdiagnose haben etwa 75 % der Patienten entsprechend der internationalen Tumorklassifikation einen lokal begrenzten Tumor der Stadien T1 oder T2. Die restlichen 25 % der diagnostizierten Tumoren sind bereits lokal fortgeschrittene Tumore der Stadien T3 oder T4 mit z.T. regionalen Metastasen oder Fernmetastasen.

Aufgrund fehlender bzw. uncharakteristischer Symptome werden Nierenzellkarzinome in der Regel relativ spät bzw. heute vermehrt eher zufällig durch bildgebende Diagnostik aus anderen Indikationsgründen entdeckt. Biomarker des Nierenzellkarzinoms sind bisher nicht bekannt. Die Teilnephrektomie bzw. radikale Nephrektomie ist zurzeit die einzige kurative Therapieform des Nierenzellkarzinoms. Die relative 5-Jahres-Überlebensrate nach der Operation beträgt ca. 75 %, denn 20-25% der in kurativer Absicht nephrektomierten Patienten entwickeln im postoperativen Verlauf ein Tumorrezidiv bzw. Metastasen. Metastasen treten bevorzugt in der Lunge, in den Knochen, in der Leber oder im Gehirn auf. Die Prognose der Patienten mit einem im frühen Stadium behandelten Tumor ist dabei wesentlich günstiger als für Patienten in fortgeschrittenen Stadien. Die Überlebensdauer von Patienten mit metastasiertem Nierenzellkarzinom beträgt oft weniger als ein Jahr und nur 10% der Patienten überleben mehr als 5 Jahre. Der Einsatz von Tyrosinkinaseinhibitoren hat zwar die Überlebenswahrscheinlichkeit von metastasierten Patienten erhöht, die primäre und letztendlich sich entwickelnde sekundäre Resistenz gegenüber diesen Medikamenten hat meist eine infauste Prognose dieser Patienten zur Folge. Aus all den besagten Gründen besteht die dringende Notwendigkeit, verbesserte Optionen in der Diagnostik und Therapie für Patienten mit einem Nierenzellkarzinom zu entwickeln. Ein fundiertes Verständnis für die ablaufenden molekularbiologischen Prozesse bei der Tumorneubildung und Metastasierung bilden hierzu eine Grundvoraussetzung, durch translationale Forschung klinisch anwendbare Methoden zu etablieren (4).

In dieser Hinsicht sind die erst seit einigen Jahren bekannten microRNAs (miRNAs) besonders wichtige biologische Faktoren. MiRNAs sind einzelsträngige, nicht

Protein-kodierende RNA-Moleküle von ca. 20 bis 22 Basen. Reife miRNAs binden entweder partiell oder komplett an komplementäre Abschnitte der 3'-UTR von mRNAs und hemmen dadurch die Proteintranslation oder führen zur Degradation der mRNA. Bis heute (Mai 2013) sind insgesamt 2219 reife humane miRNAs in der offiziellen miRBase-Datenbank (<http://www.mirbase.org>; accessed May 31, 2013) registriert. MiRNAs regulieren etwa 30% aller menschlichen Gene. Eine miRNA kann die Expression einer Vielzahl von Genen steuern, während andererseits ein Gen durch mehrere miRNAs gleichzeitig reguliert werden kann. MiRNAs beeinflussen maßgeblich Onkogene und Tumorsuppressorgene. Zahlreiche Studien haben inzwischen belegt, dass miRNAs in verschiedensten Tumoren dereguliert sind und miRNA-Expressionsmuster mit der Diagnose und Prognose und mit dem Therapieverlauf des Patienten assoziiert sind (5).

Zu Beginn der hier vorgelegten Promotionsarbeit war der Kenntnisstand zum miRNA-Verhalten beim Nierenzellkarzinom noch sehr begrenzt (6). Die Zielstellungen meiner Doktorarbeiterarbeit richteten sich daher auf drei wesentliche Aspekte, die ihren Niederschlag in drei Publikationen (7 - 9) gefunden haben und in dieser Promotion im Folgenden zusammengefasst werden. Dies sind: a) Aufstellung von methodisch-analytischen Kriterien zur Normalisierung der miRNA-Expressionen durch Referenz-miRNAs, b) Ermittlung von miRNA-Profilen im Primärtumor und Metastasen durch Microarray-Analysen und ihre Validierung mittels RT-qPCRs, c) Beurteilung der diagnostischen und prognostischen Aussagefähigkeit ausgewählter miRNAs im Vergleich zu konventionellen klinisch-pathologischen Kenngrößen anhand Receiver-operation-characteristics(ROC)-Kurven, Kaplan-Meier-Analysen und uni- und multivariaten Cox-Regressions-Modellen.

## 1.2 Methodik

### 1.2.1 Patienten und Gewebeproben

Alle untersuchten Gewebeproben wurden zwischen 2003 und 2010 unmittelbar nach radikaler Nephrektomie von Patienten mit einem klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom in flüssigem Stickstoff oder in einem RNA-Stabilisierungsreagenz asserviert und bis zur Analytik bei -80 °C gelagert. Die Untersuchungen wurden von der Ethikkommission der Charité genehmigt. In den ersten beiden Studien wurden Gewebeproben maligner und nicht-maligner Areale von Nephrektomiepräparaten von Patienten mit Nierenzellkarzinomen ohne Metastasierung und von isolierten Knochenmetastasen

analysiert (7, 8). Der Anteil von Tumorzellen in der Tumorprobe betrug >80 % und wurde durch einen erfahrenen Pathologen ermittelt. Für alle Patienten wurden anamnestische, klinische und pathologische Daten (Tumorstadium nach den UICC-TNM-Richtlinien von 2002, Fuhrman-Grad gemäß WHO-Kriterien von 2004) sowie Verlaufsdaten nach Nephrektomie (Metastasierung; Überleben) in Kooperation mit der Klinik erfasst. In der dritten Studie zum Potenzial der prognostischen Eigenschaften ausgewählter differenziell exprimierter miRNAs wurden miRNA-Bestimmungen an nicht-metastasierten und metastasierten Primärtumoren zum Zeitpunkt der Nephrektomie vorgenommen (9).

### **1.2.2 RNA-Isolierung und -Charakterisierung**

Zur Isolierung von RNA einschließlich miRNAs wurden die Gewebeproben mit einem TissueLyser (Qiagen, Hilden, Deutschland) homogenisiert und mit dem miRNeasy Mini Kit (Qiagen) isoliert. Konzentration und Reinheit der isolierten RNA wurden mit dem Spectrophotometer NanoDrop 1000 (NanoDrop Technologies, Wilmington, USA) anhand der Absorptionsquotienten 260 zu 280 nm und 230 zu 260 nm beurteilt. Die Qualität der isolierten RNA wurde durch RNA-Integritäts-Bestimmungen (RIN-Werte) mit dem Bioanalyzer 2100 (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, USA) ermittelt.

### **1.2.3 Microarray-Analysen**

Die Microarray-Analysen wurden in Kooperation mit dem Max-Planck-Institut für Infektionsbiologie mit dem miRNA-Microarray AMADID 016436 (miRBase v.9.1) der Fa. Agilent durchgeführt. Dieser Array detektierte 470 humane miRNAs auf einem Chip (7, 8). Die Reaktionsschritte erfolgten nach Angaben des miRNA-Microarray-System-Protokolls, Version 1.0. Die Rohdaten wurden mit der Software GeneSpring GX11 (Agilent) ausgewertet und sind in der GEO-Datenbank öffentlich zugänglich (GEO Accession No. GSE12105 und GSE37989).

### **1.2.4 Quantitative Reverse Transkriptions-Polymerase-Kettenreaktion (RT-qPCR)**

Die RT-qPCR-Analysen wurden am LightCycler 480 (Roche Diagnostics GmbH, Mannheim, Deutschland) entsprechend den MIQE-Richtlinien (Guidelines for Minimum Information for Publication of Quantitative Real-Time PCR Experiments) (10) mit TaqMan-miRNA-Assays (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA, USA) vorgenommen. Die reverse Transkription der miRNAs aus der Gesamt-RNA erfolgte mit miRNA-

spezifischen Stem-Loop-Primern. Die PCR-Analysen wurden in Dreifachbestimmungen im 96-Mikrotiterplatten-Format mit miRNA-spezifischen Primern und TaqMan-Sonden durchgeführt. Bei jedem PCR-Lauf wurden "No Template"-Kontrollen sowie zwei interne Kontrollen mitgeführt, um Variationen zwischen den Platten auszugleichen. Die Daten wurden mit dem Programm GenEx (MultiD Analyses AB, Göteborg, Sweden) auf der Basis der  $2^{-\Delta\Delta Cq}$  Methode ausgewertet, nachdem zuvor eine vergleichbare PCR-Effizienz aller verwendeten Assays ermittelt wurde. Zur Normalisierung der miRNA-Expressionen wurden die in der ersten Publikation ermittelten drei Referenz-miRNAs miR-28, miR-103 und miR-106a als Kombination eingesetzt (10).

### 1.2.5 Statistische Auswertungen

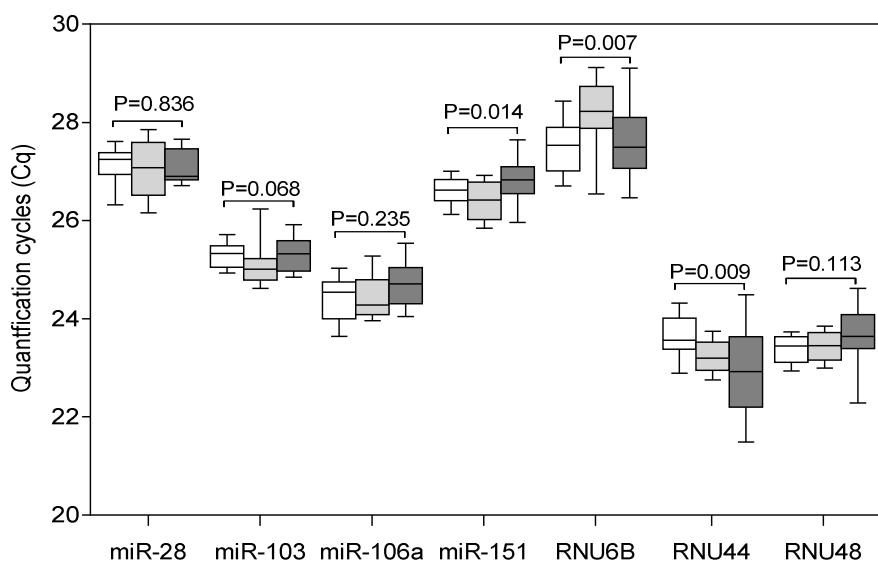
Statistische Berechnungen wurden unter Verwendung der Programme GraphPad Prism, Version 6.0 (GraphPad Software Inc., La Jolla, CA, USA), IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 19 (IBM Corp., Somers, NY, USA) und MedCalc, Version 12.2.1 (MedCalc Software, Mariakerke, Belgien) durchgeführt. Es wurden sowohl parametrische als auch nicht-parametrische Teste (u.a. Student's t-Test mit gepaarten und ungepaarten Daten, Mann-Whitney U Test, Wilcoxon-Test, Kruskal-Wallis-Test, Rangkorrelationskoeffizient nach Spearman) angewendet. Die Stabilität der Expressionsdaten bei der Bestimmung von Referenzgenen wurden mit den Programmen geNorm (<http://medgen.ugent.be/~jvdesomp/genorm/>; Programm von Mai, 2003) und NormFinder (<http://www.mdl.dk/publicationsnormfinder.htm>; accessed May 31, 2013) ermittelt. Zur Abschätzung der Überlebenswahrscheinlichkeiten wurden Kaplan-Meier-Kurven sowie univariate und multivariate Cox-Regressionen mit den o.g. Programmen berechnet. Die Diskriminationsfähigkeit von miRNAs wurde durch ROC-Analysen anhand der Flächen unter den Kurven bewertet. P-Werte <0.05 wurden als statistisch signifikant angesehen.

## 1.3. Ergebnisse

### 1.3.1 Referenzgene für miRNA-Expressionsanalysen des Nierenzellkarzinoms

135 der 470 humanen miRNAs auf dem Microarray-Chip waren in allen Proben der drei Gewebetypen (Normalgewebe, n=12; primärer Tumor, n=12; Metastasengewebe, n= 9) gut nachweisbar. Um invariante miRNAs zwischen den Proben als potenzielle Referenz-miRNAs festzustellen, wurden von diesen 135 miRNAs primär diejenigen ausgesondert, die bisher aus eigenen Untersuchungen bzw. aus der Literatur als

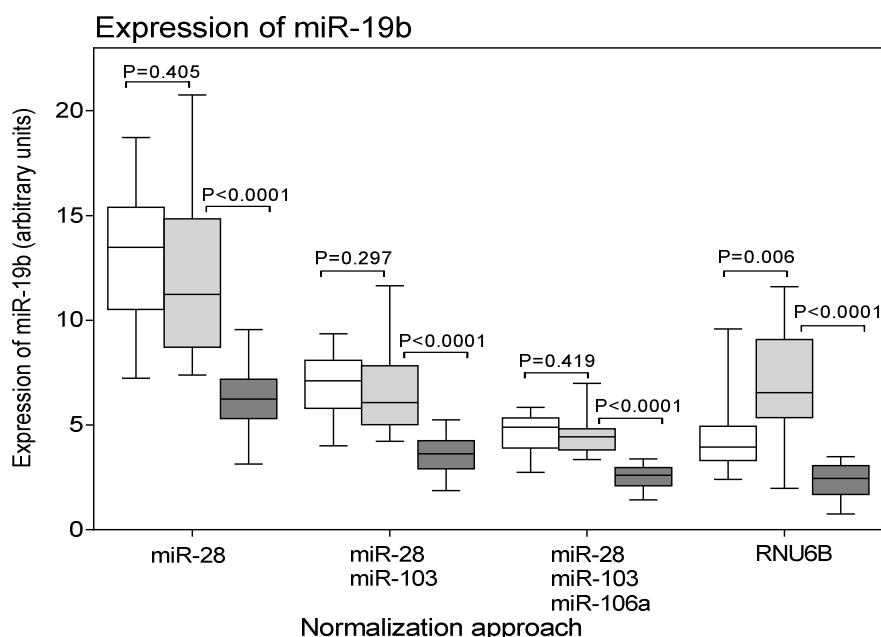
deregulierte miRNAs bekannt waren. Von den verbliebenen 117 miRNAs wurden nach einer globalen Mittelwerttransformation der Intensitäts-Daten die miRNAs als mögliche Referenz-miRNAs selektiert, deren differenzielle Expressionen innerhalb der Gruppen zwischen -1.15 und 1.15 lagen, statistisch nicht signifikant waren ( $P>0.05$ ) und Standardabweichungen <0.5 aufwiesen. Sechs miRNAs, die in zwei der drei Gruppenvergleiche diese Kriterien erfüllten, wurden mit den Programmen geNorm und NormFinder weiter bewertet. Im Ergebnis waren miR-28, miR-103, miR-106a und miR-151 die miRNAs mit der höchsten Expressionsstabilität und wurden als Kandidaten für Referenz-miRNAs in anschließenden RT-qPCR-Analysen an zusätzlichen Gewebeproben validiert (insgesamt: Normalgewebe, n=22; Primärtumor, n=22, Metastasen, n=13). Außerdem wurden die "small" RNAs RNU6B, RNU44 und RNU48 in die Studie mit einbezogen, da sie als Referenzgene in zahlreichen miRNA-Expressionstudien eingesetzt wurden. Für die miR-28, miR-103, miR-106a und die RNU48 ergaben sich keine statistisch signifikanten Differenzen zwischen den Proben aus den drei Gewebetypen (Abb. 1).



**Abb. 1.** Expression potenzieller Referenzgene im klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom. Angegeben sind Cq-Werte, mit den Medianen als Horizontallinie und der oberen und unteren Quartile in der Begrenzung der Kästen der Box-Whisker-Plots. Die "Whiskers" entsprechen der 10. bzw. 90. Perzentile. Leere Box, Normalgewebe; graue Box, Primärtumor; schwarze Box, Metastasengewebe. Signifikante Differenzen als P-Werte im Kruskal-Wallis-Test. Entnommen und adaptiert aus (7).

Auffallend war jedoch, dass gerade die RNU6B, die besonders häufig als Referenzgen bei miRNA-Analysen benutzt wird, im malignen Gewebe eine wesentlich geringere Expression aufweist als im normalen Gewebe. In weiterführenden Analysen (Äquivalenztest; Stabilitätsberechnungen mit geNorm und NormFinder) bestätigten sich

die stabilen Expressionen zwischen den Gewebematerialien für die miR-28, miR-103, miR-106a und die RNU48 in der aufgeführten Rangfolge. Aus weiteren Berechnungen mit geNorm und auch NormFinder resultierte, dass die miR-28 die beste Einzelreferenz-miRNA und zusammen mit der miR-103 die beste Kombination zweier Referenz-miRNAs zur relativen Quantifizierung von Expressionen beim klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom darstellt. Den großen Einfluss von geeigneten und weniger geeigneten Referenzgenen auf die Expressionsergebnisse habe ich am Beispiel der relativen Quantifizierung der miR-19 verdeutlicht (Abb. 2).



**Abb. 2.** Expression der miR-19b in Abhängigkeit von der Normalisierung.

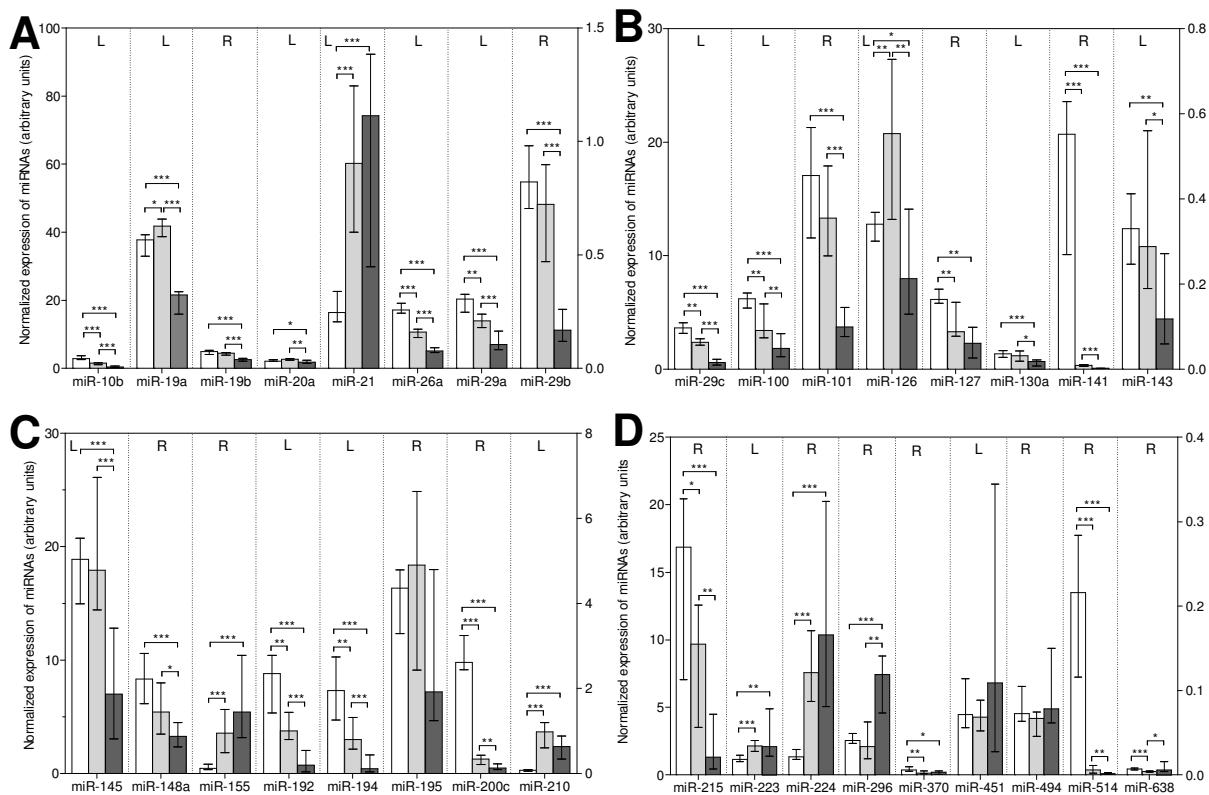
Die Box-Whisker-Plots entsprechen den Angaben in Abb. 1 mit den Medianen als Horizontallinie und der oberen und unteren Quartile in der Begrenzung der Kästen der Box-Whisker-Plots. Die "Whiskers" entsprechen der 10. bzw. 90. Perzentile. Leere Box, Normalgewebe; graue Box, Primärtumor; schwarze Box, Metastasengewebe. Entnommen und adaptiert aus (7); zusätzliche Berechnung der P-Werte mit dem Mann-Whitney U Test.

Mit den drei Referenz-miRNAs zeigte sich in verschiedenen Kombinationen kein statistisch signifikanter Unterschied in der Expression der miR-19 im malignen und nicht-malignen Gewebe. Eine eindeutig höhere Expression errechnete sich dagegen für das maligne Gewebe mit der RNU6B als Referenzgen. Dies spiegelt die verminderte Expression der RNU6B im Primärtumor (Abb. 1) wider und widerlegt ihre Eignung als Referenzgen für miRNA-Expressionsstudien beim Nierenzellkarzinom.

### 1.3.2 miRNA-Profil in Knochenmetastasen im Vergleich zu Profilen in primären Nierenzellkarzinomen und in Normalgeweben

Aus den in Microarray-Daten der drei untersuchten Gewebetypen (Knochenmetastasen, nicht-metastasierter Primärtumor, "Normalgewebe") wurden die miRNAs ermittelt, die zwischen den nicht-malignen Gewebeproben und den Karzinom- und Metastasenproben mindestens eine 1.5-fache Expressionsdifferenz bei einer "false discovery rate"(FDR)-adjustierten Signifikanz von  $P<0.05$  aufwiesen (8). Zusätzlich sollte die Signalstärke der so selektierten miRNAs auf dem Microarray mindestens gerätespezifische Einheiten von 850 betragen. Diese Signalstärke ist erfahrungsgemäß notwendig für zuverlässige RT-qPCR-Ergebnisse mit Cq-Werten <35. Daraus resultierten 28 deregulierte miRNAs. 24 miRNAs mit der höchsten Expressionsdifferenz und zusätzlich 14 miRNAs, die sich in vorhergehenden Untersuchungen der Arbeitsgruppe und aus anderen Literaturdaten als differenziell exprimierte miRNAs im klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom erwiesen hatten, wurden in einem ersten RT-qPCR-Validierungsansatz untersucht. Hierzu wurden die miRNAs jeweils in einem RNA-Pool der drei Gewebetypen gemessen. Fünf miRNAs mit Cq-Werten >35 wurden von den weiteren Analysen ausgeschlossen. Anschließend erfolgte die Validierung der 33 potenziell differenziell exprimierten miRNAs separat an insgesamt 57 Gewebeproben (22 "Normalgewebe", 22 Karzinomgewebe; 13 Metastasen). Die Ergebnisse sind in der Abbildung 3 zusammengefasst. Sie lassen sich u.a. wie folgt interpretieren: (a) 30 der 33 untersuchten miRNAs, mit Ausnahme der miR-195, miR-451 und miR-494 zeigten eine differenzielle Expression in den drei Probengruppen. (b) Die in den Microarray-Analysen bereits beobachtete generell verminderte Expression von miRNAs in den Knochenmetastasen wurde bestätigt. 21 bzw. 23 der 30 deregulierten miRNAs wiesen geringere Expressionen in den Metastasen im Vergleich zum Primärtumor bzw. zum Normalgewebe auf. In Zellkulturexperimenten wurde nachgewiesen, dass u.a. epigenetische Modifikationen (Hypermethylierung, Histonänderungen) die Ursache einer verminderten Expression sein können (miR-127, miR-141, miR-145, miR-514). (c) Nur 6 miRNAs (miR-21, miR-155, miR-210, miR-223, miR-224 und miR-296) waren in den Metastasen im Vergleich zum Normalgewebe stärker exprimiert. Nur eine dieser miRNAs (miR-296) und sowie die miR-638 waren auch vermehrt exprimiert im Vergleich zum Primärtumorgewebe.

Korrelationsanalysen zwischen den Expressionen der verschiedenen miRNAs ergaben bei 32 miRNA-Paaren Korrelationskoeffizienten von >0.70. Ein solcher Korrelationskoeffizient wurde als Kriterium einer Korepression/Koregulation angesehen. Statistisch signifikant veränderte Koeffizienten wurden als veränderte



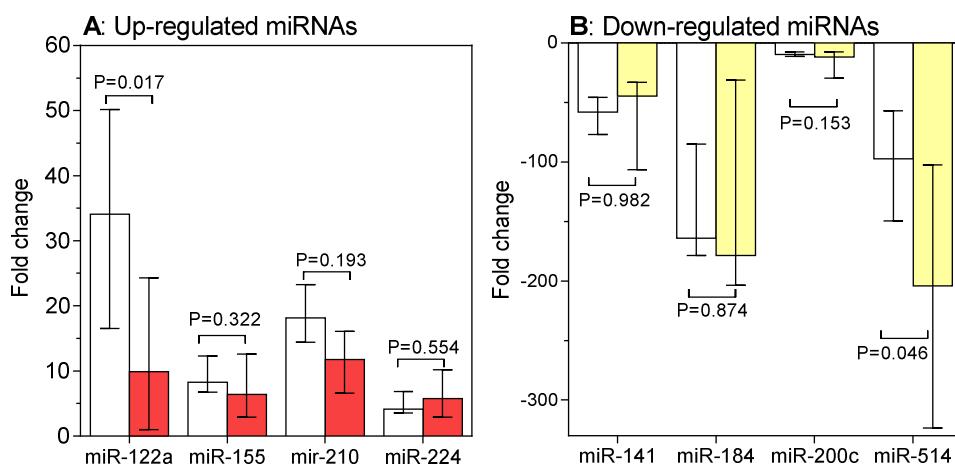
**Abb. 3.** Expression von 33 miRNAs im Nierenzellkarzinom und in Metastasen.

Untersucht wurden Nierenzellkarzinomgewebe (graue Säule; n=22) und umgebendes, nicht-malignes "Normalgewebe" (weiße Säule; n=22) sowie Knochenmetastasengewebe (schwarze Säule, n=13) von Nierenzellkarzinompatienten mittels RT-qPCR unter Normalisierung mit der Referenz-miRNA-Kombination miR-28, miR-103 und miR-106a. Die Säulen entsprechen den Medianen mit 95 % Konfidenzintervallen. Die im oberen Teil der Abbildung der jeweiligen miRNA verzeichneten Buchstaben "L" (left) und "R" (right) verweisen auf die dazugehörige y-Achse. Berechnungen der statistischen Signifikanzen erfolgte mit dem Mann-Whitney U Test zwischen den Gruppen: \*, P<0.05; \*\*, P<0.01; \*\*\*, P<0.001. Entnommen und adaptiert aus (8).

Expressionsmuster zwischen den Gruppen gewertet. Danach ergaben sich zwei grundlegende Korrelationstypen: (a) signifikante Korrelationen der miRNA-Paare zwischen allen drei Gewebetypen ohne oder mit nur geringen Differenzen (z.B. miR-10b/miR-126; miR192/miR-194) und (b) deutlich differente Korrelationskoeffizienten der miRNA-Paare zwischen zwei Probengruppen, entweder als Verlust (z.B. miR-21/miR223) oder Neuaufreten (z.B. miR-10b/miR-143) einer Korrelation, detaillierte Angaben aus Platzgründen in Tab. 3 von (8). Dabei ist bemerkenswert, dass miRNAs eines Clusters oder einer Familie keineswegs immer miteinander korrelieren (z.B. miR-141/miR-200c). Andererseits traten signifikant veränderte Korrelationen zwischen miRNA-Paaren (z.B. miR-19a/miR-20a; miR-143/miR-145) in Abhängigkeit vom jeweiligen Gewebetyp auf. Nur wenige miRNAs korrelierten mit dem Tumorstadium (miR-130a, miR-200c und miR-638) oder mit dem Tumorgrad (miR-19a, miR-130a, miR-210 und miR-451).

### 1.3.3 Diagnostische und prognostische Bedeutung von miRNAs

In einer früheren Studie der Arbeitsgruppe (11) bzw. auch in meiner im vorigen Abschnitt beschriebenen miRNA-Profilerstellung wurden die miR-122a, miR-155, miR-210 und die miR-224 als stark vermehrt, hingegen die miR-141, miR-184, miR-200c und die miR-514 als stark vermindert exprimiert im Nierenzellkarzinom beschrieben. Daraus ergaben sich zwei Fragestellungen: (a) Sind miRNAs als Indikatoren geeignet, zwischen "normalem" Gewebe und Karzinomgewebe zu unterscheiden? (b) Kann mit miRNAs allein oder in Kombination mit konventionellen klinisch-pathologischen Risikofaktoren der weitere Krankheitsverlauf nach der Nephrektomie prognostiziert werden? Um diese Fragestellungen zu beantworten, wurden die aufgeführten miRNAs in Gewebeproben von Patienten mit einem klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinomen analysiert, die zum Zeitpunkt der Nephrektomie keine Metastasen ( $n=89$ ) aufwiesen oder bereits metastasiert waren ( $n=22$ ). Von den acht untersuchten miRNAs wiesen die im Vergleich zum Normalgewebe hochregulierte miR-122 und die herunterregulierte miR-514 eine verminderte Expression im metastasierten gegenüber dem nicht-metastasierten Primärtumor auf (Abb. 4). Diese Besonderheit der beiden miRNAs im Metastasierungsprozess wurde dadurch bestätigt, dass sich ihre Expression in den Knochenmetastasen nicht zum metastasierten Primärtumor unterschied, jedoch signifikant niedriger im Vergleich zur Expression im nicht-metastasierten Primärtumor war.



**Abb. 4.** Expression von miRNAs im primären klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom.

Angabe der miRNA-Expressionen als Medianwerte mit 95 % Konfidenzintervallen im primären nicht-metastasierten (weiße Säule,  $n=89$ ) und metastasierten (farbige Säule,  $n=22$ ) Nierenzellkarzinomgewebe in Bezug (fold change) auf das umgebende "Normalgewebe". P-Werte wurden mit dem Mann-Whitney U Test berechnet. Entnommen und adaptiert aus (9).

Alle acht miRNAs erwiesen sich als gut geeignet, zwischen malignem und nicht-malignem Gewebe zu unterscheiden. ROC-Analysen ergaben Flächen unter den ROC-Kurven zwischen 0.88 und 0.99 sowie korrekte Klassifikationen von Normal- und Karzinomgewebe zwischen 81 und 95 % (Tabelle 1).

**Tabelle 1.** MicroRNAs als Diskriminatoren zwischen malignem und nicht-malignem Gewebe beim primären klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom.

| MicroRNA                            | AUC<br>(95% CI)  | Diskrimination am Optimum<br>des Youden-Index |                        | Korrekte<br>Klassifikation (%) <sup>&amp;</sup> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
|                                     |                  | Sensitivität<br>(95 % CI)                     | Spezifität<br>(95% CI) |                                                 |
| <b>Single</b>                       |                  |                                               |                        |                                                 |
| miR-122                             | 0.89 (0.83-0.93) | 77 (68-85)                                    | 100 (96-100)           | 88                                              |
| miR-141                             | 0.97 (0.93-0.99) | 93 (86-97)                                    | 99 (94-100)            | 92                                              |
| miR-155                             | 0.90 (0.85-0.94) | 83 (75-89)                                    | 87 (79-93)             | 81                                              |
| miR-184                             | 0.97 (0.93-0.99) | 92 (85-96)                                    | 89 (81-95)             | 89                                              |
| miR-200c                            | 0.96 (0.93-0.99) | 89 (82-94)                                    | 96 (89 -99)            | 91                                              |
| miR-210                             | 0.92 (0.87-0.95) | 87 (80-93)                                    | 94 (87-98)             | 88                                              |
| miR-224                             | 0.88 (0.82-0.92) | 84 (76-90)                                    | 86 (77-92)             | 82                                              |
| miR-514                             | 0.90 (0.85-0.94) | 96 (90-99)                                    | 82 (72-89)             | 84                                              |
| <b>Best Combination<sup>#</sup></b> |                  |                                               |                        |                                                 |
| miR-141 + miR-155 + miR-184         | 0.99 (0.97-1.00) | 95 (88-98)                                    | 100 (96-100)           | 95                                              |

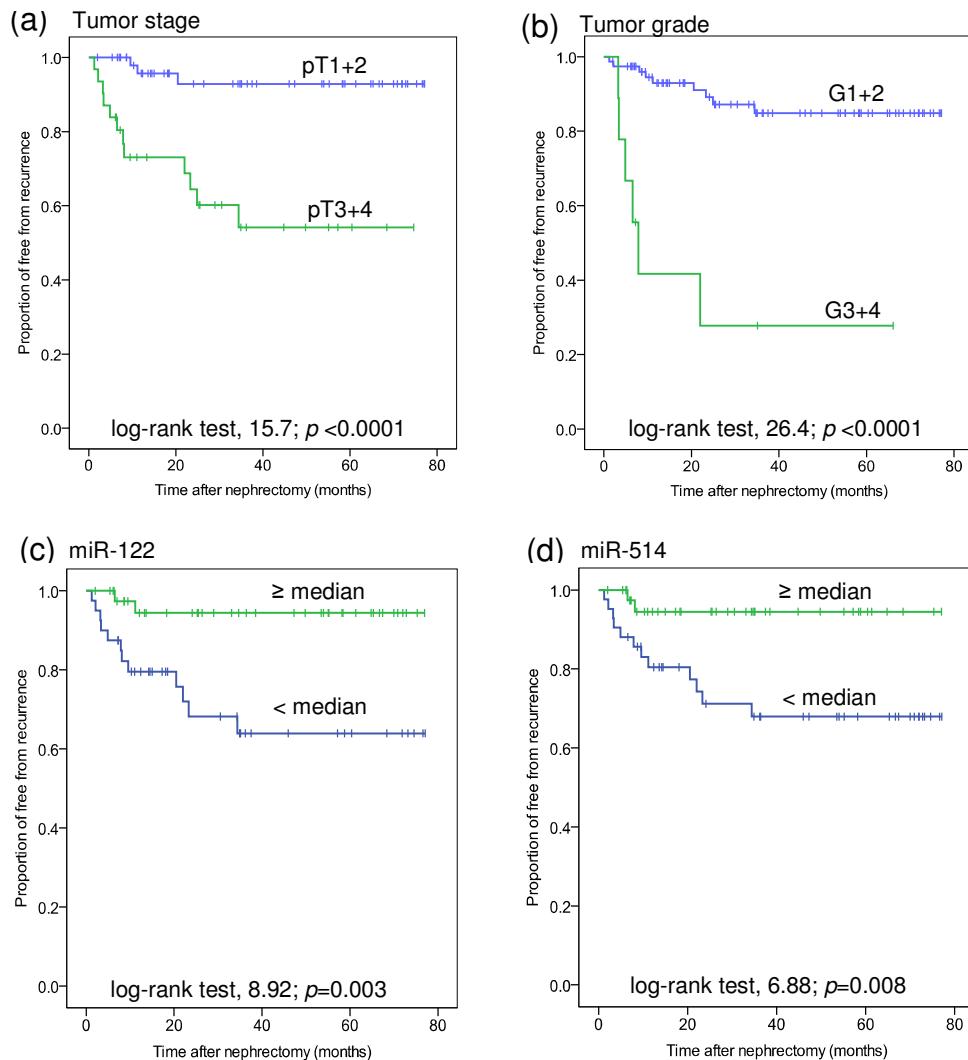
Abkürzungen: AUC = Fläche unter der ROC-Kurve; CI = Konfidenzintervall.

<sup>&</sup> Berechnet mit binärer logistischer Regression.

<sup>#</sup> Berechnet mit binärer logistischer Regression nach Rückwärtselimination mit allen 8 miRNAs. Entnommen und adaptiert aus (9).

Das prognostische Potenzial der miRNAs wurde anhand ihrer Expression eingeschätzt, um die Rezidivwahrscheinlichkeit nach der Nephrektomie vorauszusagen. Als klinischer Endpunkt galt der Zeitraum zwischen der Nephrektomie und dem Auftreten eines Rezidivs. Kaplan-Meier-Analysen zeigten, dass in der untersuchten Kohorte das rezidivfreie Intervall nach der Nephrektomie vom pT-Stadium und dem Tumorgrad abhängig war und so auch miRNAs den Effekt der konventionellen Risikofaktoren reflektierten (Abb. 5). Von den acht untersuchten miRNAs ergaben lediglich die bereits o.g. miR-122 und miR-514 eine klare Assoziation zwischen Expressionshöhe und Rezidivereignis (Abb. 5). Dies ließ sich in univariaten und multivariaten Cox-Regressions-Analysen der miRNAs zusammen mit klinisch-pathologischen Faktoren bestätigen (Tabelle 2). In einem kombinierten Cox-Regressionsmodell aus den in separaten Modellen ermittelten signifikanten klinisch-pathologischen Variablen Tumorstadium, Tumorgrad und positiver chirurgischer Schnitttrand sowie den beiden

miRNAs miR-514 und miR-122 verblieben nur die miR-514 zusammen mit dem pT-Stadium und dem positiven Schnittrand als unabhängige Variablen im Modell (Tabelle 2).



**Abb. 5.** Kaplan-Meier-Analysen nach radikaler Nephrektomie.

Die Kurven von 87 Patienten mit einem klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom und Verlaufsdaten nach radikaler Nephrektomie sind dargestellt. Als klinischer Endpunkt wurde das Auftreten eines Rezidivs gewertet. Differenzen zwischen den rezidivfreien Intervallen wurden mit dem Log-Rank-Test berechnet. Entnommen und adaptiert aus (9).

**Tabelle 2.** Univariate and multivariate Cox-Regressionsanalysen von klinisch-pathologischen Faktoren und miRNAs zur Prädiktion eines Tumorrezidivs.

| Variable                               | Kriterium <sup>§</sup> | Univariat |         | Multivariat                                                        |        |      |        | Multivariat                          |        |      |        |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------|--------|--------------------------------------|--------|------|--------|
|                                        |                        |           |         | separate Modelle mit klinisch-pathologischen Variablen oder miRNAs |        |      |        | kombiniertes Modell <sup>&amp;</sup> |        |      |        |
|                                        |                        | HR        | P-Wert  | HR                                                                 | P-Wert | HR   | P-Wert | HR                                   | P-Wert | HR   | P-Wert |
| <i>Klinisch-pathologische Variable</i> |                        |           |         |                                                                    |        |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| Alter                                  | kontinuierlich         | 1.01      | 0.633   | 1.03                                                               | 0.217  |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| Geschlecht                             | Frau/Mann              | 0.65      | 0.494   | 0.59                                                               | 0.349  |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| pT-Stadium                             | pT1-2/pT3-4            | 1.10      | 0.002   | 1.06                                                               | 0.069  | 1.07 | 0.041  | 1.06                                 | 0.080  | 1.08 | 0.026  |
| Tumorgrad                              | G1-2/G3-4              | 1.13      | <0.0001 | 1.08                                                               | 0.037  | 1.07 | 0.073  | 1.04                                 | 0.292  |      |        |
| R-Status                               | R0/R1-2                | 9.25      | <0.0001 | 3.47                                                               | 0.061  | 3.90 | 0.027  | 3.41                                 | 0.017  | 4.85 | 0.005  |
| Tumogröße                              | kontinuierlich         | 1.02      | <0.001  | 1.01                                                               | 0.161  |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| <i>miRNAs</i>                          |                        |           |         |                                                                    |        |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| miR-122                                | Median                 | 0.14      | 0.013   | 0.12                                                               | 0.017  | 0.17 | 0.017  | 0.52                                 | 0.353  |      |        |
| miR-141                                | Median                 | 1.26      | 0.667   | 0.93                                                               | 0.927  |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| miR-155                                | Median                 | 1.32      | 0.633   | 3.11                                                               | 0.082  |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| miR-184                                | Median                 | 1.07      | 0.916   | 1.04                                                               | 0.955  |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| miR-200c                               | Median                 | 0.56      | 0.299   | 1.40                                                               | 0.662  |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| miR-210                                | Median                 | 0.39      | 0.109   | 0.84                                                               | 0.802  |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| miR-224                                | Median                 | 0.74      | 0.585   | 0.48                                                               | 0.371  |      |        |                                      |        |      |        |
| miR-514                                | Median                 | 0.21      | 0.009   | 0.16                                                               | 0.006  | 0.25 | 0.005  | 0.32                                 | 0.078  | 0.23 | 0.019  |

Abkürzungen: HR = Hazard-Ratio; P-Wert = Signifikanz; pT = pathologische Tumorklassifikation; G = histopathologischer Tumorgrad nach Fuhrman; R = chirurgischer Schnittrand.

<sup>§</sup> Berechnungen mit kontinuierlichen und dichotomisierten Daten bzw. anderen aufgeführten Kriterien. P-Werte resultierten aus 2000 Bootstrapping-Zyklen.

<sup>&</sup> Das kombinierte Modell wurde nur mit den klinisch-pathologischen Variablen und den miRNAs aufgestellt, die in den jeweiligen separaten Modellen nach Rückwärtselimination als signifikante Variable verblieben.

<sup>#</sup> Reduziertes Modell nach Rückwärtselimination (P=0.05 für Verbleib und P=0.10 für Entfernung).

Entnommen und adaptiert aus (9). Aus Platzgründen wurden die Konfidenzintervalle der Hazard-Ratios entfernt.

## 1.4 Diskussion

In der vorliegenden Dissertationsschrift habe ich die wesentlichen Aspekte meiner drei in Erstautorenschaft veröffentlichten Publikationen zu deregulierten miRNAs beim klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom zusammengefasst. Wie ich in der Einleitung dargelegt habe, stehen die Publikationen in einem engen thematischen Zusammenhang.

Ausgehend von methodischen Grundlagen zur exakten relativen Quantifizierung von miRNAs über die Profil-Erstellung differenziell exprimierter miRNAs in nicht-metastasierten und metastasierten Tumoren sowie Knochenmetastasen wurden erste Daten zu ihrer diagnostischen und prognostischen Bewertung von miRNAs für dieses Krankheitsbild erarbeitet. Im Folgenden werde ich die Ergebnisse in diesem Zusammenhang diskutieren. Dabei lege ich besonderen Wert darauf, über die in

meinen Publikationen bereits besprochenen Punkte hinaus und neue Erkenntnisse aus inzwischen erschienenen Publikationen einzubeziehen.

Die RT-qPCR ist die Standardmethode für mRNA- und auch für miRNA-Expressionsanalysen. Differenzielle Unterschiede in den miRNA-Expressionen zwischen bestimmten Zuständen, wie hier beim Nierenzellkarzinom zwischen malignen und nicht-malignen ("normalen") Geweben, werden bevorzugt in Form der relativen Quantifizierung ermittelt. Hierbei erfolgt der Bezug jeweils auf sogenannte Referenzgene, deren Expressionen sich nicht zwischen malignen oder nicht-malignen Gewebe unterscheiden sollen. In zahlreichen mRNA-Expressionsstudien wurde nachgewiesen, dass die für diese Fragestellung häufig verwendeten Housekeeping-Gene, wie z.B. das beta-Actin oder die GAPDH, diese Bedingungen nicht erfüllen. Ihr Einsatz führt daher vielfach zu fehlerhaften Ergebnissen und somit zu falschen Interpretationen. Für miRNA-Expressionsstudien wurde, ähnlich wie in der Vergangenheit bei mRNA-Expressionsstudien, fast ausschließlich und ungeprüft auf die genannten Housekeeping-Gene bzw. auf kleine nukleäre oder nukleoläre RNAs (snRNAs; snoRNAs) normalisiert. Da für miRNA-Expressionsanalysen zum Nierenzellkarzinom bis zum Zeitpunkt meiner Untersuchungen keine systematische Publikationen zu diesem Problem vorlagen (7), bestand zunächst die Aufgabe darin, eine zuverlässige Bezugsbasis für solche Expressionsanalysen zu finden. Dieser Ansatz, miRNA-Profile erst dann zu erstellen, wenn die methodische Grundlage dafür vorhanden ist, also geeignete Referenzgene für eine zuverlässige relative Quantifizierung validiert sind, hat sich als richtig erwiesen. Beispielhaft habe ich dies an der Expression der miR-19b demonstriert (Abb. 2). In mehreren Schritten (Microarray-Analytik; Auswahl potenzieller invarianter miRNAs zwischen „Normalgewebe“ und Gewebe aus primären Nierenzellkarzinomen sowie Knochenmetastasen von Patienten mit Nierenzellkarzinom; RT-qPCR-Bestimmungen; Computeranalysen zur Expressionsstabilität) wurde die Kombination aus miR-28, miR-103 und miR-106a als optimal zur relativen Quantifizierung von miRNA-Expressionen im Nierenzellkarzinom ermittelt. Die relative Quantifizierung der miR-19b mit dieser Referenz-miRNA-Kombination zeigte keine Unterschiede zwischen Normalgewebe und Primärtumor. Aber auch die Quantifizierung nur mit einer Referenz-miRNA wie der miR-28 oder der Zweier-Kombination miR-28+miR-103 erbrachte identische Ergebnisse. Beide Normalisierungsansätze sind geeignete Alternativen zur Dreierkombination, wenn z.B. nur wenig Gewebematerial zur Verfügung steht. Wird hingegen die RNU6B für die

relative Quantifizierung von miR-19b als Referenzgen eingesetzt, ergeben sich im Primärtumor gegenüber dem "Normalgewebe" erhöhte miR-19b-Expressionen. In mindestens acht Publikationen zum Nierenzellkarzinom wurde die RNU6B als Referenzgen, wie auch in miRNA-Expressionsstudien bei anderen soliden Tumoren üblich, eingesetzt, ohne dass deren Eignung als Referenzgen für diese Fragestellung nachgewiesen wurde (siehe Tabelle 1 in (7)). Weitgehend unberücksichtigt blieb bei diesen Studien, dass die Integrität der RNA (RIN-Wert), die Expressionshöhe der RNU6B entscheidend beeinflusst. Im Vergleich dazu unterliegen die kürzeren miRNAs über einen weitaus größeren RIN-Bereich keinen Einschränkungen bei RT-qPCR-Messungen (12). Man muss also davon ausgehen, dass durch Normalisierung auf ungeprüfte und somit oftmals ungeeignete Referenzgene fehlerhafte miRNA-Profile erstellt werden. Diesem grundsätzlichen Problem tragen die in der Methodik erwähnten MIQE-Richtlinien Rechnung, die von Herausgebern maßgebender biowissenschaftlicher Zeitschriften zusammen mit molekularbiologischen Experten erarbeitet wurden (10). Diese Richtlinien sehen u.a. vor, bei der initialen Einreichung eines Manuskripts die Normalisierungsmethode exakt zu beschreiben. Die Bedeutung dieser Tatsache wird auch dadurch unterstrichen, dass die zwei von mir benutzten Computerprogramme geNorm und NormFinder inzwischen als essentielle Module in die weithin benutzten Datenauswertungsprogramme von RT-qPCR-Messungen (qBase-Plus, Biogazelle, Zwijnaarde, Belgien; GenEx, MultiD Analyses, Göteborg, Schweden) aufgenommen wurden.

Meine danach folgenden Untersuchungen waren darauf ausgerichtet, miRNA-Profile von primären klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinomen, seinen Metastasen, hier in Form von Knochenmetastasen, und von Normalgeweben miteinander zu vergleichen. 2007 wurden miRNAs das erste Mal als entscheidende Regulatoren bei der Metastasierung beschrieben (13). Für spezifische miRNAs mit pro- oder anti-metastatischen Effekten wurde der Name Metastamirs geprägt (4). Die vergleichenden Untersuchungen an den drei Probengruppen erwiesen sich als unbedingt notwendig, um irreführende Schlussfolgerungen zu vermeiden. Z.B. ist die Expression von sechs miRNAs (miR-21, miR-155, miR-210, miR-223, miR-224, miR-296) im Primärtumor Tumor und in den Metastasen im Vergleich zum Normalgewebe erhöht, aber mit Ausnahme der miR-296 unterscheiden sie sich nicht zwischen Tumor und Metastasen. Im Gegensatz dazu waren zwei (miR-127, miR-370) der 23 zum Normalgewebe in Metastasen herunterregulierten miRNAs nicht differenziell exprimiert zwischen Tumor und

Metastasen, während die Expression von acht miRNAs (miR-19b, miR-20a, miR-29b, miR-101, miR-130a, miR-143, miR-145, miR-148) nicht zwischen Normal- und Tumorgewebe differierte, in den Metastasen im Vergleich zum Tumorgewebe aber vermindert waren. Eine verminderte globale miRNA-Expression vom Normal- über das Tumor- zum Metastasengewebe gilt als typisch für die verschiedensten Tumore. Es ist bekannt, dass miRNA-kodierende Gene in krebstypischen genomischen Regionen lokalisiert sind. Dies, aber auch epigenetische Modifikationen, wie ich selbst zusammen mit J. Liep in Zellexperimenten zeigen konnte (8), werden als Ursachen der allgemein verminderten Expression von miRNAs in Tumoren angesehen. Aus den oben beschriebenen teilweise gegenläufigen Verhalten bestimmter miRNAs geht jedoch klar hervor, dass durch die Betrachtung von Expressionsdifferenzen nur vom Primärtumor und Metastasen wichtige Charakteristika übersehen werden könnten. Damit stellt der gewählte Ansatz, die miRNA-Profile der drei Gruppen miteinander zu vergleichen, einen wesentlichen Aspekt der durchgeföhrten Studie dar.

Insgesamt wurden in der Studie 30 deregulierte miRNAs durch RT-qPCR-Bestimmungen validiert, die offensichtlich im Zusammenhang mit der Metastasierung beim Nierenzellkarzinom stehen. Ein Vergleich mit inzwischen publizierten Daten aus anderen Studien ergab, dass damit die bisher höchste Anzahl von Metastamirs beim Nierenzellkarzinom beschrieben wurde (8). Darunter sind 17 miRNAs (miR-19a, miR-19b, miR-20a, miR-21, miR-29a, miR-29b, miR-29c, miR-100, miR-101, miR-130a, miR-148a, miR-223, miR-224, miR-296, miR-370, miR-514, und miR-638), deren Rolle in dieser Hinsicht bisher unbekannt waren. Dieser umfangreiche Datensatz ermöglichte detaillierte Korrelationsberechnungen. Ein Verlust und ebenso das Neuauftreten von Korrelationen zwischen verschiedenen miRNA-Paaren erklären so möglicherweise molekulare und zelluläre Alterationen in den verschiedenen Stadien der Tumorentwicklung. Am Beispiel des Tumorsuppressorgens RHOB habe ich dies als Schlussfolgerung aus den Daten der Studie näher ausgeführt (8). Dies soll außerdem darauf hinweisen, Interaktionen zwischen miRNAs und entsprechenden Zielgenen bei der Kanzerogenese und Metastasierung unter dem Aspekt eines "feedback networks" in Zukunft verstärkt Beachtung zu schenken. Die im Rahmen meiner Studie dann *in silico* vorgenommene Zielgen-Suche anhand potenzieller Interaktionen zwischen miRNAs und mRNA-Transkripten und ihre Integration in validierte Stoffwechselwege beim Nierenzellkarzinom verdeutlichen außerdem, dass die erstellten miRNA-Profile auch neue therapeutische Ansatzpunkte bieten. Diese Studie ist auch ein Beleg dafür, dass

solide, oftmals mühevoll erarbeitete deskriptive Studien die essentielle Grundlage für neue hypothesen-generierte Untersuchungen sind und so auch anerkannt werden sollten (14).

Im dritten Abschnitt widmete ich mich, basierend auf diesen miRNA-Profilen und vorhergehenden Untersuchungen der Arbeitsgruppe (11), dem diagnostischen und prognostischen Potential von differenziell exprimierten miRNAs. Untersucht wurden jeweils vier zum Normalgewebe stark über- (miR-122, miR-155, miR-210, miR-224) bzw. unterexprimierte (miR-141, miR-184, miR-200c, miR-514) miRNAs. Auch für diese miRNAs konnte die außerordentliche Diskriminationsfähigkeit zwischen Karzinom- und Normalgewebe bestätigt werden, wie sie auch bei anderen miRNAs bereits von der Arbeitsgruppe gezeigt wurde (11). Von besonderem klinischem Interesse war jedoch die prognostische Aussagekraft der miRNAs. Die miR-122 und miR-514 erwiesen sich in Kaplan-Meier-Analysen als Kenngrößen, deren Expression im Nephrektomiepräparat im engen Zusammenhang mit der Rezidivwahrscheinlichkeit nach der Nephrektomie stand (Fig. 5). In multivariaten Analysen zusammen mit klinisch-pathologischen Parametern war miR-514 eine unabhängige Variable. Im Cox-Regressionsmodell war diese miRNA damit ein zusätzlicher Risikostratifikator zu den etablierten Parametern, wie dem pT-Stadium und dem positiven chirurgischen Schnittrand. Man kann somit berechtigt hoffen, dass die Integration geeigneter miRNAs in bekannte Prognosemodelle die Vorhersagewahrscheinlichkeit eines Rezidivs verbessert (15). Bisher wurden erst drei weitere Studien bekannt, die andere miRNAs hinsichtlich ihrer prognostischen Eigenschaften untersucht haben [Zusammenstellung siehe (9)]. Im Gegensatz zum hier gezeigten Projekt hatten diese Autoren jedoch ihre Daten nicht multivariat analysiert, sodass Aussagen über eine Informationsgewinn gegenüber von klinisch-pathologischen Faktoren nicht möglich war.

In den drei Publikationen zu dieser zusammenfassenden Dissertationsschrift sind im Einzelnen Punkte aufgeführt, die dort als mögliche Einschränkungen der Studien diskutiert wurden. Dies bezieht sich in erster Linie auf die Anzahl der untersuchten Probanden in den Studiengruppen und die z.B. für die Prognosebeurteilung erforderliche Anzahl von Ereignissen. Die Untersuchungen erfolgten jedoch grundsätzlich auf der Basis von Fallzahlberechnungen ( $\alpha=5\%$ ;  $\beta=80\%$ ), sodass Fehler erster und zweiter Art von vornherein weitgehend auszuschließen sind. Trotz dieser selbstkritischen Einschätzung gehe ich davon aus, dass die hier exemplarisch am Nierenzellkarzinom vorgestellten Ergebnisse eine hoffnungsvolle neue

Forschungsrichtung aufzeigen. Aufgrund der mittel- und unmittelbaren zahlreichen Interaktionen von miRNAs mit anderen zellulären Komponenten wird die miRNA-Forschung zukünftig sowohl direkte Auswirkungen auf die Diagnostik und Therapie von Patienten haben als auch indirekt ein wichtiger Ausgangspunkt für andere Forschungsansätze sein.

## 1.5 Literaturverzeichnis

Die Promotionsordnung sieht die Angabe von nur 15 Zitationen in der Zusammenfassung vor. Alle anderen Zitationen sind in den drei Publikationen wiedergegeben.

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## 2. EIDESSTATTLICHE VERSICHERUNG/ANTEILSERKLÄRUNGEN

Ich, Zofia Wotschofsky, versichere an Eides statt durch meine eigenhändige Unterschrift, dass ich die vorgelegte Dissertation in Form einer Publikationspromotion mit mindestens drei Publikationen mit dem zusammenfassenden Thema: "Deregulierte microRNAs und deren diagnostische und prognostische Bedeutung beim klarzelligen Nierenzellkarzinom" selbstständig und ohne nicht offengelegte Hilfe Dritter verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel genutzt habe.

Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder dem Sinne nach auf Publikationen oder Vorträgen anderer Autoren beruhen, sind als solche in korrekter Zitierung (siehe „Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts (URM)“ des ICMJE -www.icmje.org) kenntlich gemacht. Die Abschnitte zu Methodik (insbesondere praktische Arbeiten, Laborbestimmungen, statistische Aufarbeitung) und Resultaten (insbesondere Abbildungen, Graphiken und Tabellen) entsprechen den URM (s.o) und werden von mir verantwortet.

Meine Anteile an den ausgewählten Publikationen entsprechen denen, die in der untenstehenden gemeinsamen Erklärung mit dem Betreuer angegeben sind. Sämtliche Publikationen, die aus dieser Dissertation hervorgegangen sind und bei denen ich Autor bin, entsprechen den URM (s.o) und werden von mir verantwortet.

Die Bedeutung dieser eidestattlichen Versicherung und die strafrechtlichen Folgen einer unwahren eidestattlichen Versicherung (§156,161 des Strafgesetzbuches) sind mir bekannt und bewusst.

Berlin, den 18. Juni 2013

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Zofia Wotschofsky

### Anteilserklärung an den erfolgten Publikationen

**Publikation 1:** **Wotschofsky Z**, Meyer HA, Jung M, Fendler A, Wagner I, Stephan C, Busch J, Erbersdobler A, Disch AC, Mollenkopf HJ, Jung K. Reference genes for the relative quantification of microRNAs in renal cell carcinomas and their metastases. Anal Biochem 2011;417:233-41.

Beitrag im Einzelnen:

- a) Gewebeprobenvorbereitung für Microarray- und RT-qPCR-Analysen; Microarray-Messungen in Kooperation mit der Core Facility des MPI Infektionsbiologie Berlin.
- b) Auswertung der miRNA-Microarray-Daten: GeneSpring; Invarianzprüfungen für potenzielle Referenz-miRNAs; geNorm und NormFinder-Programme.
- c) RT-qPCR-Validierung an zusätzlichen RNA-Isolaten nach MIQE-Guidelines.
- d) Auswertung: geNorm, Normfinder; Eignungsüberprüfung der ermittelten optimalen Referenz-miRNAs und ihrer Kombinationen; statistische Bewertung mit verschiedenen Testen.
- e) Verfassen des Publikationsentwurfs; Abstimmung mit allen Autoren und dem korrespondierenden Autor.

**Publikation 2:** **Wotschofsky Z**, Liep J, Meyer HA, Jung M, Wagner I, Disch AC, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Busch J, Weikert S, Miller K, Erbersdobler A, Mollenkopf HJ, Jung K. Identification of metastamirs as metastasis-associated microRNAs in clear cell renal cell carcinomas. *Int J Biol Sci* 2012;8:1363-74.

Beitrag im Einzelnen:

Punkt a und b entspricht den Angaben in der Publikation 1, da die Ermittlung der differenziell exprimierten miRNAs aus den o.g. Microarray-Analysen resultierte.

c) Auswertung der miRNA-Microarray-Daten unter dem Aspekt der differenziellen Expression: GeneSpring; statistische Teste; Multiplizitäts-Korrekturen; Programme geNorm und NormFinder.

d) RT-qPCR-Validierung an zusätzlichen RNA-Isolaten nach MIQE-Guidelines.

e) Auswertung der differenziellen Expression mit verschiedenen statistischen Testen, Korrelationsberechnungen, prädiktive Zielgen-Suche mit verschiedenen Suchmaschinen; Einordnung in KEGG-Stoffwechselwege über miRNA-mRNA-Interaktionsprogramme.

Abstimmung der Zellkulturbestimmungen mit Julia Liep.

f) Verfassen des Publikationsentwurfs; Abstimmung mit allen Autoren und dem korrespondierenden Autor.

**Publikation 3:** **Wotschofsky Z**, Busch J, Jung M, Kempkensteffen C, Weikert S, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Miller K, Kristiansen G, Erbersdobler A, Jung K. Diagnostic and prognostic potential of differentially expressed miRNAs between metastatic and non-metastatic renal cell carcinoma at the time of nephrectomy. *Clin Chim Acta* 2013;416:5-10.

Beitrag im Einzelnen:

a) Aufarbeitung zusätzlicher Gewebeproben (Rücksprachen mit Kliniker und Uropathologen; RNA-Isolierung; übliche Charakterisierung der RNA nach MIQE-Guidelines)

b) RT-qPCR-Messungen aller Proben mit den 8 selektierten miRNAs; Validierung insbesondere von miR-122 und miR-514 entsprechend Supporting information) an zusätzlichen RNA-Isolaten nach MIQE-Guidelines.

c) Auswertung der differenziellen Expressionen; Auswertung der diagnostischen Aussagekraft (ROC-Analysen) und prognostischen Validität (Kaplan-Meier- und Cox-Regressions-Analysen).

f) Verfassen des Publikationsentwurfs; Abstimmung mit allen Autoren und dem korrespondierenden Autor.

### 3. DRUCKEXEMPLARE DER DREI PUBLIKATIONEN

Die folgenden Seiten umfassen die drei ausgewählten Originalartikel einschließlich der "Supplementary data":

1. **Wotschofsky Z**, Meyer HA, Jung M, Fendler A, Wagner I, Stephan C, Busch J, Erbersdobler A, Disch AC, Mollenkopf HJ, Jung K. Reference genes for the relative quantification of microRNAs in renal cell carcinomas and their metastases. *Anal Biochem* 2011;417:233-41.
2. **Wotschofsky Z\***, Liep J\*, Meyer HA, Jung M, Wagner I, Disch AC, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Busch J, Weikert S, Miller K, Erbersdobler A, Mollenkopf HJ, Jung K. Identification of metastamirs as metastasis-associated microRNAs in clear cell renal cell carcinomas. *Int J Biol Sci* 2012;8:1363-74.  
\*geteilte Erstautorenschaft
3. **Wotschofsky Z**, Busch J, Jung M, Kempkensteffen C, Weikert S, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Miller K, Kristiansen G, Erbersdobler A, Jung K. Diagnostic and prognostic potential of differentially expressed miRNAs between metastatic and non-metastatic renal cell carcinoma at the time of nephrectomy. *Clin Chim Acta* 2013;416:5-10.

### 3.1 Publikation 1: Anal Biochem 2011;417:233-41

**Wotschofsky Z**, Meyer HA, Jung M, Fendler A, Wagner I, Stephan C, Busch J, Erbersdobler A, Disch AC, Mollenkopf HJ, Jung K.

Reference genes for the relative quantification of microRNAs in renal cell carcinomas and their metastases.

Anal Biochem 2011;417:233-41. doi: 10.1016/j.ab.2011.06.009

Impact Factor (IF): 2.535

### 3.2 Publikation 2: Int J Biol Sci 2012;8:1363-74

**Wotschofsky Z\***, Liep J\*, Meyer HA, Jung M, Wagner I, Disch AC, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Busch J, Weikert S, Miller K, Erbersdobler A, Mollenkopf HJ, Jung K.

Identification of metastamirs as metastasis-associated microRNAs in clear cell renal cell carcinomas.

Int J Biol Sci 2012;8:1363-74.

\*geteilte Erstautorenschaft

Impact Factor (IF): 2.699

# Identification of Metastamirs as Metastasis-associated MicroRNAs in Clear Cell Renal Cell Carcinomas

Zofia Wotschofsky<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Julia Liep<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Hellmuth-Alexander Meyer<sup>1,3</sup>, Monika Jung<sup>1</sup>, Ina Wagner<sup>4</sup>, Alexander C. Disch<sup>5</sup>, Klaus D. Schaser<sup>5</sup>, Ingo Melcher<sup>5</sup>, Ergin Kilic<sup>6</sup>, Jonas Busch<sup>1</sup>, Steffen Weikert<sup>1</sup>, Kurt Miller<sup>1</sup>, Andreas Erbersdobler<sup>7</sup>, Hans-Joachim Mollenkopf<sup>4</sup>, Klaus Jung<sup>1,2,8✉</sup>

1. Department of Urology, University Hospital Charité, Berlin, Germany.
2. Berlin Institute for Urologic Research, Berlin, Germany.
3. Institute of Physiology, University Hospital Charité, Berlin, Germany.
4. Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology, Berlin, Germany.
5. Center for Musculoskeletal Surgery, University Hospital Charité, Berlin, Germany.
6. Institute of Pathology, University Hospital Charité, Germany.
7. Institute of Pathology, University Rostock, Germany.
8. Corresponding author: Prof. Dr. Klaus Jung, Department of Urology, University Hospital Charité, Schumannstrasse 20/21, D-10117 Berlin, Germany; E-mail: klaus.jung@charite.de; Tel. ++49-30 450-515041, Fax: ++49-30 450-51590.

\* These authors contributed equally.

✉ Corresponding author: Dr. Klaus Jung, Email: klaus.jung@charite.de.

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## Abstract

MicroRNAs (miRNAs) play a pivotal role in cancerogenesis and cancer progression, but their specific role in the metastasis of clear cell renal cell carcinomas (ccRCC) is still limited. Based on microRNA microarray analyses from normal and cancerous samples of ccRCC specimens and from bone metastases of ccRCC patients, we identified a set of 57 differentially expressed microRNAs between these three sample groups of ccRCC. A selected panel of 33 miRNAs was subsequently validated by RT-qPCR on total 57 samples. Then, 30 of the 33 examined miRNAs were confirmed to be deregulated. A stepwise down-regulation of miRNA expression from normal, over primary tumor to metastatic tissue samples, was found to be typical. A total of 23 miRNAs (miR-10b/-19a/-19b/-20a/-29a/-29b/-29c/-100/-101/-126/-127/-130/-141/-143/-145/-148a/-192/-194/-200c/-210/-215/-370/-514) were down-regulated in metastatic tissue samples compared with normal tissue. This down-regulated expression in metastatic tissue in comparison with primary tumor tissue was also present in 21 miRNAs. In cell culture experiments with 5-aza-2'-deoxycytidine and trichostatin A, epigenetic modifications were shown as one reason of this down-regulation. The altered miRNA profiles, comprising newly identified metastasis-associated miRNAs, termed metastamir and the predicted miRNA-target interactions together with the significant correlations of miRNAs that were either lost or newly appeared in the studied sample groups, afford a solid basis for further functional analyses of individual miRNAs in RCC metastatic progression.

Key words: Renal cell carcinoma; Microarray; RT-qPCR; microRNAs; Metastasis.

## Introduction

Renal cell carcinoma (RCC) is one of the ten most frequent tumors, representing approximately 3-5% of all adult malignancies [1]. In 2012, 64,770 new cancer

cases and 13,570 deaths are expected in the USA [1]. Approximately 80-90% of this cancer comprises the histological clear cell subtype of RCC (ccRCC). At the

time of initial diagnosis, approximately 60% of the patients have a localized carcinoma, and nearly 20% are identified with regional or distant metastases [2]. As approximately 30% of RCC cases develop metastatic disease following surgery with curative intent, there is a need to better detection of high risk RCC to potentially improve the curative treatment for RCC disease. Metastatic spread of RCC, primarily occurring in the lungs, bones, liver or brain, account for the high morbidity and poor prognosis. The average survival time from the diagnosis of distant metastasis ranges around 24 months, and less than 20% of the patients survive more than 5 years [2]. Thus, essential research efforts are needed to establish novel molecular-based strategies to more successfully combat this aggressive metastatic disease.

Cancer progression is a complex multi-step process for which the path from a primary tumor to a metastatic lesion is still largely unknown. It is suggested that the organ-specific sequence of these step-wise events is induced by epigenetic and genetic changes [3]. Therefore, a better understanding of these molecular processes could allow the development of early diagnostic markers and could lead to effective, targeted approaches to preventing and treating RCC metastasis. Recent reports have shown the emerging role of microRNAs (miRNAs) in cancerogenesis. The identified miRNAs associated to cancer have been termed oncomirs [4], and the specific miRNAs with pro- and anti-metastatic effects are so-called metastamirs [5,6]. These non-protein coding RNAs of approximately 20-22 nucleotides are involved in the regulation of approximately 30% of all of the genes at the post-transcriptional level [7]. As of July 2012, a total of 1921 mature human miRNAs have been annotated in the miRBase release 18.0 (<http://www.mirbase.org>). Meanwhile, numerous studies have proven the differential miRNA expression for different cancer types [8-11]. For urological malignancies, we recently summarized the expression data of miRNAs as well as the potential role of miRNAs as regulators in the signal transduction pathways and as metastamirs [6,12,13]. In the case of renal cell carcinoma, several studies have reported on differential miRNA expression patterns [14-18]. However, the information on specific miRNAs in relation to the RCC metastasis is limited. In the literature, only a few reports on miRNA profiles or single miRNAs that are related to RCC metastasis are published with a minimal overlap of miRNAs between those studies [19-23].

Therefore, in the present study, we aimed (a) to specify a typical metastamir pattern of ccRCC by examining our own miRNA microarray data from

non-malignant and malignant samples of ccRCC specimens as well as from bone metastatic ccRCC samples, (b) to validate the most prominent metastamirs in reverse transcription quantitative RT-PCR (RT-qPCR) assays, (c) to examine epigenetic modifications as potential reason for altered miRNA expression, (d) to correlate the expression of validated miRNAs with each other and with clinico-pathological variables, and (e) to use an enrichment strategy comprising miRNA and predicted gene targets thereof prominent in the renal cell carcinoma pathway in the Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG). These microRNA metastatic signatures could be helpful for providing a better understanding of the biology of ccRCC and for predicting clinical outcomes and metastatic recurrences.

## Materials and Methods

### Patients and Tissue Samples

A total 22 non-malignant tissue samples from 22 non-metastatic ccRCC patients (21 male, one female; median age 62, range 41-78 years) and 22 malignant samples from another 22 ccRCC patients (21 male, one female; median age 67, range 39-87 years) undergoing radical nephrectomy as well as metastatic tissue samples from 13 patients (12 male, one female, median age 67, range 40-89 years) undergoing surgical resection of ccRCC bone metastases were collected between 2003 and 2010 at the University Hospital Charité, as previously reported [24]. Tissue samples were snap frozen in liquid nitrogen directly after surgery and were stored at -80°C until RNA isolation. Fifteen tumor samples were classified as pT1, one as pT2, and six as pT3, according to the 2002 TNM classification, while the histological grading according to the 2004 WHO criteria resulted in four G1, 17 G2, and one G3 (Table 1). All of the tumor types were ccRCC. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University Hospital Charité in accordance with the principles of Declaration of Helsinki; the patients provided informed consent. All of these samples were used for the validation of the microarray-based selection of differentially expressed miRNAs with RT-qPCR. Tissue samples used for microarray profiling were previously described [24].

### Cell Culture Experiments with Epigenetic Modifications

The ccRCC cell lines ACHN and A498 were maintained in Eagle's Minimum Essential Medium (Biochrom, Berlin, Germany), Caki-1 in McCoy's 5a Medium (Invitrogen, Darmstadt, Germany), and 786-O in RPMI 1640 (Invitrogen) under standard

conditions (37°C, 5% CO<sub>2</sub>) recommended by the American Type Culture Collection (Manassas, VA, USA). All media were supplemented with 10% fetal calf serum (PAA, Pasching, Austria) and 100 U/ml penicillin and 100 mg/ml streptomycin (both PAA). For the demethylation and histone deacetylase inhibition experiments, the cells were plated in 6-well plates and 24 h later, they were treated with 1 μM 5-Aza-2'-deoxycytidine (Aza) (Sigma, Munich, Germany) for 72 h or with 1 μM Aza for 72 h followed by 100nM trichostatin A (TSA) (Sigma) for 24h. The media with Aza was renewed after 48 h.

**Table 1.** Clinical and histopathological characteristics of investigated patients.

| Characteristic  | ccRCC patients undergoing nephrectomy (n=22) | Bone metastatic ccRCC patients (n=13) |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Age, years      |                                              |                                       |
| Median          | 67                                           | 69                                    |
| Range           | 37-78                                        | 40-89                                 |
| Sex             |                                              |                                       |
| Male            | 21                                           | 12                                    |
| Female          | 1                                            | 1                                     |
| pT stage        |                                              | Not applicable                        |
| pT1             | 15                                           |                                       |
| pT2             | 1                                            |                                       |
| pT3             | 6                                            |                                       |
| pT4             | -                                            |                                       |
| N stage         |                                              | Not applicable                        |
| pN0             | 6                                            |                                       |
| pN1             | -                                            |                                       |
| pNx             | 16                                           |                                       |
| M stage         |                                              |                                       |
| M0              | 22                                           |                                       |
| M1              | -                                            |                                       |
| Mx              | -                                            |                                       |
| Surgical margin |                                              | Not applicable                        |
| R0              | 19                                           |                                       |
| R1              | 1                                            |                                       |
| R2              | 1                                            |                                       |
| Rx              | 1                                            |                                       |

ccRCC: clear cell renal cell carcinoma.

## RNA Extraction, Microarray-based MiRNA Profiling and Quantitative RT-PCR of MiRNAs

Analyses were performed as previously described [11,17,24]. Details are given in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material.

## Prediction of MicroRNA Targets

Target prediction was performed using miRecords (<http://mirecords.umn.edu/miRecords>) which integrates several miRNA target prediction programs [25]. We assumed a useful prediction only if the putative target was concordantly identified by three of the most common algorithms (miRanda, PicTar, and TargetScan). Some miRNAs were not listed neither in the PicTar tools used in the miRecords search machine and were also not listed in the actualized PicTar program [26]. In this case, additional positive predictions by two other algorithms (PITA, RNAhybrid) in miRecords were used as a criterion for a putative target. The web-based software DIANA-mirPath (<http://diana.cslab.ece.ntua.gr>) was applied to identify genes that are affected by differentially expressed miRNAs in the renal cell carcinoma pathway provided by the KEGG database [27].

## Statistical Analysis

Statistical analyses were performed with Graph Pad Prism version 6.0 (GraphPad Software Inc., La Jolla, CA, USA), IBM SPSS Statistics version 19 (IBM Corp., Somers, NY, USA), and MedCalc version 12.2.1 (MedCalc Software, Mariakerke, Belgium). Differences between the miRNA expressions of the three sample groups were analyzed by non-parametric tests (Kruskal-Wallis-test with Dunn's test; Mann-Whitney U test), as indicated in the corresponding passages in the text. Significances in the cell experiments were calculated by the Student's *t*-test. Correlations were assessed by Spearman's rank correlation coefficients. P-values of <0.05 (two-tailed) were considered to be statistically significant. Data of the cell Sample size determinations were performed using Graph-Pad StatMate, version 2.0, based on an alpha error of 5% and a power of 80% (Doc S2 of Supplementary Material).

## Results

### Characteristics of the Isolated Total RNA

The median RNA yield from one mg wet weight of normal, malignant, and metastatic tissue samples amounted to 937 ng (95% CI, 734-1247 ng), 499 ng (466-636 ng), and 809 ng (331-1165 ng), respectively. The yield from the malignant RCC samples was significantly lower compared with the quantities that were isolated from the two other tissue samples (Kruskal-Wallis test, P<0.001). The median ratios of the absorbances at 260 nm to 280 nm (2.04, 2.01, and 2.00) and the median RIN values (7.45, 7.8, and 7.2) of the RNA samples from the three sample groups did not differ (Kruskal-Wallis test, P>0.05).

## Microarray-based Selection of Metastamirs

The normalized data and the quality flags (present and absent calls) generated from GeneSpring software were used to identify differentially expressed miRNA genes between sample groups. Here, 148 miRNAs of the 470 human miRNA species located on the Agilent microarray chip were flagged as "valid" in a minimum of 80% of the samples from each group. A total of 57 of these miRNAs with a minimum 1.5-fold difference between the mean expression in the malignant RCC samples and bone-metastatic samples were classified as dysregulated miRNAs (Mann-Whitney U test, corrected  $P<0.05$ ; Supplementary Material: Table S1). These miRNAs were re-evaluated concerning chip raw-signal intensity to detect the selected candidates in RT-qPCR. Our previously published work showed that the raw signal strength in microarray experiments and the ability to detect a miRNA by RT-qPCR was strongly correlated [11]. Therefore, a threshold of a mean raw signal  $>850$  was used to condense the number of potentially deregulated miRNAs to a final list of 28 targets resulting from this microarray analysis (Table 2 and Supplementary Material: Table S1).

## RT-qPCR Validation of Metastamirs

To confirm the results of the microarray data sets, 24 out of these 28 miRNAs with the highest differential fold changes and the immediate availability of test kits build the selection criteria for the validation using RT-qPCR (Table 2). Furthermore, six differentially expressed miRNAs based on our previous ccRCC profiling study [17] and eight additional miRNAs from literature [14,15,18-20,28-31] were included in this first validation approach (Table 2).

The initial validation of all these 38 miRNAs was checked regarding their measurability ( $C_{qs} < 35$ ) in three RNA pools that were prepared with equal amounts of RNAs from eight RNA samples isolated from normal, malignant, and metastatic samples. Five miRNAs with  $C_{qs} > 35$  in the pools were excluded from further analysis. The remaining 33 miRNAs were measured in 57 individual clinical samples in the final RT-qPCR validation normalized against the previously validated reference gene combination of miR-28, miR-103, and miR-106a (Table 2) [24]. Only a few of the 33 miRNAs are affiliated with the same miRNA gene family or miRNA cluster (Supplementary Material: Table S2). A very good agreement between the microarray data and the RT-qPCR results was evident (Table 2).

The results of the RT-qPCR measurements in the three sample groups are presented in Figure 1 and in detail in Supplementary Material: Table S3. The following features are striking: (a) 30 of the 33 total examined miRNAs, except for miR-195, miR-451, and miR-494, showed a differentially expressed pattern in the three sample groups. (b) The general down-regulation of miRNAs in bone metastatic samples found in the microarray analysis was confirmed; 21 of the 30 deregulated miRNAs were significantly down-regulated ( $P<0.005$ ) in metastatic samples when compared with those in primary tumors (Table 2). In addition, these 21 miRNAs, as well as miR-127 and miR-370, were less expressed in metastatic than in normal tissue samples. (c) Eight miRNAs (miR-19b, miR-20a, miR-29b, miR-101, miR-130a, miR-143, miR-145, and miR-148) did not differ in their expression between normal and tumor RCC samples but decreased in metastatic samples. This decreased expression in metastatic samples was also observed for miR-19a and miR-126, which were more highly expressed in tumor RCC samples compared with samples from normal tissue. (d) Only six miRNAs (miR-21, miR-155, miR-210, miR-223, miR-224, and miR-296) were up-regulated in metastatic samples in comparison to normal tissue samples, while only one of these miRNAs (miR-296) and the additional miR-638 were higher expressed compared with primary tumor samples. (e) A gradually reduced expression in non-malignant tissue samples as compared to primary tumor and metastatic samples was observed for 11 miRNAs (miR-10b, miR-26a, miR-29a, miR-29c, miR-100, miR-141, miR-192, miR-194, miR-200c, miR-215, and miR-514).

## Down-regulation of miRNAs by Epigenetic Modifications

We hypothesized that the high proportion of down-regulated miRNAs could possibly be caused by epigenetic modifications. Therefore, we exemplarily selected miR-29a, miR-101, miR-127, miR-141, miR-145, miR-200c, miR-215, and miR-514 to study their expression in RCC cell lines after treatment with the demethylating agent 5-aza-2'-deoxycytidine alone or in combination with the histone deacetylase inhibitor trichostatin A. As shown in Figure 2, the expression of miR-127, miR-141, miR-145, and miR-514 could be restored, whereby the re-expression effect was generally enhanced when both agents were used in combination. The other four miRNA (data not shown) did not change their expression behavior under the above-mentioned treatment.

**Table 2.** miRNAs included in the RT-qPCR analysis regarding their metastatic association.<sup>†</sup>

## Selected miRNAs by microarray analysis

| No. | miRNA          | Microarray <sup>‡</sup> |       | RT-qPCR <sup>‡</sup>  |         |
|-----|----------------|-------------------------|-------|-----------------------|---------|
|     |                | Fold changes            | P     | Fold changes          | P       |
| 1   | miR-10b        | -2.29                   | 0.001 | -3.91                 | <0.0001 |
| 2   | miR-19a        | -2.76                   | 0.001 | -1.94                 | <0.0001 |
| 3   | miR-19b        | -1.68                   | 0.003 | -1.71                 | <0.0001 |
| 4   | miR-21         | +1.65                   | 0.035 | +1.23                 | 0.986   |
| 5   | miR-29a        | -1.78                   | 0.003 | -1.98                 | 0.0004  |
| 6   | miR-29b        | -3.36                   | 0.001 | -4.28                 | <0.0001 |
| 7   | miR-29c        | -3.63                   | 0.001 | -4.00                 | <0.0001 |
| 8   | miR-100        | -2.40                   | 0.025 | -1.87                 | 0.007   |
| 9   | miR-101        | -2.17                   | 0.001 | -3.57                 | 0.001   |
| 10  | miR-126        | -2.76                   | 0.001 | -2.60                 | 0.002   |
| 11  | miR-130a       | -1.76                   | 0.013 | -1.78                 | 0.019   |
| 12  | miR-143        | -2.51                   | 0.015 | -2.44                 | 0.011   |
| 13  | miR-145        | -2.80                   | 0.005 | -2.56                 | 0.001   |
| 14  | miR-148a       | -2.10                   | 0.009 | -1.65                 | 0.039   |
| 15  | miR-192        | -2.98                   | 0.013 | -5.13                 | 0.001   |
| 16  | miR-194        | -3.40                   | 0.010 | -7.05                 | 0.0002  |
| 17  | miR-195        | -2.31                   | 0.021 | -2.55                 | 0.054   |
| 18  | miR-223        | +2.83                   | 0.013 | -1.02                 | 0.824   |
| 19  | miR-370        | +11.3                   | 0.001 | +1.43                 | 0.905   |
| 20  | miR-451        | +4.79                   | 0.013 | +1.60                 | 0.403   |
| 21  | miR-494        | +5.73                   | 0.001 | +1.17                 | 0.063   |
| 22  | <i>miR-575</i> | +7.87                   | 0.001 | see Note <sup>§</sup> | -       |
| 23  | <i>miR-630</i> | +15.2                   | 0.001 | see Note <sup>§</sup> | -       |
| 24  | miR-638        | +5.93                   | 0.001 | +1.56                 | 0.030   |

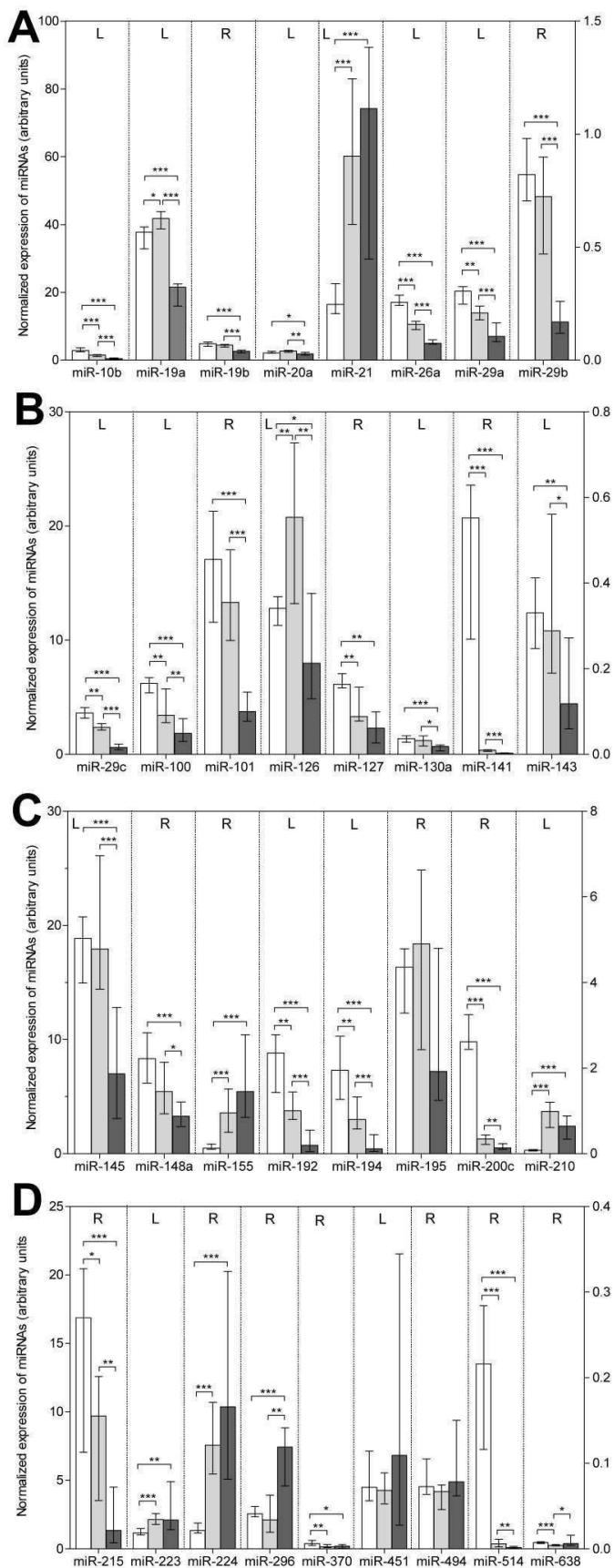
## Selected miRNAs from a ccRCC-specific miRNA panel [17]

|   |          |   |   |       |         |
|---|----------|---|---|-------|---------|
| 1 | miR-141  | - | - | -3.91 | <0.0001 |
| 2 | miR-155  | - | - | +1.52 | 0.267   |
| 3 | miR-200c | - | - | -2.62 | 0.004   |
| 4 | miR-210  | - | - | -1.54 | 0.063   |
| 5 | miR-224  | - | - | +1.38 | 0.484   |
| 6 | miR-514  | - | - | -3.78 | 0.007   |

## Selected miRNAs after literature search

|   |                 |                                                            |                       |         |  |
|---|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|--|
| 1 | <i>let-7f</i>   | Gottardo et al. [14]                                       | see Note <sup>§</sup> |         |  |
| 2 | miR-20a         | Chow et al. [29]                                           | -1.40                 | 0.002   |  |
| 3 | miR-26a         | Liu et al. [31], Chow et al. [30], Heinzelmann et al. [20] | -2.11                 | <0.0001 |  |
| 4 | <i>miR-106b</i> | Chow et al. [30], Slaby et al. [19]                        | see Note <sup>§</sup> |         |  |
| 5 | <i>miR-125b</i> | Liu et al. [31]                                            | see Note <sup>§</sup> |         |  |
| 6 | miR-127         | Saito et al. [28]                                          | -1.43                 | 0.091   |  |
| 7 | miR-215         | Nakada et al. [15]                                         | -7.28                 | 0.007   |  |
| 8 | miR-296         | Juan et al. [18]                                           | +3.55                 | 0.001   |  |

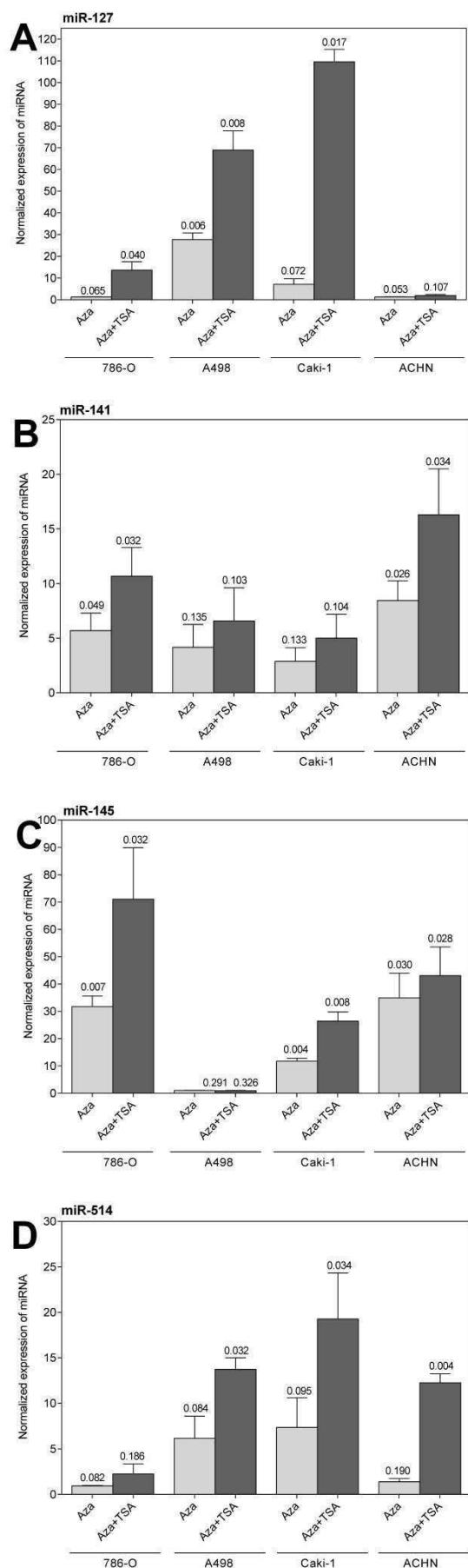
<sup>†</sup>miRNAs investigated in this study were chosen on the basis of the microarray-based selection of metastamirs in the present study, a specific panel of differentially expressed miRNAs in renal cell carcinoma described in a previous study [17] and literature data as indicated. <sup>‡</sup>Fold changes in metastatic to primary renal cell carcinoma samples (see Figure 1 and Supplementary Material: Table S1). Symbols: +, up-regulation; -, down-regulation. <sup>§</sup>miRNAs in italics showed Cq values >35 in RT-qPCR of the pooled samples and were therefore excluded in subsequent analyses.



**Figure 1.** Expression of the 33 miRNAs validated by RT-qPCR in normal, primary tumor, and metastatic tissue samples of renal cell carcinoma. Columns (blank column: normal, non-malignant tissue, n=22; gray column: primary tumor tissue, n=22; black column: bone metastatic tissue, n=13) represent medians with 95% CIs. The reference miRNA combination of miR-28, miR-103, and miR-106a was used for normalization [24]. For the sake of completeness, we also included in this figure of deregulated miRNAs the data of miR-19b and miR-141 previously reported [24]. For reasons of clarity, miRNAs were listed according to their number and the left (L) and right (R) y-axis, as indicated in the upper part of the figure, was used to represent the expression levels of the various miRNAs. Statistical differences were calculated by the Mann-Whitney U test between the groups and indicated as follows: \*, P<0.05; \*\*, P<0.01; \*\*\*, at least P<0.001.

### Correlation between the Expression of MiRNAs and Their Expression with Clinico-pathologic Variables

The correlation between the expression of the individual miRNAs was analyzed by Spearman's rank correlation (Supplementary Material: Table S4). From this analysis, 32 miRNA pairs were identified with correlation coefficients ( $r_s$ ) >0.70 (Table 3). Taking into account this high level of  $r_s$  >0.70 as criterion of co-expression/co-regulation between miRNAs, differential correlation patterns between the three groups were observed (Table 3). Two main situations could be distinguished: (a) significant correlations of the miRNA pairs in all of the sample groups without or with slight differences between them (e.g., the pairs miR-10b/miR-126, miR-19a/miR-19b, miR-192/miR-194, and miR-194/miR-215) and (b) distinctly different correlation coefficients of the miRNA pairs between two different sample groups with either the loss of correlation (e.g., miR-21/miR-223, miR-130a/miR-143) or a new correlation (e.g., miR-10b/miR-143, miR-127/miR-200c) that appeared in the metastatic samples compared with those in non-malignant and primary tumor samples. miRNA pairs from the same family/cluster (Supplementary Material: Table S2) did not always correlate (e.g., miR-141/miR-200c, miR-29a/miR-29b) whereas significantly altered correlations were observed between miRNA pairs (e.g., miR-19a/miR-20a, miR-143/miR-145), depending on the sample group studied. As explained in the Discussion section, the correlation data, especially the loss or new appearance of correlations between the different miRNA pairs in the study groups, could be helpful to interpret the changed involvement of miRNAs as characteristics for the respective groups.



No significant association was found between the expression of any miRNA and age ( $r_s$  with P values 0.061 to 0.974). Out of the 33 miRNAs measured, only miR-130a ( $r_s=-0.450$ ;  $P=0.036$ ), miR-200c ( $r_s=0.488$ ;  $P=0.021$ ), and miR-638 ( $r_s=-0.648$ ;  $P=0.001$ ) were significantly ( $P<0.05$ ) correlated with the tumor stage, while miR-19a ( $r_s=-0.450$ ;  $P=0.036$ ), miR-130a ( $r_s=-0.627$ ;  $P=0.048$ ), miR-210 ( $r_s=-0.455$ ;  $P=0.048$ ), and miR-451 ( $r_s=0.441$ ;  $P=0.040$ ) significantly correlated with the tumor grade.

### Putative MiRNA Target Genes

In Table 4, we summarized validated and the number of predicted putative miRNA-target interactions of the 30 differentially expressed miRNAs shown in this study. As stated in the Methods section, only the genes that were identified by the three computational prediction programs miRanda, PicTar, and TargetScan were considered. However, despite this strong selection criterion, the high figures of predicted and already validated targets related to the KEGG pathway "renal cell carcinoma" [27] are obvious (Table 4).

**Figure 2.** Expression of miR-127, miR-141, miR-145, and miR-514 in the renal cell carcinoma cell lines 786-O, A498, Caki-1, and ACHN treated with 5-aza-2'-deoxycytidine (Aza) and trichostatin A (TSA). Values are given as fold changes (mean  $\pm$  SEM) in treated cells compared with the expression in untreated cells. The reference gene combination of RNU48 and RNU6B was used for normalization and the expression in the untreated cells was set one.

**Table 3.** Spearman rank correlation coefficients ( $r_s$ )  $>0.70$  between miRNAs in normal (non-malignant) renal tissue samples in comparison to the  $r_s$ -values of miRNAs in tissue samples from the primary clear cell renal cell carcinoma and metastases.

| Correlation between miRNA pairs |          | $r_s$                  |                        |                         |
|---------------------------------|----------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
|                                 |          | Non-malignant          | ccRCC                  | Metastases              |
| miR-10b                         | miR-101  | 0.473                  | 0.382 <sup>†</sup>     | 0.709                   |
| miR-10b                         | miR-126  | 0.560                  | 0.813                  | 0.808                   |
| miR-10b                         | miR-143  | 0.280 <sup>a,b</sup>   | 0.280 <sup>†,b,c</sup> | 0.852 <sup>b,c</sup>    |
| miR-10b                         | miR-194  | 0.721 <sup>a,b</sup>   | 0.161 <sup>†,a</sup>   | -0.269 <sup>†,b</sup>   |
| miR-19a                         | miR-19b  | 0.871                  | 0.720                  | 0.945                   |
| miR-19a                         | miR-20a  | 0.534 <sup>a</sup>     | 0.877 <sup>a,c</sup>   | 0.319 <sup>†,c</sup>    |
| miR-19b                         | miR-130a | 0.375 <sup>†,a,b</sup> | 0.870 <sup>a,c</sup>   | -0.456 <sup>†,b,c</sup> |
| miR-21                          | miR-223  | 0.770 <sup>a,b</sup>   | 0.299 <sup>†,a</sup>   | 0.060 <sup>†,b</sup>    |
| miR-29a                         | miR-130a | 0.761 <sup>b</sup>     | 0.447                  | 0.027 <sup>†,b</sup>    |
| miR-29a                         | miR-141  | 0.730                  | 0.286 <sup>†</sup>     | 0.407 <sup>†</sup>      |
| miR-29b                         | miR-29c  | 0.579                  | 0.754                  | 0.462 <sup>†</sup>      |
| miR-29b                         | miR-514  | -0.021 <sup>†,b</sup>  | 0.046 <sup>†,c</sup>   | -0.797 <sup>b,c</sup>   |
| miR-101                         | miR-194  | 0.794 <sup>b</sup>     | 0.506                  | 0.203 <sup>†,b</sup>    |
| miR-101                         | miR-215  | 0.800 <sup>b</sup>     | 0.530                  | 0.275 <sup>†,b</sup>    |
| miR-126                         | miR-143  | 0.247 <sup>†,b</sup>   | 0.144 <sup>†,c</sup>   | 0.907 <sup>b,c</sup>    |
| miR-126                         | miR-145  | -0.249 <sup>†,b</sup>  | 0.089 <sup>†,c</sup>   | 0.874 <sup>b,c</sup>    |
| miR-126                         | miR-195  | 0.246 <sup>†,b</sup>   | 0.344 <sup>†,c</sup>   | 0.835 <sup>b</sup>      |
| miR-127                         | miR-195  | 0.478                  | 0.235 <sup>†</sup>     | 0.742                   |
| miR-127                         | miR-200c | -0.106 <sup>†,b</sup>  | 0.073 <sup>†,c</sup>   | -0.736 <sup>b</sup>     |
| miR-127                         | miR-370  | 0.677 <sup>a</sup>     | 0.906 <sup>a</sup>     | 0.879                   |
| miR-130a                        | miR-143  | 0.832 <sup>b</sup>     | 0.496 <sup>c</sup>     | -0.225 <sup>†,b,c</sup> |
| miR-130a                        | miR-195  | 0.840 <sup>b</sup>     | 0.424                  | 0.071 <sup>†,b</sup>    |
| miR-141                         | miR-210  | 0.438                  | 0.738 <sup>c</sup>     | 0.016 <sup>†,c</sup>    |
| miR-143                         | miR-145  | 0.466 <sup>b</sup>     | 0.641 <sup>c</sup>     | 0.934 <sup>b,c</sup>    |
| miR-143                         | miR-195  | 0.780                  | 0.625                  | 0.769                   |
| miR-145                         | miR-370  | 0.136 <sup>†</sup>     | 0.522                  | 0.703                   |
| miR-148a                        | miR-194  | 0.799 <sup>a,b</sup>   | 0.0224 <sup>†,a</sup>  | -0.264 <sup>†,b</sup>   |
| miR-192                         | miR-194  | 0.854                  | 0.835                  | 0.967                   |
| miR-192                         | miR-215  | 0.768                  | 0.868                  | 0.951                   |
| miR-194                         | miR-215  | 0.864                  | 0.773                  | 0.940                   |
| miR-451                         | miR-638  | 0.566                  | 0.313 <sup>†</sup>     | 0.775                   |
| miR-494                         | miR-638  | 0.353 <sup>†</sup>     | 0.622                  | 0.709                   |

ccRCC: clear cell renal cell carcinoma;  $r_s$ : Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. <sup>†</sup>Correlation coefficients with this superscript indicate non-significant ( $P>0.05$ ) correlations within the group. Figures without this superscript indicate significant correlation between the corresponding miRNA pair. <sup>a</sup>Significant differences (at least  $P<0.05$ ) between the correlation coefficients from non-malignant and primary tumor samples. <sup>b</sup>Significant differences (at least  $P<0.05$ ) between the correlation coefficients from non-malignant and metastatic tissue samples. <sup>c</sup>Significant differences (at least  $P<0.05$ ) of the correlation coefficients from the primary tumor samples and metastatic tissue samples.

**Table 4.** Predicted and validated targets of the differentially expressed miRNAs in this study.

| hsa-miRNA | Predicted targets <sup>†</sup> | Validated targets of the RCC pathway <sup>‡</sup>              |
|-----------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| miR-10b   | 57                             | PIK3CA, CRK, PAK7                                              |
| miR-19a   | 321                            | PIK3CA, HIF1A, KRAS, PAK6, RAP1B, RAP1A, PIK3R3, RAF1          |
| miR-19b   | 326                            | PIK3CA, HIF1A, KRAS, PAK6, RAP1B, RAP1A, PIK3R3, RAF1          |
| miR-20a   | 293                            | HIF1A, EGLN3, EPAS1, VEGFA, CRK, MAPK1, PAK7, EGLN1            |
| miR-21    | 67                             | PIK3R1                                                         |
| miR-26a   | 206                            | HGF, CREBBP, PAK2, RAP1B, RAP1A, EP300                         |
| miR-29a   | 281                            | PDGFB, PIK3R1, VEGFA, CDC42, PIK3R2, ARNT, AKT3, TGF $\beta$ 3 |

|          |      |                                                                              |
|----------|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| miR-29b  | 284  | PDGFB, PIK3R1, VEGFA, CDC42, PIK3R2, AKT3                                    |
| miR-29c  | 315  | PDGFB, PIK3R1, VEGFA, CDC42, PIK3R2, ARNT, AKT3, TGFB3                       |
| miR-100  | 15   | -                                                                            |
| miR-101  | 188  | TCEB1, MAPK1, RAC1, PAK2, RAP1B, AKT2, PAK7                                  |
| miR-126  | 4    | CRK                                                                          |
| miR-127  | 4    | -                                                                            |
| miR-130a | 233  | MET, EGLN3, SOS1, PAK6, EP300                                                |
| miR-141  | 168  | HGF, CDC42, GRB2, TGFB2, GAB1                                                |
| miR-143  | 74   | KRAS, PTPN11, EGLN1                                                          |
| miR-145  | 101  | PAK7                                                                         |
| miR-148a | 166  | MET, SLC2A1, EPAS1, SOS1, EP300, PIK3R3                                      |
| miR-155  | 96   | PIK3CA, HIF1A, KRAS, SOS1, RAP1B, ETS1                                       |
| miR-192  | 19   | -                                                                            |
| miR-194  | 74   | HIF1A, MAPK1, RAP1B, AKT2                                                    |
| miR-200c | 289  | TCEB1, CRKL, SOS1, PTPN11, VEGFA, RAC1, RAP1B, ETS1, PAK7, EP300, EGLN1, JUN |
| miR-210  | 4    | -                                                                            |
| miR-215  | 19   | RAP1B                                                                        |
| miR-223  | 58   | PAK7                                                                         |
| miR-224  | 82   | ETS1                                                                         |
| miR-296  | 1050 | -                                                                            |
| miR-370  | 132  | PIK3CA, SOS1                                                                 |
| miR-514  | 550  | RBX1, SLC2A1, JUN, AKT3                                                      |
| miR-638  | 254  | -                                                                            |

<sup>a</sup>Number of predicted targets according to the algorithms explained in Materials and Methods. The individual targets are available as complete list upon request.

<sup>b</sup>Validated targets indicated by the software DIANA-mirPath (<http://diana.cslab.ece.ntua.gr>) corresponding to the genes that were provided to be affected in the renal cell carcinoma pathway as shown in the KEGG database [27].

## Discussion

In 2007, Ma et al. [32] showed for the first time that miRNAs belong to the group of critical regulators in the complex invasion-metastasis network process of breast cancer. Because miRNAs regulate ~30% of the transcriptome by either translational inhibition, destabilization or RNA decay [33], these cellular components are considered to be important modulators of signal transduction pathways in metastatic progression, including for urological tumors [6,13,34].

In the present work, we used several approaches for identifying the involvement of miRNAs in RCC metastasis. These approaches included microarray screening of differentially expressed miRNAs, the subsequent validation of the most distinctly deregulated over- and under-expressed miRNAs by RT-qPCR using additional clinical samples, correlation analysis of these miRNAs between the sample groups, the prediction of putative miRNA-target interactions, and the compilation of validated targets by the deregulated miRNAs in the KEGG pathway "renal cell carcinoma". The basic principle was the differential expression of miRNAs between normal, primary tumor, and metastatic tissue. We consider the comparative examination of the three sample groups to be necessary for clear evidence of differential expression

to avoid misleading conclusions. For example, the expression of six miRNAs (miR-21, miR-155, miR-210, miR-223, miR-224, and miR-296) was found to be up-regulated in primary tumor and metastatic samples compared with normal tissue, but there was no difference between primary tumor and metastases except for miR-296. In contrast, two miRNAs (miR-127 and miR-370) out of the 23 down-regulated miRNAs in metastases compared with normal tissue were not differentially expressed between primary tumor and metastases, while eight miRNAs (miR-19b, miR-20a, miR-29b, miR-101, miR-130a, miR-143, miR-145, and miR-148) were not differentially expressed between normal and tumor RCC samples but were decreased in metastatic samples. Thus, to test only the expression difference between primary tumor and metastatic tissue samples, there is a risk that important characteristics could be overseen and that might cause misinterpretation regarding the behavior of metastatic miRNA expression.

In the present work, we not only confirmed some the results of other studies, but mainly identified new miRNAs that were associated with RCC metastasis. Although the results of several expression studies regarding metastatic RCC samples have been reported after we started our study only a very small number of miRNAs has been congruently described

as differentially expressed in these reports [19-23]. On the whole, 165 differentially expressed miRNAs were detected by microarray analysis in these four studies, which were performed by three independent groups and in our study (Supplementary Material: Table S6). However, only two (miR-10b, miR-143) and 13 miRNAs (let-7d, miR-10b, miR-26a, miR-29a, miR-29b, miR-30c, miR-106b, miR-126, miR-130a, miR-143, miR-145, miR-195, miR-451) were concordantly found to be altered in all studies or in at least three studies (Supplementary Material: Table S6). As previously discussed [12], this limited overlap might result from the use of different detection platforms with certain preanalytical and analytical particularities and in tumor and cohort differences that are not always clearly characterized as required. A different number of differentially expressed miRNAs will inevitably be detected if microarrays based on different mirBase releases are used because the current mirBase database is continuously updated with the newly discovered miRNAs. In addition, results based only on microarray data have the limitation of a relatively high false-positive rate. Thus, the validation of the microarray results by RT-qPCR is required. We validated the relatively high number of 33 miRNAs by RT-qPCR. In addition to the deregulated miRNAs found in our microarray analysis, we included in this validation process some additional miRNAs from the literature as potential metastasis marker (Table 2). In the above-mentioned studies, a smaller number of five to nine different deregulated miRNAs were validated or examined in further functional studies. Five (miR-10b, miR-126, miR-192, miR-194, miR-215) of seven deregulated miRNAs in the study of Khella et al. [22] and seven (miR-10b, miR-126, miR-143, miR-145, miR-192, miR-194, miR-195) of nine suspicious miRNAs in the study of Slaby et al. [23], recently published in the time when we prepared the submission of our work, were described to be associated with RCC metastasis in a similar fashion to the observations found in our work (Supplementary Material: Table S6). However, when compared with all previous studies, we validated 17 additional miRNAs in this study (miR-19a, miR-19b, miR-20a, miR-21, miR-29a, miR-29b, miR-29c, miR-100, miR-101, miR-130a, miR-148a, miR-223, miR-224, miR-296, miR-370, miR-514, and miR-638) that were associated with RCC metastasis and that were not described before. Thus, to the best of our knowledge, the presented list of 30 deregulated miRNAs comprises the most extensive list of RCC metastamirs validated by RT-qPCR. In this respect, the global approach in our study to assess the expression data in the three groups of normal, primary tumor, and metastatic tissue sam-

ples, both in the screening phase by microarrays and in the validation phase by RT-qPCR, as mentioned above, proved to be advantageous.

As described, a stepwise down-regulation of miRNA expression from normal over primary tumor to metastatic tissue samples appears to be more typical than an up-regulated expression in RCC progression. Already in 2005 Lu et al. [8] observed a general reduction of the expression level of many miRNAs in tumors. Because of the reduced global miRNA expression, the authors concluded that miRNAs could function to drive differentiation and prevent cell division. In this case, the expression levels of miRNAs might reflect the degree of cell differentiation [8,35]. The gradual down-regulation of miRNAs from normal tissue over the primary tumor to metastatic tissue in our study generally points in the same direction. It is obvious that the miRNAs affect the essential characteristics of cancer development and progression defined as the hallmarks of cancer in complex regulatory circuits [8,36]. But the complexity of these interactions might also explain that the downregulation of miRNAs, as shown for miR-19a, miR-130a, , miR-143, and miR-145 (Figure 1), does not always occur in a stepwise manner.

But there is still the question how the prevalent down-regulation of the miRNAs is mediated [8,37]. Previous studies showed that approximately miRNA coding genes are frequently located at fragile sites, in minimal regions of loss of heterozygosity, minimal regions of amplification or common breakpoint regions which are cancer-related genomic regions [38]. But cancer is not only caused by genetic mutations. The development of tumors results from accumulation of both, genetic and epigenetic changes. Alterations of the epigenetic pattern play also a very important role in miRNA dysregulation in human tumors. As actually reviewed for urological tumors [39], there seems to be a complicated feedback network between epigenetic changes and miRNA expression. Our data show that epigenetic mechanisms of hypermethylation and histone acetylation of chromatin are probably more important for the miRNA dysregulation in RCC than previously assumed [40]. However, other mechanism of miRNA deregulation caused by an altered transcription factor activity or by malfunctions in the miRNA biogenesis machinery have to be considered [37].

The comprehensive approach of this study also allowed us to apply correlation analysis of miRNAs within each sample group and between the normal group, the primary tumor, and the metastatic sample group. Considering the relatively high correlation coefficient of >0.70 to be an indicator of

co-regulation/co-expression, characteristic constellations were observed. The consistent high correlation of numerous miRNA pairs between the three sample groups contrasted with the loss or appearance of new correlations. The loss or new appearance of new correlations of miRNAs can indicate important cellular and molecular alterations. Thus, miRNAs with that peculiarity are of special importance. A loss of correlation between the up-regulated miRNA pairs miR-21/miR-223 and the down-regulated pairs miR-101/miR-194 are two examples (Table 3). RHOB is a tumor suppressor gene and is predicted to be a common target, among others, for the two mentioned up-regulated miRNAs, miR-21 and miR-223, in metastases (Supplementary Material: Table S5). Moreover, RAC1, a small GTP-binding protein was predicted to be a putative target for miR-101 as well as for miR-194 (Supplementary Material: Table S5). The repression of RhoB protein induced by miR-21 is associated with increased proliferation, migration, invasion, and the decreased apoptosis of cancer cells [41,42] and RCC survival [43], while the Rac1 protein was found to be able to suppress tumor initiation and metastasis by cancer stem cells [44]. Thus, the differentially altered miRNA expression during the tumor initiation and metastasis reflected by the different development of the correlation of respective miRNA pairs between the sample groups suggests that the effects of the mentioned miRNAs on targets change during cancer progression. The altered pleiotropic effects of miRNAs during the different stages of cancer development may be the consequence [45]. It is obvious that these results already imply the necessity to explore miRNA-target interactions in the various stages of cancer development under the aspect of feedback networks.

To underline this view, we compiled the *in silico* predicted targets only for informational purposes (Table 4; Supplementary Material: Table S5). The number of predicted targets is partly very high and contrasts with the relatively low number of actually validated targets indicated in the KEGG database as part of the renal cell cancer pathway. However, it draws attention to new research topics at the same time. For certain miRNAs, a higher number of targets presented in the TarBase 6.0 of the DIANA lab (<http://diana.cs.tau.ac.il>) compared with the predicted targets were observed (data not shown). This discrepancy is partly explained by altered mRNA levels of target genes in microarray analyses after transfection experiments in cell lines that were considered to be proof of evidence without further functional validation, which requires loss- and/or gain-of-function analyses.

Some limitations of this study merit discussion. We deliberately refrained from functional analysis of individual miRNAs and their potential targets, which might be considered to be a limitation of the present study. However, the primary focus of our work on the actual expression regulation in clinical samples and the identification of new miRNAs associated with RCC metastasis reinforce our view that sustainable validation data are essential for future research studies. A limited number of samples seems to be evaluated, however, the number of actually examined samples was consistent with the specified preconditions of type I and II errors ( $\alpha=5\%$ ;  $\beta=80\%$ ) in the sample size calculations to perform this study. The results additionally confirmed that the risk of type I and II errors as problem in small studies could be excluded as much as possible.

In summary, this study on miRNAs profiles in normal, primary RCC, and metastatic tissue samples provides a comprehensive list of 30 deregulated metastasis-associated miRNAs termed metastamirs. A stepwise down-regulation of miRNA expression from normal over primary tumor to metastatic tissue samples was found to be typical. We primarily identified new miRNAs associated with RCC metastasis, and also confirmed the results of other studies because only a few miRNAs have been concordantly described as RCC metastamirs. This metastatic miRNA profile, together with the compiled predicted targets, provides a solid basis for the functional analysis of individual miRNAs and the subsequent integrative network evaluation of data.

## Supplementary Material

Doc S1, Doc S2, Table S1-S5.

<http://www.biolsci.org/v08p1363s1.pdf>

## Abbreviations

ccRCC: clear cell renal cell carcinoma; Cq: quantification cycles; KEGG: Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes; miRNA: microRNA; RIN: RNA integrity number; RT-qPCR: quantitative RT-PCR.

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## Competing Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

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## Supplementary Material to

### Identification of Metastamirs as Metastasis-associated MicroRNAs in Clear Cell Renal Cell Carcinomas by Wotschofsky et al.

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**Doc S1 of Supplementary Material**

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**RNA Extraction**

Tumor tissue samples (between 30-93 mg wet weight) with at least 80% of the tumor cells verified by the two reference pathologists (AE, EK) were selected for RNA isolation [1]. Total RNA, including microRNAs, was extracted using the miRNeasy Mini Kit (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany), with an additional DNA digestion step on the RNA binding silica gel membrane of the spin column, as previously described [1]. The RNA yield and the A260/280 ratios were determined on a NanoDrop 1000 Spectrophotometer (NanoDrop Technologies, Wilmington, DE, USA). A Bioanalyzer 2100 (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA, USA) with an RNA 6000 Nano Lab Chip was used for the determination of RNA integrity numbers (RIN), as criteria for the RNA quality and degradation. Similar procedures were used for the isolation and characterization of RNA in the cell culture experiments. We washed the cells twice with PBS (PAA, Pasching, Austria) and lysed them directly with QIAzol<sup>®</sup> Lysis Reagent (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany).

**Microarray-based MiRNA Profiling**

The microarray profiling approach has been described in detail previously [1]. Briefly, microarray data of miRNAs from 12 malignant and 12 non-malignant tissue specimens of primary non-metastatic ccRCCs as well as nine samples from ccRCC bone metastases were used (GEO accession number GSE37989). Microarray analyses were performed with one-color hybridizations on human catalog 8-plex 15 K microRNA microarrays (AMADID 016436; Agilent Technologies), encoding probes for 470 human miRNAs from the Sanger database v9.1 [1,2]. The raw data were normalized using GeneSpring GX11 Software (Agilent Technologies) with default parameters (threshold raw signal to 1.0, percent shift to 90<sup>th</sup> percentile as a normalization algorithm and no baseline transformation). Statistical analysis was performed using the Mann-Whitney U test. The Benjamini-Hochberg correction was applied for multiple comparisons. A corrected P-value of <0.05 was set to determine the statistical significance. Fold change differences were calculated by the mean expression values of the different sample groups. Raw values were analyzed to estimate the mean signal strength of the micro-array probesets. Further evaluation of the data to select a candidate metastamir pattern based on these microarray data is described in the Results section.

**Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs**

Mature miRNAs were measured using TaqMan miRNA assays (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA, USA) (see Table of "TaqMan MicroRNA Assays" in this DOC S1, page 4) in accordance with the manufacturer's protocols and the MIQE

guidelines (see Table "MIQE Checklist" in this Doc S1, page 7) [3]. Real-time PCRs were performed on a Light-Cycler 480 Instrument (Roche Applied Science, Mannheim, Germany) in white 96-well plates (cat.no. 04729692001 with sealing foils) [1,2,4]. Briefly, cDNA was synthesized from total RNA (6.67 ng pro 10 µl RT reaction) using miRNA-specific stem-looped primers, 10 nmol dNTP mix, 2.6 U RNase inhibitor, 33.5 U MultiScribe RT enzyme and 1 x RT Buffer (Applied Biosystems). All of the cDNA samples were stored at -20°C until PCR analysis. PCR was performed in 10 µl per well, including 1 µl RNA-specific cDNA, 1x TaqMan Universal PCR Master Mix No AmpErase UNG, and gene-specific TaqMan MicroRNA primer Assay solution. The reactions were incubated at 95°C for 10 minutes, followed by 45 cycles of 95°C for 15 s, and 60°C for 60 s. The samples were measured in triplicate, including a non-template control and two interplate controls in each PCR run. The quantification cycles (Cq values) were calculated automatically using the LightCycler software, release 1.5.0, and the "second derivative maximum" cycle analysis method. The analytical precision of the qPCRs (the standard deviation of the Cq values) was tested by intra-run (n=8) measurements and ranged from 0.051 to 0.109 for mean Cq values between 24.28 and 27.49 for the miRNAs miR-28, miR-103, and miR-106a. The between-run precision (n=18) of the reverse transcription reaction including the intra-run variance of the qPCR determination was controlled by cDNA generation for qPCR measurements of miR-126 in one run and amounted to a standard deviation of 0.20 at mean Cq values of 29.34. Calibration curves were made with dilutions of miRNA-specific cDNAs and were documented, together with further qPCR validation data (see "Information on the qPCR validation experiments" in this Doc S1, page 11). Amplification efficiencies were calculated by the LightCycler software, and a mean efficiency of 1.929 was used for the efficiency correction.

The raw RT-qPCR data were analyzed by the GenEX software (MultiD Analyses AB, Göteborg, Sweden) [5]. Using this software, the correction of amplification efficiencies, the adjustment of between-run variations using the interplate calibrators, and the normalization of the miRNA expressions with the reference gene combination of miR-28, miR-103, and miR-106a were performed [1]. RT-qPCR data in the cell culture experiments were analyzed by the qBase<sup>PLUS</sup> software (Biogazelle NV, Zwijnaarde, Belgium) and normalized with the reference gene combination of RNU48 and RNU6B [6].

**TaqMan MicroRNA Assays (Applied Biosystems; Assay name, Assay ID) for the measurement of mature miRNAs characterized by the permanently assigned miRBase accession number, the miRBase-prescribed ID related to the miRBase version, and the sequence**

| <b>Assay name</b> | <b>Assay ID</b> | <b>miRBase accession no.</b> | <b>miRBase ID<sup>†</sup></b>                | <b>Sequence</b>         |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| hsa-miR-10b       | 002218          | MIMAT0000254                 | hsa-miR-10b (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-10b-5p (v18)   | UACCCUGUAGAACCGAAUUUGUG |
| hsa-miR-19a       | 000395          | MIMAT0000073                 | hsa-miR-19a (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-19a-3p (v18)   | UGUGCAAAUCUAUGCAAAACUGA |
| hsa-miR-19b       | 000396          | MIMAT0000074                 | hsa-miR-19b (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-19b-3p (v18)   | UGUGCAAAUCCAUGCAAAACUGA |
| hsa-miR-20a       | 000580          | MIMAT0000075                 | hsa-miR-20a (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-20a-5p (v18)   | UAAAGUGCUUAUAGUGCAGGUAG |
| hsa-miR-21        | 000397          | MIMAT0000076                 | hsa-miR-21 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-21-5p (v18)     | UAGCUUAUCAGACUGAUGUUGA  |
| hsa-miR-26a       | 000405          | MIMAT0000082                 | hsa-miR-26a (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-26a-5p (v18)   | UUCAAGUAAUCCAGGAUAGGCU  |
| hsa-miR-28        | 000411          | MIMAT0000085                 | hsa-miR-28 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-28-5p (v18)     | AAGGAGCUCACAGUCUAUUGAG  |
| hsa-miR-29a       | 002112          | MIMAT0000086                 | hsa-miR-29a (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-29a-3p (v18)   | UAGCACCAUCUGAAAUCGGUUA  |
| hsa-miR-29b       | 000413          | MIMAT0000100                 | hsa-miR-29b (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-29b-3p (v18)   | UAGCACCAUUUGAAAUCAGUGUU |
| hsa-miR-29c       | 000587          | MIMAT0000681                 | hsa-miR-29c (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-29c-3p (v18)   | UAGCACCAUUUGAAAUCGGUUA  |
| hsa-miR-100       | 000437          | MIMAT0000098                 | hsa-miR-100 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-100-5p (v18)   | AACCCGUAGAUCCGAACUUGUG  |
| hsa-miR-101       | 002253          | MIMAT0000099                 | hsa-miR-101 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-101-3p (v18)   | UACAGUACUGUGAUACUGAA    |
| hsa-miR-103       | 000439          | MIMAT0000101                 | hsa-miR-103 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-103-3p         | AGCAGCAUUGUACAGGGCUAUGA |
| hsa-miR-106a      | 002169          | MIMAT0000103                 | hsa-miR-106a (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-106a-5p (v18) | AAAAGUGCUUACAGUGCAGGUAG |
| hsa-miR-126       | 002228          | MIMAT0000445                 | hsa-miR-126 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-126-3p (v18)   | UCGUACCGUGAGUAAUAAUGC   |

| <b>Assay name</b> | <b>Assay ID</b> | <b>miRBase accession no.</b> | <b>miRBase ID<sup>†</sup> Sequence</b>      |                         |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| hsa-miR-127       | 000452          | MIMAT0000446                 | hsa-miR-127 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-127-3p (v18)  | UCGGAUCCGUCUGAGCUUGGU   |
| hsa-miR-130a      | 000454          | MIMAT0000425                 | hsa-miR-130a (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-130a-3p(v18) | CAGUGCAAUGUUAAAAGGGCAU  |
| hsa-miR-141       | 000463          | MIMAT0000432                 | hsa-miR-141 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-141-3p (v18)  | UAACACUGUCUGGUAAAGAUGG  |
| hsa-miR-143       | 002249          | MIMAT0000435                 | hsa-miR-143 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-143-3p (v18)  | UGAGAUGAAGCACUGUAGCUC   |
| hsa-miR-145       | 002278          | MIMAT0000437                 | hsa-miR-145 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-145-5p (v18)  | GUCCAGUUUUCCCAGGAAUCCU  |
| hsa-miR-148a      | 000470          | MIMAT0000243                 | hsa-miR-148a (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-148a-3p(v18) | UCAGUGCACUACAGAACUUUGU  |
| hsa-miR-155       | 002623          | MIMAT0000646                 | hsa-miR-155 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-155-5p (v18)  | UUAAUGCUAUACGUGAUAGGGGU |
| hsa-miR-192       | 000491          | MIMAT0000222                 | hsa-miR-192 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-192-5p (v18)  | CUGACCUAUGAAUUGACAGCC   |
| hsa-miR-194       | 000493          | MIMAT0000460                 | hsa-miR-194 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-194-5p (v18)  | UGUAACAGCAACUCCAUGUGGA  |
| hsa-miR-195       | 000494          | MIMAT0000461                 | hsa-miR-195 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-195-5p (v18)  | UAGCAGCACAGAAAUAUUGGC   |
| hsa-miR-200c      | 000505          | MIMAT0004150                 | hsa-miR-200c (v9.2)<br>mdo-miR-200c (v18)   | UAAUACUGCCGGGUAAUGAUGG  |
| hsa-miR-210       | 000512          | MIMAT0000267                 | hsa-miR-210 (v9.2, v18)                     | CUGUGCGUGUGACAGCGGCUGA  |
| hsa-miR-215       | 000518          | MIMAT0000272                 | hsa-miR-215 (v9.2, v18)                     | AUGACCUAUGAAUUGACAGAC   |
| hsa-miR-223       | 002295          | MIMAT0000280                 | hsa-miR-223 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-223-3p (v18)  | UGUCAGUUUGUCAAAUACCCC   |
| hsa-miR-224       | 002099          | MIMAT0000281                 | hsa-miR-224 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-224-5p (v18)  | CAAGUCACUAGUGGUUCCGUU   |
| hsa-miR-296       | 000527          | MIMAT0000690                 | hsa-miR-296 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-296-5p (v18)  | AGGGCCCCCCCCUCAAUCCUGU  |
| hsa-miR-370       | 002275          | MIMAT0000722                 | hsa-miR-370 (v9.2, v18)                     | GCCUGCUGGGGUGGAACCUGGU  |
| hsa-miR-451       | 001141          | MIMAT0001631                 | hsa-miR-451 (v9.2)<br>hsa-miR-451a (v18)    | AAACCGUUACCAUUACUGAGUU  |
| hsa-miR-494       | 002365          | MIMAT0002816                 | hsa-miR-494 (v9.2), v18)                    | UGAAACAUACACGGAAACCUC   |
| hsa-miR-514       | 001147          | MIMAT0005778                 | hsa-miR-514 (v9.2)                          | AUUGACACUUCUGUGAGUAG    |

| <b>Assay name</b> | <b>Assay ID</b> | <b>miRBase accession no.</b> | <b>miRBase ID<sup>†</sup> Sequence</b>       |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| hsa-miR-638       | 001582          | MIMAT0003308                 | ptr-miR-514 (v18)<br>hsa-miR-638 (v9.2, v18) | AGGGAUCGCGGCGGGUGGCCU |

<sup>†</sup> miR NA ID in the miRBase version 9.2 and 18, respectively.

## MIQE Checklist according to Bustin et al., Clin Chem 2009;55:611-22

All essential information (E) must be submitted with the manuscript. Desirable information (D) should be submitted if available.

| ITEM TO CHECK                                                  | IMPORTANCE | CHECKLIST      | WHERE IN THE MANUSCRIPT; ADDITIONAL COMMENT                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN</b>                                     |            |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Definition of experimental and control groups                  | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: Patients and tissue samples; and in Table 1.                                                                                                                                       |
| Number within each group                                       | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: Patients and tissue samples; Cell culture experiments; <u>Legends to Figure 1 and 2</u> .                                                                                          |
| Assay carried out by core lab or investigator's lab?           | D          | Yes            | All assays were performed in investigator's lab.                                                                                                                                                          |
| Acknowledgement of authors' contributions                      | D          | Yes            | All mentioned authors met the authorship as defined by the journal.                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>SAMPLE</b>                                                  |            |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Description                                                    | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Volume/mass of sample processed                                | D          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: RNA extraction; see Doc S1 of Supplementary Materials                                                                                                                              |
| Microdissection or macrodissection                             | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: RNA extraction; see Doc S1 of Supplementary Materials, <u>macrodissection with histological verification</u> .                                                                     |
| Processing procedure                                           | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: Patients and tissue samples; see Doc S1                                                                                                                                            |
| If frozen - how and how quickly?                               | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: Patients and tissue samples; see Doc S1                                                                                                                                            |
| If fixed - with what, how quickly?                             | E          | Not applicable |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Sample storage conditions and duration (esp. for FFPE samples) | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: Patients and tissue samples; see Doc S1                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>NUCLEIC ACID EXTRACTION</b>                                 |            |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Procedure and/or instrumentation                               | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: RNA extraction in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material and <u>references indicated</u> .                                                                                               |
| Name of kit and details of any modifications                   | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: RNA extraction in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material and <u>references indicated</u> .                                                                                               |
| Source of additional reagents used                             | D          | Yes            | RNase-free DNase set; Qiagen (cat.no. 79254), see subsequent information.                                                                                                                                 |
| Details of DNase or RNase treatment                            | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: RNA extraction as in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material; <u>with an optional on-column digestion DNase step</u> .                                                                    |
| Contamination assessment (DNA or RNA)                          | E          | Yes            | See previous comment; according to Chen et al. (Nucleic Acids Res 33 (2005) e179) miRNA measurements by the TaqMan assays are not affected by genomic DNA; see also comment on "Cgs with and without RT". |
| Nucleic acid quantification                                    | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: RNA extraction in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material and <u>references indicated</u> .                                                                                               |
| Instrument and method                                          | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: RNA extraction in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material and <u>references indicated</u> .                                                                                               |
| Purity (A260/A280)                                             | D          | Yes            | Results: Characteristics of the isolated total RNA.                                                                                                                                                       |
| Yield                                                          | D          | Yes            | Results: Characteristics of the isolated total RNA                                                                                                                                                        |
| RNA integrity method/instrument                                | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: RNA extraction; in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material: Bioanalyzer 2100 (Agilent)/                                                                                                   |

| ITEM TO CHECK                                             | IMPORTANCE | CHECKLIST      | WHERE IN THE MANUSCRIPT; ADDITIONAL COMMENT                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RIN/RQI or Cq of 3' and 5' transcripts                    | E          | Yes            | Results: Characteristics of the isolated total RNA                                                                                                                                                |
| Electrophoresis traces                                    | D          | No             |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Inhibition testing (Cq dilutions, spike or other)         | E          | Yes            | Dilution experiments were performed; PCR efficiencies were found >90%; see also qPCR validation section. For the three groups of clinical samples, identical isolation procedures were performed. |
| <b>REVERSE TRANSCRIPTION</b>                              |            |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Complete reaction conditions                              | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                                                                       |
| Amount of RNA and reaction volume                         | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                                                                       |
| Priming oligonucleotide (if using GSP) and concentration  | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                                                                       |
| Reverse transcriptase and concentration                   | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                                                                       |
| Temperature and time                                      | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                                                                       |
| Manufacturer of reagents and catalogue numbers            | D          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                                                                       |
| Cqs with and without RT                                   | D*         | Yes            | There were no Cqs (<40) in reactions without RT.                                                                                                                                                  |
| Storage conditions of cDNA                                | D          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs": -20°C.                                                                                               |
| <b>qPCR TARGET INFORMATION</b>                            |            |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| If multiplex, efficiency and LOD of each assay.           | E          | Not applicable |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Sequence accession number                                 | E          | Yes            | See Table "TaqMan assays" in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 4.                                                                                                                            |
| Location of amplicon                                      | D          | Yes            | Use of miRNA specific TaqMan assays; specificity guaranteed by the manufacturer.                                                                                                                  |
| Amplicon length                                           | E          | Yes            | Use of miRNA specific TaqMan assays; specificity guaranteed by the manufacturer.                                                                                                                  |
| <i>In silico</i> specificity screen (BLAST, etc)          | E          | Yes            | Use of miRNA specific TaqMan assays; specificity guaranteed by the manufacturer.                                                                                                                  |
| Pseudogenes, retropseudogenes or other homologs?          | D          | Yes            | Use of miRNA specific TaqMan assays; specificity guaranteed by the manufacturer.                                                                                                                  |
| Sequence alignment                                        | D          | Yes            | Use of miRNA specific TaqMan assays; specificity guaranteed by the manufacturer.                                                                                                                  |
| Secondary structure analysis of amplicon                  | D          | Yes            | Use of miRNA specific TaqMan assays; specificity guaranteed by the manufacturer.                                                                                                                  |
| Location of each primer by exon or intron (if applicable) | E          | Yes            | Specificity guaranteed by the manufacturer of the TaqMan assays.                                                                                                                                  |
| What splice variants are targeted?                        | E          | Yes            | See Table "TaqMan assays" in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 4; specificity guaranteed by the manufacturer of the TaqMan assay.                                                            |
| <b>qPCR OLIGONUCLEOTIDES</b>                              |            |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Primer sequences                                          | E          | Yes            | The manufacturer does not provide this information for miRNAs; see Supplemental Table S2.                                                                                                         |
| RTPrimerDB Identification Number                          | D          | Not applicable | miRNA specific TaqMan assays were used; see Table "TaqMan assays" in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 4.                                                                                    |

| ITEM TO CHECK                                            | IMPORTANCE | CHECKLIST      | WHERE IN THE MANUSCRIPT; ADDITIONAL COMMENT                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Probe sequences                                          | D**        | Yes            | The manufacturer does not provide this information for miRNAs; see Table "TaqMan assays" in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 4.            |
| Location and identity of any modifications               | E          | Yes            | The manufacturer does not provide this information for miRNAs; see Table "TaqMan assays" in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 4.            |
| Manufacturer of oligonucleotides                         | D          | Yes            | Applied Biosystems as part of Life Technologies.                                                                                                 |
| Purification method                                      | D          | Yes            | Applied Biosystems does not provide information.                                                                                                 |
| <b>qPCR PROTOCOL</b>                                     |            |                |                                                                                                                                                  |
| Complete reaction conditions                             | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                      |
| Reaction volume and amount of cDNA/DNA                   | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                      |
| Primer, (probe), Mg++ and dNTP concentrations            | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                      |
| Polymerase identity and concentration                    | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                      |
| Buffer/kit identity and manufacturer                     | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                      |
| Exact chemical constitution of the buffer                | D          | Yes            | The manufacturer does not provide this information                                                                                               |
| Additives (SYBR Green I, DMSO, etc.)                     | E          | Yes            | No additional additives                                                                                                                          |
| Manufacturer of plates/tubes and catalog number          | D          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                      |
| Complete thermocycling parameters                        | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                      |
| Reaction setup (manual/robotic)                          | D          | Yes            | Manual setup                                                                                                                                     |
| Manufacturer of qPCR instrument                          | E          | Yes            | LightCycler 480; see Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there. |
| <b>qPCR VALIDATION</b>                                   |            |                |                                                                                                                                                  |
| Evidence of optimisation (from gradients)                | D          | Yes            | Kits from Applied Biosystems (see Table "TaqMan assays" in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 4; optimisation guaranteed by the manufacturer |
| Specificity (gel, sequence, melt, or digest)             | E          | Yes            | Specificity guaranteed by the manufacturer of the TaqMan assays                                                                                  |
| For SYBR Green I, Cq of the NTC                          | E          | Not applicable | miRNA specific TaqMan assays                                                                                                                     |
| Calibration curves with slope and y-intercept            | E          | Yes            | Material and Methods: see "Information on the qPCR validation experiments" in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 11.                         |
| PCR efficiency calculated from slope                     | E          | Yes            | Material and Methods: see "Information on the qPCR validation experiments" in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 11.                         |
| Confidence interval for PCR efficiency or standard error | D          | Yes            | Material and Methods: see "Information on the qPCR validation experiments" in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 11.                         |
| r <sup>2</sup> of standard curve                         | E          | No             | Not provided by the LC480 software.                                                                                                              |
| Linear dynamic range                                     | E          | Yes            | Material and Methods: see "Information on the qPCR validation experiments" in                                                                    |

| ITEM TO CHECK                                                                        | IMPORTANCE | CHECKLIST      | WHERE IN THE MANUSCRIPT; ADDITIONAL COMMENT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                      |            |                | Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 11. Only 2.7% of all miRNA measurements were outside the linear dynamic range of the calibration curve.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Cq variation at lowest concentration of the linear interval of the calibration curve | E          | Yes            | Material and Methods: see "Information on the qPCR validation experiments" in Doc S1 of Supplementary Material, page 11.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Confidence intervals throughout range                                                | D          | No             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Evidence for limit of detection                                                      | E          | Yes            | See comments in the row "Linear dynamic range" above. Thus, it was not necessary to determine the LOD.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| If multiplex, efficiency and LOD of each assay.                                      | E          | Not applicable |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>                                                                 |            |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| qPCR analysis program (source, version)                                              | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Cq method determination                                                              | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Outlier identification and disposition                                               | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Results of NTCs                                                                      | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there; NTC did not result in any                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Justification of number and choice of reference genes                                | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there; use of the three reference miRNA miR-28, miR-103, and miR-106a as geometric means as previously shown (see ref. 24 in the main text). RNU48 and RNU6B RNU6B were used as reference genes in cell culture experiments. |
| Description of normalisation method                                                  | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs" and references indicated there; use of the three miRNA reference genes of miR-28, miR-103, and miR-106a as geometric means as previously shown (see ref. 24 in the main text) and RNU48 and RNU6B RNU6B in the cell culture experiments.              |
| Number and concordance of biological replicates                                      | D          | Yes            | See Legend to Figure 1A-D: n=22 for normal and malignant samples; n=13 for metastatic tissue samples.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Number and stage (RT or qPCR) of technical replicates                                | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs"; see precision data of RT and qPCR there.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Repeatability (intra-assay variation)                                                | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs"; see precision data of RT and qPCR there.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Reproducibility (inter-assay variation, %CV)                                         | D          | No             | Materials and Methods: see Doc S1 of Supplementary Material "Quantitative RT-PCR of miRNAs"; see precision data here; in addition, biological replicates were                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Power analysis                                                                       | D          | Yes            | See Doc S2 "Sample size and power calculations" in Supplementary Material, page 13.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Statistical methods for result significance                                          | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: Statistical analysis; see legend to Figure 1A-D.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Software (source, version)                                                           | E          | Yes            | Materials and Methods: Statistical analysis.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Cq or raw data submission using RDML                                                 | D          | No             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

**Information on the qPCR validation experiments according to the MIQE guidelines with respect to the calibration curves and the dynamic range of measurements**

Calibration curves were generated with diluted cDNAs. The Cq values were calculated automatically by the LightCycler software, release 1.5.0 using the “second derivative maximum” cycle analysis method. The slopes, intercepts, and errors of the regression lines of the calibration curves from these dilution series and the PCR efficiencies ( $E=10^{-1/\text{slope}}$ ) including the dynamic range and the Cq variation at the lower limit (the endpoint of the linear dynamic range) were calculated by the LightCycler 480 software 1.5.0. Validation of the qPCR and calibration curves of the miR-106, miR-145, and miR-192 are exemplarily shown as follows. As efficiencies did only differ in the second decimal place confirming the manufacturer's information that the different TaqMan miRNA assays run with equivalent amplification efficiencies, we used mean efficiency of 1.929 for efficiency correction and the calibration curve of miR-145 for all assays.

| Gene            | PCR-Efficiency | Slope  | y-Intercept | Error <sup>†</sup> | Linear dynamic range <sup>‡</sup> | Cq variation at lowest limit (SD) <sup>§</sup> |
|-----------------|----------------|--------|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>miR-106a</b> | 1.934          | -3.491 | 24.79       | 0.0324             | 23.35-35.16                       | 0.20                                           |
| <b>miR-145</b>  | 1.929          | -3.506 | 19.04       | 0.0563             | 18.02-35.42                       | 0.10                                           |
| <b>miR-192</b>  | 1.923          | -3.523 | 22.48       | 0.0363             | 21.80-36.09                       | 0.14                                           |

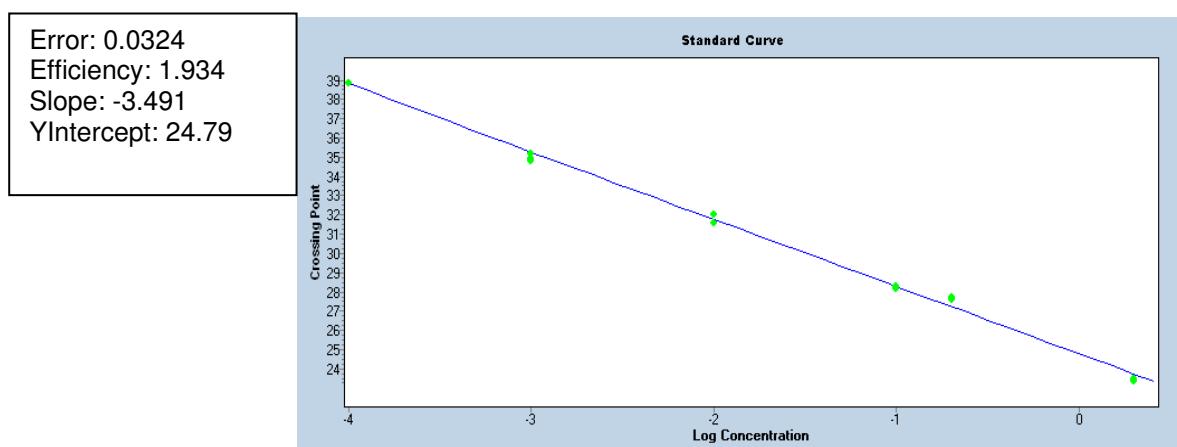
<sup>†</sup> The error value is the mean squared error of the single data points fit to the regression line, according to the definition given in the handbook of the LightCycler software.

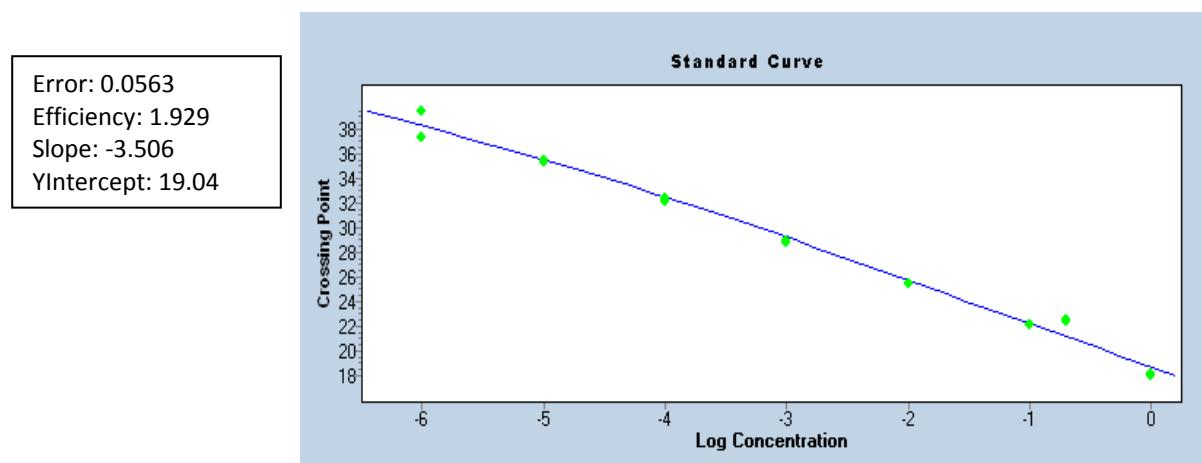
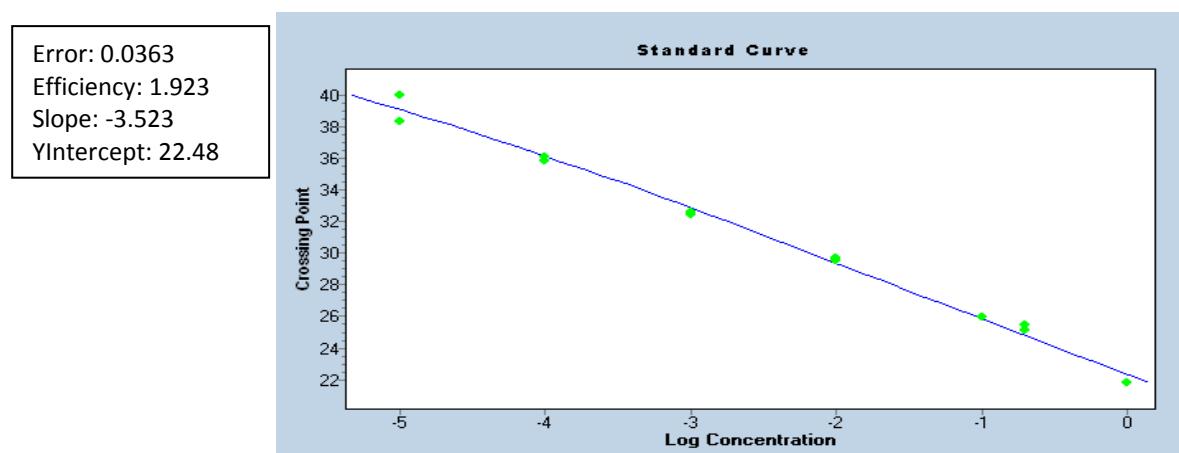
<sup>‡</sup> The linear dynamic range represents the range of the Cq values between the highest and the lowest concentration of linear interval of the calibration curve.

<sup>§</sup> Cq variation given as SD at the endpoint of the linear dynamic range that corresponds to the lowest concentration in the linear interval of the calibration curve.

**Standard curve of hsa-miR-106a**

Std.curve  Samples



**Standard curve of hsa-miR-145****Standard curve of hsa-miR-192****References to Doc S1 of Supplementary Material**

- Wotschofsky Z, Meyer HA, Jung M, Fendler A, Wagner I, Stephan C, et al. Reference genes for the relative quantification of microRNAs in renal cell carcinomas and their metastases. *Anal Biochem*. 2011; 417: 233-41.
- Jung M, Mollenkopf HJ, Grimm C, Wagner I, Albrecht M, Waller T, et al. MicroRNA profiling of clear cell renal cell cancer identifies a robust signature to define renal malignancy. *J Cell Mol Med*. 2009; 13: 3918-28.
- Bustin SA, Benes V, Garson JA, Hellemans J, Huggett J, Kubista M, et al. The MIQE guidelines: minimum information for publication of quantitative real-time PCR experiments. *Clin Chem*. 2009; 55: 611-22.
- Schaefer A, Jung M, Mollenkopf HJ, Wagner I, Stephan C, Jentzmik F, et al. Diagnostic and prognostic implications of microRNA profiling in prostate carcinoma. *Int J Cancer*. 2010; 126: 1166-76.
- Kubista M, Andrade JM, Bengtsson M, Forootan A, Jonak J, Lind K, et al. The real-time polymerase chain reaction. *Mol Aspects Med*. 2006; 27: 95-125.
- Hellemans J, Mortier G, De PA, Speleman F, Vandesompele J. qBase relative quantification framework and software for management and automated analysis of real-time quantitative PCR data. *Genome Biol*. 2007; 8: R19.

**Doc S2 of Supplementary Material** Sample size and power calculations.

Sample size and power calculations for assessing the significances of the expression of the various miRNAs between the three clinical sample groups were performed using the software GraphPad StatMate, version 2.0 (GraphPad Software). The calculation was based on comparing the mean change of expression in two sample groups. To apply a uniform assessment criterion, the change in terms of units of SD was used taking into account the results of our previous expression study [Jung M, Mollenkopf HJ, Grimm C, et al. MicroRNA profiling of clear cell renal cell cancer identifies a robust signature to define renal malignancy. *J Cell Mol Med* 2009;13:3918-28]. With samples at a ratio of 1:1 or 1:2 in two groups, mean expression differences of one SD between the two groups could be detected with a power of 80% (alpha-error of 5%, one-sided) by studying either 26 (13 each in the two groups) or 30 samples (10 and 20 samples, respectively). Thus, sample sizes calculated for a study power of at least 80 to 90% were selected taking into account the availability of clinical samples, especially metastatic samples as shown in Figure 2A-D (n= 22 for normal and malignant tissue samples from RCC specimens; n=13 from bone metastatic samples). To achieve a correlation coefficient of 0.7 under similar conditions (power 80%, alpha-error of 5%), a sample size of 13 would be necessary.

**Table S1 of Supplementary Material**

Identification of differentially expressed miRNAs between the sample groups in microarray analysis.

Out of the 28 selected miRNAs highlighted in blue (details are given in Data S1 concerning microarray-based profiling and in the text), 24 miRNAs except for the four miRNAs highlighted in yellow were included in the further validation approach (see Table 2).

Abbreviations: RCC, primary renal cell carcinoma; normal, non-malignant renal tissue samples from specimens after radical nephrectomy; metastases, bone metastases in patients with metastatic renal cell carcinomas.

| No. | Systematic Name     | RCC to Normal |             | Metastases to Normal |             | Metastases to RCC |             | Selected miRNAs |
|-----|---------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------------|
|     |                     | P value       | Fold-change | P value              | Fold-change | P value           | Fold-change |                 |
| 1   | hsa-miR-10b_v9.1    | 0.001         | -2.42       | 0.001                | -5.55       | 0.001             | -2.29       | 1               |
| 2   | hsa-miR-18a_v9.1    | 0.001         | 2.31        | 0.001                | 1.51        | 0.004             | -1.53       |                 |
| 3   | hsa-miR-19a         | 0.036         | 1.44        | 0.001                | -1.92       | 0.001             | -2.76       | 2               |
| 4   | hsa-miR-19b         | 1.000         | 1.06        | 0.001                | -1.58       | 0.003             | -1.68       | 3               |
| 5   | hsa-miR-21          | 0.002         | 3.65        | 0.001                | 6.03        | 0.035             | 1.65        | 4               |
| 6   | hsa-miR-25          | 0.001         | 1.94        | 0.001                | 2.95        | 0.002             | 1.52        |                 |
| 7   | hsa-miR-29a_v9.1    | 0.090         | -1.20       | 0.001                | -2.13       | 0.003             | -1.78       | 5               |
| 8   | hsa-miR-29b         | 0.041         | -1.24       | 0.001                | -4.19       | 0.001             | -3.36       | 6               |
| 9   | hsa-miR-29c_v9.1    | 0.111         | -1.42       | 0.001                | -5.14       | 0.001             | -3.63       | 7               |
| 10  | hsa-miR-30e-5p_v9.1 | 0.005         | -1.33       | 0.001                | -2.65       | 0.001             | -1.99       | 8               |
| 11  | hsa-miR-32_v9.1     | 0.101         | -1.34       | 0.001                | -2.37       | 0.009             | -1.77       |                 |
| 12  | hsa-miR-93          | 0.001         | 2.12        | 0.001                | 3.33        | 0.002             | 1.57        |                 |
| 13  | hsa-miR-99a         | 0.004         | -2.04       | 0.001                | -4.41       | 0.030             | -2.16       | 9               |
| 14  | hsa-miR-100         | 0.537         | -1.19       | 0.003                | -2.85       | 0.025             | -2.40       | 10              |
| 15  | hsa-miR-101_v9.1    | 0.720         | -1.01       | 0.001                | -2.20       | 0.001             | -2.17       | 11              |
| 16  | hsa-miR-125a_v9.1   | 0.001         | -1.42       | 0.001                | -2.20       | 0.001             | -1.55       | 12              |
| 17  | hsa-miR-126*        | 0.001         | 2.13        | 0.795                | -1.20       | 0.003             | -2.55       | 13              |
| 18  | hsa-miR-126_v9.1    | 0.001         | 1.80        | 0.174                | -1.53       | 0.001             | -2.76       | 14              |
| 19  | hsa-miR-128b_v9.1   | 0.962         | 1.06        | 0.007                | -1.51       | 0.006             | -1.61       |                 |
| 20  | hsa-miR-130a        | 0.816         | -1.07       | 0.001                | -1.89       | 0.013             | -1.76       | 15              |
| 21  | hsa-miR-130b        | 0.001         | 3.16        | 0.001                | 5.06        | 0.015             | 1.60        |                 |
| 22  | hsa-miR-143_v9.1    | 0.079         | 1.46        | 0.222                | -1.72       | 0.015             | -2.51       | 16              |
| 23  | hsa-miR-145_v9.1    | 0.629         | 1.28        | 0.011                | -2.19       | 0.005             | -2.80       | 17              |
| 24  | hsa-miR-148a        | 0.867         | -1.03       | 0.003                | -2.17       | 0.009             | -2.10       | 18              |
| 25  | hsa-miR-155_v9.1    | 0.001         | 6.39        | 0.001                | 13.24       | 0.035             | 2.07        |                 |
| 26  | hsa-miR-185_v9.1    | 0.015         | 1.41        | 0.001                | 2.13        | 0.018             | 1.51        |                 |
| 27  | hsa-miR-188_v9.1    | 0.002         | -2.27       | 0.001                | 4.13        | 0.001             | 9.35        |                 |
| 28  | hsa-miR-191*        | 0.816         | -1.01       | 0.001                | 2.11        | 0.001             | 2.13        |                 |
| 29  | hsa-miR-191_v9.1    | 0.750         | -1.13       | 0.001                | 1.47        | 0.001             | 1.66        |                 |
| 30  | hsa-miR-192         | 0.123         | -1.81       | 0.004                | -5.39       | 0.013             | -2.98       | 19              |
| 31  | hsa-miR-194         | 0.090         | -1.85       | 0.004                | -6.31       | 0.010             | -3.40       | 20              |
| 32  | hsa-miR-195         | 0.629         | 1.24        | 0.034                | -1.86       | 0.021             | -2.31       | 21              |
| 33  | hsa-miR-212         | 0.421         | 1.31        | 0.001                | 2.31        | 0.007             | 1.76        |                 |
| 34  | hsa-miR-223_v9.1    | 0.023         | 1.89        | 0.001                | 5.37        | 0.013             | 2.83        | 22              |
| 35  | hsa-miR-296-5p      | 0.449         | 1.72        | 0.001                | 14.15       | 0.001             | 8.24        |                 |

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| No. | Systematic Name   | RCC to Normal |             | Metastases to Normal |             | Metastases to RCC |             | Selected miRNAs |
|-----|-------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------------|
|     |                   | P value       | Fold-change | P value              | Fold-change | P value           | Fold-change |                 |
| 36  | hsa-miR-338_v9.1  | 0.629         | 1.33        | 0.222                | -1.36       | 0.007             | -1.82       |                 |
| 37  | hsa-miR-339_v9.1  | 0.001         | 1.95        | 0.550                | 1.15        | 0.013             | -1.68       |                 |
| 38  | hsa-miR-370_v9.1  | 0.750         | -1.21       | 0.001                | 9.45        | 0.001             | 11.39       | <b>23</b>       |
| 39  | hsa-miR-374a      | 0.750         | 1.06        | 0.001                | -1.69       | 0.002             | -1.79       |                 |
| 40  | hsa-miR-422b_v9.1 | 0.111         | -1.38       | 0.843                | 1.39        | 0.003             | 1.91        |                 |
| 41  | hsa-miR-425       | 0.041         | 1.30        | 0.001                | 2.00        | 0.001             | 1.54        |                 |
| 42  | hsa-miR-451_v9.1  | 0.750         | 1.40        | 0.002                | 6.71        | 0.013             | 4.79        | <b>24</b>       |
| 43  | hsa-miR-452_v9.1  | 0.071         | 1.68        | 0.001                | 8.67        | 0.001             | 5.16        |                 |
| 44  | hsa-miR-486-5p    | 0.387         | 1.55        | 0.001                | 6.61        | 0.013             | 4.25        |                 |
| 45  | hsa-miR-494_v9.1  | 0.750         | -1.03       | 0.001                | 5.54        | 0.001             | 5.73        | <b>25</b>       |
| 46  | hsa-miR-513_v9.1  | 0.421         | -1.63       | 0.001                | 8.86        | 0.001             | 14.45       |                 |
| 47  | hsa-miR-564       | 0.750         | -1.22       | 0.001                | 5.62        | 0.001             | 6.84        |                 |
| 48  | hsa-miR-572       | 0.629         | -1.26       | 0.003                | 3.32        | 0.001             | 4.18        |                 |
| 49  | hsa-miR-575       | 0.750         | -1.06       | 0.001                | 7.42        | 0.001             | 7.87        | <b>26</b>       |
| 50  | hsa-miR-630       | 0.750         | 1.11        | 0.001                | 16.85       | 0.001             | 15.23       | <b>27</b>       |
| 51  | hsa-miR-638       | 0.816         | -1.05       | 0.001                | 5.62        | 0.001             | 5.93        | <b>28</b>       |
| 52  | hsa-miR-660       | 0.001         | -3.33       | 0.001                | -5.41       | 0.041             | -1.62       |                 |
| 53  | hsa-miR-663       | 0.123         | -2.01       | 0.001                | 19.51       | 0.001             | 39.24       |                 |
| 54  | hsa-miR-671_v9.1  | 0.123         | -1.80       | 0.001                | 7.11        | 0.001             | 12.79       |                 |
| 55  | hsa-miR-765       | 0.216         | -1.56       | 0.001                | 16.65       | 0.001             | 25.94       |                 |
| 56  | hsa-miR-766       | 0.962         | 1.01        | 0.001                | 3.48        | 0.001             | 3.46        |                 |
| 57  | hsa-miR-801_v10.1 | 0.750         | -1.15       | 0.001                | 18.57       | 0.001             | 21.38       |                 |

**Table S2 of Supplementary Material.** Affiliation of the investigated miRNAs to a miRNA gene family or cluster.

| <b>miRNA</b>    | <b>miRNA gene family<sup>†</sup></b>                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Clustered miRNAs<sup>‡</sup></b>                                                                               |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>miR-10b</b>  | miR-10 (miR-10a, miR-10b)                                                                                                                                                                     | -                                                                                                                 |
| <b>miR-19a</b>  | miR-19 (miR-19a, miR-19b-1, miR-19b-2)                                                                                                                                                        | miR-17, miR-18a, miR-19b-1, miR-20a, miR-92a-1                                                                    |
| <b>miR-19b</b>  | miR-19 (miR-19a, miR-19b-1, miR-19b-2)                                                                                                                                                        | miR-17, miR-18a, miR-19a, miR-20a, miR-92a-1                                                                      |
| <b>miR-20a</b>  | miR-17 (miR-17, miR-18a, miR-18b, miR-20a, miR-20b, miR-93, miR-106a, miR-106b)                                                                                                               | miR-17, miR-18a, miR-19a, miR-19b-1, miR-92a-1                                                                    |
| <b>miR-21</b>   | miR-21                                                                                                                                                                                        | -                                                                                                                 |
| <b>miR-26a</b>  | miR-26 (miR-26a-1, miR-26a-2, miR-26b)                                                                                                                                                        | -                                                                                                                 |
| <b>miR-29a</b>  | miR-29 (miR-29a, miR-29b-1, miR-29b-2, miR-29c)                                                                                                                                               | miR-29b-1                                                                                                         |
| <b>miR-29b</b>  | miR-29 (miR-29a, miR-29b-1, miR-29b-2, miR-29c)                                                                                                                                               | miR-29a                                                                                                           |
| <b>miR-29c</b>  | miR-29 (miR-29a, miR-29b-1, miR-29b-2, miR-29c)                                                                                                                                               | miR-29b-2                                                                                                         |
| <b>miR-100</b>  | miR-99(miR-99a, miR-99b, miR-100)                                                                                                                                                             | let-7a-2                                                                                                          |
| <b>miR-101</b>  | miR-101 (miR-101-1, miR-101-2)                                                                                                                                                                | miR-3671                                                                                                          |
| <b>miR-126</b>  | miR-126                                                                                                                                                                                       | -                                                                                                                 |
| <b>miR-127</b>  | miR-127                                                                                                                                                                                       | miR-136, miR-337, miR-431, miR-432, miR-433, miR-665                                                              |
| <b>miR-130a</b> | miR-130 (miR-130a, miR-130b, miR-301a, miR-301b)                                                                                                                                              | -                                                                                                                 |
| <b>miR-141</b>  | miR-8 (miR-141, miR-200a, miR-200b, miR-200c, miR-429)                                                                                                                                        | miR-200c                                                                                                          |
| <b>miR-143</b>  | miR-143                                                                                                                                                                                       | miR-145                                                                                                           |
| <b>miR-145</b>  | miR-145                                                                                                                                                                                       | miR-143                                                                                                           |
| <b>miR-148a</b> | miR-148 (miR-148a, miR-148b, miR-152)                                                                                                                                                         | -                                                                                                                 |
| <b>miR-155</b>  | miR-155                                                                                                                                                                                       | -                                                                                                                 |
| <b>miR-192</b>  | miR-192 (miR-192, miR-215)                                                                                                                                                                    | miR-194-2                                                                                                         |
| <b>miR-194</b>  | miR-194 (miR-194-1, miR-194-2)                                                                                                                                                                | miR-215                                                                                                           |
| <b>miR-195</b>  | miR-15 (miR-15a, mir-15b, miR-16-1, miR-16-2, miR-195)                                                                                                                                        | miR-497                                                                                                           |
| <b>miR-200c</b> | miR-8 (miR-141, miR-200a, miR-200b, miR-200c, miR-429)                                                                                                                                        | miR-141                                                                                                           |
| <b>miR-210</b>  | miR-210                                                                                                                                                                                       | -                                                                                                                 |
| <b>miR-215</b>  | miR-192 (miR-192, miR-215)                                                                                                                                                                    | miR-194-1                                                                                                         |
| <b>miR-223</b>  | miR-223                                                                                                                                                                                       | -                                                                                                                 |
| <b>miR-224</b>  | miR-224                                                                                                                                                                                       | miR-452                                                                                                           |
| <b>miR-296</b>  | miR-296                                                                                                                                                                                       | miR-298                                                                                                           |
| <b>miR-370</b>  | miR-370                                                                                                                                                                                       | -                                                                                                                 |
| <b>miR-451</b>  | miR-451                                                                                                                                                                                       | miR-144, miR-451b, miR-4732                                                                                       |
| <b>miR-494</b>  | miR-154 (miR-154, miR-300, miR-323a, miR-323b, miR-369, miR-377, miR-381, miR-382, miR-409, miR-410, miR-487a, miR-487b, miR-494, miR-496, miR-539, miR-655, miR-656, miR-1185-1, miR-1185-2) | miR-299, miR-323a, miR-329-1, miR-329-2, miR-379, miR-380, miR-411, miR-495, miR-543, miR-758, miR-1193, miR-1197 |

| <b>miRNA</b>   | <b>miRNA gene family<sup>†</sup></b>                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Clustered miRNAs<sup>‡</sup></b>      |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>miR-514</b> | miR-506 (miR-506, miR-507, miR-508, miR-509-1, miR-509-2, miR-509-3, miR-510, miR-511-1, miR-511-2, miR-512-1, miR-512-2, miR-513a-1, miR-513a-2, miR-513b, miR-513c, miR-514a-1, miR-514a-2, miR-514a-3, miR-514b) | miR-510, miR-514-2, miR-514-3, miR-514-4 |
| <b>miR-638</b> | miR-638                                                                                                                                                                                                             | -                                        |

Data are taken from the miRBase database, release 18.

<sup>†</sup>miRNA gene family represents sequences evolved from a common ancestor and corresponds to miRNAs that have similar sequence which is vertebrate specific.

<sup>‡</sup>miRNAs which are located on the same strand of the chromosome and separated by a distance <10 kb are defined as "clustered miRNAs".

**Table S3 of Supplementary Material.** Summary statistics of the normalized expression data of miRNAs in the three clinical sample groups. Abbreviations: CI, confidence interval; 10-90 P, range 10-90 percentiles; 25-75 P, range between 25-75 percentiles, the interquartile range; normal distr., test for normal distribution according to D'Agostino-Pearson.

| miRNAs   | Normal (non-malignant) samples |        |                  |          |          |         |                   |          |         |                  |                   |               |
|----------|--------------------------------|--------|------------------|----------|----------|---------|-------------------|----------|---------|------------------|-------------------|---------------|
|          | N                              | Mean   | 95% CI           | SD       | SEM      | Median  | 95% CI            | Minimum  | Maximum | 10 - 90 P        | 25 - 75 P         | Normal Distr. |
| miR-10b  | 22                             | 3.108  | 2.598 - 3.618    | 1.1501   | 0.2452   | 2.847   | 2.545 - 3.699     | 0.761    | 6.077   | 1.965 - 4.433    | 2.405 - 3.848     | 0.2236        |
| miR-19a  | 22                             | 0.515  | 0.455 - 0.575    | 0.1353   | 0.02884  | 0.566   | 0.494 - 0.589     | 0.217    | 0.685   | 0.262 - 0.647    | 0.493 - 0.594     | 0.0594        |
| miR-19b  | 22                             | 4.572  | 4.125 - 5.020    | 1.0092   | 0.2152   | 4.898   | 4.072 - 5.286     | 2.479    | 6.023   | 2.947 - 5.689    | 3.980 - 5.304     | 0.3179        |
| miR-20a  | 22                             | 2.321  | 2.106 - 2.536    | 0.4848   | 0.1034   | 2.171   | 2.076 - 2.588     | 1.57     | 3.46    | 1.767 - 2.996    | 2.015 - 2.598     | 0.3743        |
| miR-21   | 22                             | 22.186 | 14.29 - 30.09    | 17.82    | 3.799    | 16.408  | 13.69 - 22.57     | 2.527    | 75.12   | 8.953 - 51.53    | 12.32 - 22.62     | 0.0001        |
| miR-26a  | 22                             | 17.371 | 16.08 - 18.66    | 2.9117   | 0.6208   | 17.098  | 16.21 - 19.18     | 10.341   | 22.462  | 14.16 - 21.15    | 15.86 - 19.88     | 0.5578        |
| miR-29a  | 22                             | 18.878 | 16.31 - 21.45    | 5.8006   | 1.2367   | 20.371  | 16.49 - 21.74     | 3.675    | 28.754  | 11.35 - 25.13    | 15.99 - 21.87     | 0.0695        |
| miR-29b  | 22                             | 0.938  | 0.677 - 1.198    | 0.5885   | 0.1255   | 0.821   | 0.704 - 0.981     | 0.271    | 3.125   | 0.406 - 1.497    | 0.697 - 0.994     | <0.0001       |
| miR-29c  | 22                             | 3.598  | 3.010 - 4.186    | 1.3259   | 0.2827   | 3.621   | 3.164 - 4.102     | 0.627    | 6.357   | 2.026 - 5.570    | 2.656 - 4.273     | 0.7825        |
| miR-100  | 22                             | 5.954  | 5.252 - 6.655    | 1.5817   | 0.3372   | 6.194   | 5.389 - 6.708     | 1.806    | 9.349   | 4.003 - 7.436    | 4.929 - 6.934     | 0.1729        |
| miR-101  | 22                             | 0.428  | 0.334 - 0.522    | 0.2126   | 0.04533  | 0.455   | 0.308 - 0.568     | 0.0169   | 0.835   | 0.133 - 0.635    | 0.261 - 0.598     | 0.5693        |
| miR-126  | 22                             | 12.891 | 11.744 - 14.04   | 2.5884   | 0.5519   | 12.792  | 11.31 - 13.81     | 7.918    | 19.102  | 9.913 - 15.94    | 11.03 - 13.945    | 0.25          |
| miR-127  | 22                             | 0.185  | 0.148 - 0.222    | 0.08305  | 0.01771  | 0.164   | 0.155 - 0.188     | 0.0797   | 0.432   | 0.0883 - 0.305   | 0.139 - 0.206     | 0.0029        |
| miR-130a | 22                             | 1.381  | 1.098 - 1.664    | 0.6378   | 0.136    | 1.358   | 1.048 - 1.649     | 0.0991   | 2.912   | 0.613 - 2.074    | 1.008 - 1.849     | 0.5199        |
| miR-141  | 22                             | 0.512  | 0.381 - 0.643    | 0.2951   | 0.06292  | 0.552   | 0.269 - 0.629     | 0.0277   | 1.159   | 0.161 - 0.901    | 0.260 - 0.639     | 0.5775        |
| miR-143  | 22                             | 13.872 | 9.550 - 18.194   | 9.748    | 2.0783   | 12.392  | 9.256 - 15.462    | 2.222    | 46.827  | 5.141 - 22.575   | 8.742 - 15.514    | <0.0001       |
| miR-145  | 22                             | 19.645 | 15.98 - 23.31    | 8.2569   | 1.7604   | 18.876  | 14.96 - 20.75     | 10.37    | 47.681  | 12.58 - 27.72    | 14.77 - 20.96     | <0.0001       |
| miR-148a | 22                             | 2.112  | 1.689 - 2.536    | 0.9551   | 0.2036   | 2.224   | 1.642 - 2.824     | 0.163    | 3.768   | 0.819 - 3.253    | 1.396 - 2.888     | 0.6132        |
| miR-155  | 22                             | 0.301  | 0.0155 - 0.587   | 0.6443   | 0.1374   | 0.129   | 0.0973 - 0.223    | 0.0675   | 3.152   | 0.0830 - 0.399   | 0.0927 - 0.246    | <0.0001       |
| miR-192  | 22                             | 7.56   | 5.762 - 9.359    | 4.0561   | 0.8648   | 8.817   | 5.347 - 10.413    | 0.235    | 13.565  | 1.097 - 12.113   | 5.272 - 10.601    | 0.3613        |
| miR-194  | 22                             | 6.824  | 5.080 - 8.568    | 3.9329   | 0.8385   | 7.301   | 4.749 - 10.286    | 0.206    | 12.104  | 0.854 - 11.416   | 4.437 - 10.500    | 0.3396        |
| miR-195  | 22                             | 4.132  | 3.477 - 4.787    | 1.4781   | 0.3151   | 4.361   | 3.290 - 4.789     | 1.47     | 7.676   | 2.058 - 5.853    | 3.274 - 4.879     | 0.6585        |
| miR-200c | 22                             | 2.836  | 2.315 - 3.356    | 1.1739   | 0.2503   | 2.613   | 2.441 - 3.246     | 0.222    | 6.414   | 1.794 - 3.908    | 2.181 - 3.310     | 0.0066        |
| miR-210  | 22                             | 0.369  | 0.240 - 0.499    | 0.292    | 0.06225  | 0.29    | 0.217 - 0.351     | 0.149    | 1.255   | 0.194 - 0.841    | 0.205 - 0.352     | <0.0001       |
| miR-215  | 22                             | 0.23   | 0.168 - 0.293    | 0.1407   | 0.03     | 0.27    | 0.113 - 0.327     | 0.000817 | 0.495   | 0.0358 - 0.389   | 0.113 - 0.327     | 0.5351        |
| miR-223  | 22                             | 1.268  | 1.032 - 1.505    | 0.5336   | 0.1138   | 1.155   | 0.993 - 1.471     | 0.465    | 2.68    | 0.680 - 1.944    | 0.863 - 1.575     | 0.1412        |
| miR-224  | 22                             | 0.0306 | 0.0188 - 0.0425  | 0.02672  | 0.005697 | 0.0214  | 0.0185 - 0.0301   | 0.0113   | 0.134   | 0.0121 - 0.0522  | 0.0182 - 0.0351   | <0.0001       |
| miR-296  | 22                             | 0.0419 | 0.0359 - 0.0478  | 0.01334  | 0.002845 | 0.0408  | 0.0374 - 0.0493   | 0.0165   | 0.0773  | 0.0231 - 0.0558  | 0.0366 - 0.0501   | 0.2219        |
| miR-370  | 22                             | 0.0075 | 0.00521 - 0.0096 | 0.005053 | 0.001077 | 0.00617 | 0.00414 - 0.00981 | 0.00185  | 0.0247  | 0.00257 - 0.0118 | 0.00395 - 0.00988 | <0.0001       |
| miR-451  | 22                             | 5.602  | 3.928 - 7.276    | 3.7753   | 0.8049   | 4.482   | 3.494 - 7.116     | 0.195    | 15.566  | 1.815 - 11.028   | 3.392 - 7.642     | 0.0341        |
| miR-494  | 22                             | 0.0841 | 0.0677 - 0.100   | 0.03704  | 0.007896 | 0.0726  | 0.0636 - 0.105    | 0.0249   | 0.162   | 0.0389 - 0.136   | 0.0622 - 0.113    | 0.5443        |
| miR-514  | 22                             | 0.225  | 0.150 - 0.299    | 0.1682   | 0.03587  | 0.216   | 0.116 - 0.284     | 0.00439  | 0.685   | 0.00898 - 0.458  | 0.111 - 0.305     | 0.0335        |
| miR-638  | 22                             | 0.0105 | 0.00611 - 0.0150 | 0.009991 | 0.00213  | 0.00729 | 0.00617 - 0.00825 | 0.00245  | 0.0392  | 0.00372 - 0.0263 | 0.00560 - 0.00903 | <0.0001       |

| miRNAs   | Clear cell renal cell carcinoma |        |                  |          |          |         |                   |          |         |                    |                   |               |
|----------|---------------------------------|--------|------------------|----------|----------|---------|-------------------|----------|---------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|
|          | N                               | Mean   | 95% CI           | SD       | SEM      | Median  | 95% CI            | Minimum  | Maximum | 10 - 90 P          | 25 - 75 P         | Normal Distr. |
| miR-10b  | 22                              | 1.515  | 1.144 - 1.886    | 0.837    | 0.1785   | 1.509   | 1.103 - 1.662     | 0.219    | 3.86    | 0.478 - 2.477      | 1.010 - 1.686     | 0.0065        |
| miR-19a  | 22                              | 0.65   | 0.578 - 0.721    | 0.1612   | 0.03437  | 0.627   | 0.580 - 0.658     | 0.451    | 1.117   | 0.454 - 0.848      | 0.567 - 0.712     | 0.0016        |
| miR-19b  | 22                              | 4.583  | 4.045 - 5.121    | 1.2131   | 0.2586   | 4.442   | 3.955 - 4.609     | 3.097    | 7.999   | 3.456 - 6.241      | 3.865 - 4.755     | 0.0007        |
| miR-20a  | 22                              | 2.826  | 2.310 - 3.343    | 1.1649   | 0.2484   | 2.629   | 2.355 - 2.884     | 1.513    | 6.324   | 1.641 - 4.169      | 2.231 - 2.921     | <0.0001       |
| miR-21   | 22                              | 67.618 | 50.188 - 85.049  | 39.313   | 8.3815   | 60.18   | 40.016 - 82.961   | 2.744    | 152.196 | 24.57 - 131.90     | 38.453 - 88.591   | 0.389         |
| miR-26a  | 22                              | 11.05  | 9.223 - 12.878   | 4.1218   | 0.8788   | 10.65   | 9.070 - 11.496    | 6.002    | 22.736  | 6.131 - 17.124     | 8.185 - 12.043    | 0.0155        |
| miR-29a  | 22                              | 16.076 | 10.922 - 21.231  | 11.626   | 2.4787   | 13.887  | 11.937 - 15.968   | 2.837    | 64.588  | 9.143 - 20.946     | 11.688 - 16.150   | <0.0001       |
| miR-29b  | 22                              | 0.893  | 0.552 - 1.233    | 0.7679   | 0.1637   | 0.723   | 0.471 - 0.898     | 0.166    | 3.678   | 0.298 - 1.754      | 0.445 - 0.907     | <0.0001       |
| miR-29c  | 22                              | 2.475  | 2.004 - 2.945    | 1.0621   | 0.2264   | 2.367   | 2.128 - 2.694     | 0.331    | 4.561   | 1.290 - 4.205      | 1.811 - 2.729     | 0.7945        |
| miR-100  | 22                              | 4.041  | 3.240 - 4.843    | 1.8086   | 0.3856   | 3.403   | 2.762 - 5.743     | 1.589    | 7.438   | 1.968 - 6.506      | 2.506 - 5.856     | 0.2939        |
| miR-101  | 22                              | 0.366  | 0.269 - 0.463    | 0.2181   | 0.04651  | 0.355   | 0.266 - 0.478     | 0.0124   | 0.821   | 0.0556 - 0.650     | 0.222 - 0.481     | 0.6767        |
| miR-126  | 22                              | 20.519 | 16.225 - 24.813  | 9.6853   | 2.0649   | 20.768  | 13.210 - 27.299   | 2.812    | 37.014  | 8.383 - 32.897     | 12.162 - 27.601   | 0.4872        |
| miR-127  | 22                              | 0.113  | 0.0835 - 0.143   | 0.0676   | 0.01441  | 0.0881  | 0.0776 - 0.157    | 0.0113   | 0.226   | 0.0392 - 0.224     | 0.0671 - 0.168    | 0.2993        |
| miR-130a | 22                              | 1.117  | 0.853 - 1.381    | 0.595    | 0.1269   | 1.195   | 0.717 - 1.614     | 0.0563   | 1.914   | 0.256 - 1.821      | 0.646 - 1.623     | 0.3205        |
| miR-141  | 22                              | 0.0504 | -0.00207 - 0.103 | 0.1184   | 0.02525  | 0.009   | 0.00638 - 0.0106  | 0.00114  | 0.51    | 0.00363 - 0.158    | 0.00611 - 0.0138  | <0.0001       |
| miR-143  | 22                              | 13.855 | 9.733 - 17.977   | 9.2967   | 1.9821   | 10.813  | 7.110 - 21.019    | 0.914    | 32.282  | 3.790 - 26.956     | 5.483 - 21.587    | 0.3105        |
| miR-145  | 22                              | 18.596 | 14.495 - 22.697  | 9.2501   | 1.9721   | 17.919  | 14.420 - 26.105   | 0.882    | 35.684  | 5.942 - 30.765     | 14.372 - 26.183   | 0.6769        |
| miR-148a | 22                              | 1.667  | 1.190 - 2.144    | 1.0749   | 0.2292   | 1.448   | 0.930 - 2.133     | 0.15     | 3.784   | 0.303 - 3.316      | 0.850 - 2.350     | 0.3292        |
| miR-155  | 22                              | 1.461  | 0.804 - 2.117    | 1.4802   | 0.3156   | 0.952   | 0.495 - 1.514     | 0.101    | 6.207   | 0.312 - 3.652      | 0.487 - 1.828     | 0.0001        |
| miR-192  | 22                              | 4.117  | 3.208 - 5.025    | 2.0489   | 0.4368   | 3.768   | 2.999 - 5.413     | 0.0873   | 7.781   | 1.334 - 6.974      | 2.860 - 5.521     | 0.7108        |
| miR-194  | 22                              | 3.258  | 2.490 - 4.025    | 1.7304   | 0.3689   | 2.999   | 2.174 - 4.955     | 0.106    | 5.727   | 0.986 - 5.314      | 1.990 - 4.975     | 0.3891        |
| miR-195  | 22                              | 4.708  | 3.549 - 5.867    | 2.6144   | 0.5574   | 4.9     | 2.433 - 6.630     | 0.596    | 9.138   | 1.447 - 8.067      | 2.366 - 6.700     | 0.437         |
| miR-200c | 22                              | 0.479  | 0.267 - 0.691    | 0.478    | 0.1019   | 0.346   | 0.217 - 0.437     | 0.0588   | 2.101   | 0.124 - 1.148      | 0.207 - 0.531     | <0.0001       |
| miR-210  | 22                              | 3.95   | 2.891 - 5.009    | 2.3884   | 0.5092   | 3.687   | 2.277 - 4.492     | 0.197    | 9.491   | 1.331 - 7.229      | 2.104 - 5.657     | 0.4528        |
| miR-215  | 22                              | 0.14   | 0.0957 - 0.185   | 0.1006   | 0.02144  | 0.155   | 0.0563 - 0.201    | 0.00236  | 0.377   | 0.00343 - 0.252    | 0.0445 - 0.204    | 0.6394        |
| miR-223  | 22                              | 2.726  | 1.431 - 4.022    | 2.922    | 0.623    | 2.142   | 1.758 - 2.563     | 1.097    | 15.476  | 1.267 - 3.236      | 1.622 - 2.711     | <0.0001       |
| miR-224  | 22                              | 0.158  | 0.0951 - 0.220   | 0.1409   | 0.03004  | 0.121   | 0.0871 - 0.171    | 0.0361   | 0.721   | 0.0612 - 0.244     | 0.0829 - 0.189    | <0.0001       |
| miR-296  | 22                              | 0.05   | 0.0314 - 0.0686  | 0.04194  | 0.008942 | 0.0335  | 0.0192 - 0.0626   | 0.00735  | 0.166   | 0.00839 - 0.101    | 0.0191 - 0.0891   | 0.0365        |
| miR-370  | 22                              | 0.0041 | 0.00232 - 0.0059 | 0.003994 | 0.000872 | 0.00234 | 0.00153 - 0.00504 | 0.000534 | 0.0142  | 0.000935 - 0.0106  | 0.00146 - 0.00663 | 0.0069        |
| miR-451  | 22                              | 6.364  | 3.323 - 9.405    | 6.8596   | 1.4625   | 4.27    | 3.283 - 5.543     | 0.0821   | 24.897  | 1.629 - 21.046     | 2.948 - 5.750     | 0.0002        |
| miR-494  | 22                              | 0.0632 | 0.0501 - 0.0764  | 0.02966  | 0.006324 | 0.0668  | 0.0458 - 0.0745   | 0.00777  | 0.126   | 0.0204 - 0.106     | 0.0441 - 0.0757   | 0.9541        |
| miR-514  | 22                              | 0.0095 | 0.00484 - 0.0141 | 0.01043  | 0.002223 | 0.00579 | 0.00226 - 0.0112  | 0.000582 | 0.0351  | 0.00120 - 0.0301   | 0.00207 - 0.0141  | 0.0056        |
| miR-638  | 22                              | 0.0049 | 0.00284 - 0.0068 | 0.004447 | 0.000971 | 0.00409 | 0.00344 - 0.00505 | 0.000359 | 0.022   | 0.000814 - 0.00803 | 0.00311 - 0.00518 | <0.0001       |

| miRNAs   | RCC bone metastases |        |                  |          |          |         |                   |          |         |                    |                   |               |
|----------|---------------------|--------|------------------|----------|----------|---------|-------------------|----------|---------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|
|          | N                   | Mean   | 95% CI           | SD       | SEM      | Median  | 95% CI            | Minimum  | Maximum | 10 - 90 P          | 25 - 75 P         | Normal Distr. |
| miR-10b  | 13                  | 0.474  | 0.350 - 0.597    | 0.2044   | 0.05669  | 0.439   | 0.265 - 0.685     | 0.238    | 0.768   | 0.243 - 0.754      | 0.270 - 0.676     | 0.3587        |
| miR-19a  | 13                  | 0.289  | 0.235 - 0.343    | 0.0898   | 0.02491  | 0.323   | 0.240 - 0.338     | 0.104    | 0.411   | 0.132 - 0.391      | 0.245 - 0.334     | 0.2782        |
| miR-19b  | 13                  | 2.54   | 2.148 - 2.932    | 0.6486   | 0.1799   | 2.605   | 2.124 - 2.966     | 1.401    | 3.394   | 1.461 - 3.381      | 2.289 - 2.944     | 0.4733        |
| miR-20a  | 13                  | 1.898  | 1.592 - 2.204    | 0.5062   | 0.1404   | 1.884   | 1.487 - 2.369     | 1.022    | 2.593   | 1.244 - 2.562      | 1.497 - 2.359     | 0.5459        |
| miR-21   | 13                  | 64.616 | 43.628 - 85.603  | 34.7301  | 9.6324   | 74.263  | 29.815 - 92.256   | 8.323    | 114.761 | 22.154 - 113.163   | 31.358 - 90.720   | 0.474         |
| miR-26a  | 13                  | 5.571  | 4.734 - 6.408    | 1.3856   | 0.3843   | 5.057   | 4.715 - 6.033     | 3.765    | 8.352   | 4.405 - 8.349      | 4.765 - 5.893     | 0.0756        |
| miR-29a  | 13                  | 7.979  | 5.933 - 10.026   | 3.3867   | 0.9393   | 7.019   | 5.439 - 10.962    | 3.196    | 14.169  | 4.457 - 12.936     | 5.453 - 10.340    | 0.4281        |
| miR-29b  | 13                  | 0.189  | 0.131 - 0.247    | 0.0962   | 0.02668  | 0.169   | 0.119 - 0.260     | 0.0495   | 0.372   | 0.0567 - 0.318     | 0.125 - 0.250     | 0.7097        |
| miR-29c  | 13                  | 0.611  | 0.460 - 0.761    | 0.2485   | 0.06892  | 0.592   | 0.385 - 0.879     | 0.158    | 0.907   | 0.318 - 0.894      | 0.389 - 0.876     | 0.5315        |
| miR-100  | 13                  | 2.326  | 1.360 - 3.292    | 1.5984   | 0.4433   | 1.822   | 1.118 - 3.126     | 0.524    | 5.857   | 0.669 - 5.057      | 1.137 - 3.083     | 0.1403        |
| miR-101  | 13                  | 0.119  | 0.0783 - 0.160   | 0.06781  | 0.01881  | 0.0996  | 0.0769 - 0.145    | 0.0519   | 0.303   | 0.0589 - 0.212     | 0.0790 - 0.135    | 0.0011        |
| miR-126  | 13                  | 9.536  | 6.092 - 12.980   | 5.6986   | 1.5805   | 7.974   | 4.875 - 14.092    | 3.048    | 21.658  | 4.040 - 18.431     | 5.052 - 13.899    | 0.2729        |
| miR-127  | 13                  | 0.114  | 0.0134 - 0.214   | 0.1662   | 0.04609  | 0.0614  | 0.0263 - 0.0993   | 0.00465  | 0.601   | 0.00698 - 0.371    | 0.0325 - 0.0963   | <0.0001       |
| miR-130a | 13                  | 0.63   | 0.435 - 0.825    | 0.3224   | 0.08941  | 0.671   | 0.295 - 0.816     | 0.206    | 1.358   | 0.239 - 0.970      | 0.312 - 0.813     | 0.4295        |
| miR-141  | 13                  | 0.0024 | 0.0015 - 0.0032  | 0.00144  | 0.000399 | 0.0023  | 0.0017 - 0.0026   | 0.00087  | 0.00676 | 0.000946 - 0.00343 | 0.00177 - 0.00256 | <0.0001       |
| miR-143  | 13                  | 5.613  | 3.299 - 7.926    | 3.8285   | 1.0618   | 4.435   | 2.237 - 10.201    | 1.094    | 11.519  | 1.369 - 10.603     | 2.352 - 10.147    | 0.3326        |
| miR-145  | 13                  | 7.784  | 4.653 - 10.915   | 5.1814   | 1.4371   | 7.009   | 3.068 - 12.823    | 2.001    | 16.964  | 2.017 - 14.347     | 3.198 - 12.616    | 0.383         |
| miR-148a | 13                  | 0.987  | 0.660 - 1.315    | 0.5425   | 0.1505   | 0.875   | 0.630 - 1.205     | 0.241    | 2.426   | 0.505 - 1.625      | 0.643 - 1.205     | 0.0056        |
| miR-155  | 13                  | 4.077  | -1.248 - 9.402   | 8.8121   | 2.444    | 1.448   | 0.842 - 2.776     | 0.29     | 33.165  | 0.305 - 9.809      | 0.849 - 2.717     | <0.0001       |
| miR-192  | 13                  | 1.278  | 0.348 - 2.207    | 1.5382   | 0.4266   | 0.734   | 0.146 - 2.058     | 0.0541   | 4.808   | 0.102 - 4.085      | 0.148 - 1.987     | 0.0337        |
| miR-194  | 13                  | 0.84   | 0.287 - 1.392    | 0.9145   | 0.2536   | 0.426   | 0.171 - 1.664     | 0.0597   | 2.844   | 0.0804 - 2.201     | 0.180 - 1.538     | 0.1351        |
| miR-195  | 13                  | 2.999  | 1.703 - 4.295    | 2.1446   | 0.5948   | 1.92    | 1.242 - 4.795     | 0.964    | 7.742   | 1.081 - 5.924      | 1.286 - 4.736     | 0.2529        |
| miR-200c | 13                  | 0.173  | 0.111 - 0.236    | 0.1033   | 0.02865  | 0.132   | 0.0953 - 0.234    | 0.0487   | 0.382   | 0.0572 - 0.351     | 0.0978 - 0.232    | 0.3372        |
| miR-210  | 13                  | 2.469  | 1.736 - 3.202    | 1.2132   | 0.3365   | 2.4     | 1.278 - 3.302     | 0.901    | 4.387   | 1.061 - 4.256      | 1.348 - 3.287     | 0.4445        |
| miR-215  | 13                  | 0.0458 | 0.0135 - 0.0782  | 0.05353  | 0.01485  | 0.0212  | 0.00704 - 0.0720  | 0.00292  | 0.158   | 0.00301 - 0.151    | 0.00708 - 0.0703  | 0.058         |
| miR-223  | 13                  | 4.468  | 1.124 - 7.812    | 5.5334   | 1.5347   | 2.094   | 1.379 - 4.903     | 0.637    | 18.458  | 0.836 - 15.201     | 1.393 - 4.861     | 0.0013        |
| miR-224  | 13                  | 0.195  | 0.110 - 0.280    | 0.1414   | 0.03921  | 0.166   | 0.0811 - 0.324    | 0.0338   | 0.49    | 0.0512 - 0.393     | 0.0852 - 0.322    | 0.387         |
| miR-296  | 13                  | 0.112  | 0.0797 - 0.144   | 0.05306  | 0.01472  | 0.119   | 0.0736 - 0.141    | 0.0212   | 0.201   | 0.0326 - 0.192     | 0.0757 - 0.138    | 0.9952        |
| miR-370  | 13                  | 0.0062 | 0.000782 - 0.012 | 0.01015  | 0.002816 | 0.00327 | 0.00638 - 0.00486 | 0.000117 | 0.0352  | 0.000133 - 0.0232  | 0.000678 - 0.0048 | <0.0001       |
| miR-451  | 13                  | 13.217 | 3.582 - 22.851   | 15.9434  | 4.4219   | 6.816   | 1.709 - 21.535    | 0.101    | 51.831  | 0.479 - 38.745     | 2.163 - 18.617    | 0.0226        |
| miR-494  | 13                  | 0.14   | 0.0326 - 0.248   | 0.1784   | 0.04948  | 0.0781  | 0.0619 - 0.150    | 0.0147   | 0.707   | 0.0288 - 0.301     | 0.0642 - 0.135    | <0.0001       |
| miR-514  | 13                  | 0.0022 | 0.00105 - 0.0032 | 0.001839 | 0.00051  | 0.00153 | 0.00104 - 0.00296 | 0.000469 | 0.00741 | 0.000696 - 0.00435 | 0.00104 - 0.00284 | 0.0002        |
| miR-638  | 13                  | 0.0114 | 0.00368 - 0.0191 | 0.01275  | 0.003536 | 0.00619 | 0.00403 - 0.0158  | 0.000394 | 0.048   | 0.000660 - 0.0272  | 0.00446 - 0.0147  | 0.0001        |

**Table S4 of Supplementary Material .** Spearman rank correlation coefficients >0.70 between the miRNAs in the three groups and in comparison between the groups.

**A).** Spearman rank correlation coefficients ( $r_s$ ) between miRNAs in normal (non-malignant) renal tissue samples in comparison to the  $r_s$ -values of miRNAs in tissue samples from clear cell renal cell carcinoma (ccRCC) and metastases.

| Correlation between miRNA pairs |          | $r_s$                |                       |                         |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
|                                 |          | Non-malignant        | ccRCC                 | Metastases              |
| miR-10b                         | miR-194  | 0.721 <sup>a,b</sup> | 0.161 <sup>†,a</sup>  | -0.269 <sup>†,b</sup>   |
| miR-19a                         | miR-19b  | 0.871                | 0.720                 | 0.945                   |
| miR-21                          | miR-223  | 0.770 <sup>a,b</sup> | 0.299 <sup>†,a</sup>  | 0.060 <sup>†,b</sup>    |
| miR-29a                         | miR-130a | 0.761 <sup>b</sup>   | 0.447                 | 0.027 <sup>†,b</sup>    |
| miR-29a                         | miR-141  | 0.730                | 0.286 <sup>†</sup>    | 0.407 <sup>†</sup>      |
| miR-101                         | miR-194  | 0.794 <sup>b</sup>   | 0.506                 | 0.203 <sup>†,b</sup>    |
| miR-101                         | miR-215  | 0.800 <sup>b</sup>   | 0.530                 | 0.275 <sup>†,b</sup>    |
| miR-130a                        | miR-143  | 0.832 <sup>b</sup>   | 0.496 <sup>c</sup>    | -0.225 <sup>†,b,c</sup> |
| miR-130a                        | miR-195  | 0.840 <sup>b</sup>   | 0.424                 | 0.071 <sup>†,b</sup>    |
| miR-143                         | miR-195  | 0.780                | 0.625                 | 0.769                   |
| miR-148a                        | miR-194  | 0.799 <sup>a,b</sup> | 0.0224 <sup>†,a</sup> | -0.264 <sup>†,b</sup>   |
| miR-192                         | miR-194  | 0.854                | 0.835                 | 0.967                   |
| miR-192                         | miR-215  | 0.768                | 0.868                 | 0.951                   |
| miR-194                         | miR-215  | 0.864                | 0.773                 | 0.940                   |

**B).** Spearman rank correlation coefficients ( $r_s$ ) >0.70 between miRNAs in tissue samples from clear cell renal cell carcinoma in comparison to the  $r_s$ -values of miRNAs in renal metastatic and normal (non-malignant) renal tissue samples.

| Correlation between miRNA pairs |          | $r_s$                |                         |                        |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
|                                 |          | ccRCC                | Metastases              | Non-malignant          |
| miR-10b                         | miR-126  | 0.813                | 0.808                   | 0.560                  |
| miR-19a                         | miR-19b  | 0.720                | 0.945                   | 0.871                  |
| miR-19a                         | miR-20a  | 0.877 <sup>a,c</sup> | 0.319 <sup>†,c</sup>    | 0.534 <sup>a</sup>     |
| miR-19b                         | miR-130a | 0.870 <sup>a,c</sup> | -0.456 <sup>†,b,c</sup> | 0.375 <sup>†,a,b</sup> |
| miR-29b                         | miR-29c  | 0.754                | 0.462 <sup>†</sup>      | 0.579                  |
| miR-127                         | miR-370  | 0.906 <sup>a</sup>   | 0.879                   | 0.677 <sup>a</sup>     |
| miR-141                         | miR-210  | 0.738 <sup>c</sup>   | 0.016 <sup>†,c</sup>    | 0.438                  |
| miR-192                         | miR-194  | 0.835                | 0.967                   | 0.854                  |
| miR-192                         | miR-195  | 0.868 <sup>a,c</sup> | -0.423 <sup>†,c</sup>   | 0.001 <sup>†,a</sup>   |
| miR-194                         | miR-215  | 0.773                | 0.940                   | 0.864                  |

**C).** Spearman rank correlation coefficients ( $r_s$ )  $>0.70$  between miRNAs in renal bone metastases in comparison to  $r_s$ -values of miRNAs in tissue samples of clear cell renal cell carcinoma (ccRCC) and normal (non-malignant) renal tissue samples.

| Correlation between miRNA pairs |          | Metastases            | $r_s$<br>ccRCC       | Non-malignant         |
|---------------------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| miR-10b                         | miR-101  | 0.709                 | 0.382 <sup>†</sup>   | 0.473                 |
| miR-10b                         | miR-126  | 0.808                 | 0.813                | 0.560                 |
| miR-10b                         | miR-143  | 0.852 <sup>b,c</sup>  | 0.280 <sup>†,c</sup> | 0.280 <sup>†,b</sup>  |
| miR-19a                         | miR-19b  | 0.945                 | 0.720                | 0.871                 |
| miR-29b                         | miR-514  | -0.797 <sup>b,c</sup> | 0.046 <sup>†,c</sup> | -0.021 <sup>†,b</sup> |
| miR-126                         | miR-143  | 0.907 <sup>b,c</sup>  | 0.144 <sup>†,c</sup> | 0.247 <sup>†,b</sup>  |
| miR-126                         | miR-145  | 0.874 <sup>b,c</sup>  | 0.089 <sup>†,c</sup> | -0.249 <sup>†,b</sup> |
| miR-126                         | miR-195  | 0.835                 | 0.344 <sup>†,c</sup> | 0.246 <sup>†,b</sup>  |
| miR-127                         | miR-195  | 0.742                 | 0.235 <sup>†</sup>   | 0.478                 |
| miR-127                         | miR-200c | -0.736                | 0.073 <sup>†,c</sup> | -0.106 <sup>†,b</sup> |
| miR-127                         | miR-370  | 0.879                 | 0.906 <sup>a</sup>   | 0.677 <sup>a</sup>    |
| miR-143                         | miR-145  | 0.934 <sup>c</sup>    | 0.641 <sup>c</sup>   | 0.466 <sup>b</sup>    |
| miR-143                         | miR-195  | 0.769                 | 0.625                | 0.780                 |
| miR-145                         | miR-370  | 0.703                 | 0.522                | 0.136 <sup>†</sup>    |
| miR-192                         | miR-194  | 0.967                 | 0.835                | 0.854                 |
| miR-192                         | miR-215  | 0.957                 | 0.868                | 0.768 <sup>b</sup>    |
| miR-194                         | miR-215  | 0.940                 | 0.773 <sup>c</sup>   | 0.864                 |
| miR-451                         | miR-638  | 0.775                 | 0.313 <sup>†</sup>   | 0.566                 |
| miR-494                         | miR-638  | 0.709                 | 0.622                | 0.353 <sup>†</sup>    |

<sup>†</sup>Correlation coefficients with this superscript indicate non-significant ( $P>0.05$ ) correlations within the group. Figures without this superscript indicate significant correlation between the corresponding miRNA pair.

<sup>a</sup>Significant difference (at least  $P <0.05$ ) between the correlation coefficients from non-malignant and primary tumor samples.

<sup>b</sup>Significant difference (at least  $P <0.05$ ) between the correlation coefficients from non-malignant and metastatic tissue samples.

<sup>c</sup>Significant difference (at least  $P <0.05$ ) of the correlation coefficients from the primary tumor samples and metastatic tissue samples.

**Table S5 of Supplementary Material.** Differentially expressed miRNAs described in studies with primary and metastatic tumor tissue of clear cell renal cell carcinoma using microarray and RT-qPCR analyses.

**A. Differentially expressed miRNAs found by microarray analyses in four studies<sup>†</sup>**

| No. | Heinzelmann et al. [20] | White et al. [21] | Slaby et al. [23] | present study | miRNAs present in |                |                |
|-----|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
|     |                         |                   |                   |               | all 4 studies     | 3 of 4 studies | 2 of 4 studies |
| 1   | let-7a                  | let-7a            |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 2   | let-7b                  | let-7b            |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 3   | let-7c                  | let-7c            |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 4   | let-7d                  | let-7d            | let-7d*           |               |                   |                |                |
| 5   | let-7g                  | let-7e            |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 6   | let-7i                  | let-7f            |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 7   |                         | let-7g            |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 8   |                         | let-7i            |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 9   |                         |                   | miR-1             |               |                   |                |                |
| 10  | miR-10a                 | miR-10a           |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 11  | miR-10b                 | miR-10b           | miR-10b           | miR-10b       |                   |                |                |
| 12  |                         | miR-15            |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 13  |                         |                   | miR-15b           |               |                   |                |                |
| 14  | miR-16                  |                   |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 15  |                         | miR-17            |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 16  |                         |                   |                   | miR-18a       |                   |                |                |
| 17  |                         |                   |                   | miR-19a       |                   |                |                |
| 18  | miR-19b                 |                   |                   | miR-19b       |                   |                |                |
| 19  |                         | miR-20a           |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 20  |                         |                   |                   | miR-21        |                   |                |                |
| 21  | miR-22                  |                   |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 22  | miR-23a                 |                   |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 23  | miR-23b                 | miR-23b           |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 24  | miR-24                  | miR-24            |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 25  |                         |                   |                   | miR-25        |                   |                |                |
| 26  | miR-26a                 | miR-26a           | miR-26a           |               |                   |                |                |
| 27  | miR-26b                 | miR-26b           |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 28  |                         | miR-27a           |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 29  | miR-27b                 | miR-27b           |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 30  |                         | miR-28-5p         | miR-28-5p         |               |                   |                |                |
| 31  | miR-29a                 | miR-29a           |                   | miR-29a       |                   |                |                |
| 32  |                         | miR-29b           | miR-29b           | miR-29b       |                   |                |                |
| 33  |                         | mir-29c           |                   | miR-29c       |                   |                |                |
| 34  | miR-30a                 | miR-30a           |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 35  |                         | miR-30a*          |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 36  | miR-30b                 | miR-30b           |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 37  | miR-30c                 | miR-30c           | miR-30c-1         |               |                   |                |                |
| 38  | miR-30d                 | miR-30d           |                   |               |                   |                |                |
| 39  |                         | miR-30e           |                   | miR-30e       |                   |                |                |
| 40  |                         | miR-30e*          |                   |               |                   |                |                |

| No. | Heinzelmann et al. [20] | White et al. [21] | Slaby et al. [23] | present study |         | miRNAs present in |                |                |
|-----|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
|     |                         |                   |                   |               |         | all 4 studies     | 3 of 4 studies | 2 of 4 studies |
| 41  |                         |                   |                   | miR-32        |         |                   |                |                |
| 42  |                         |                   | miR-34b*          |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 43  |                         |                   | miR-92a-1*        |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 44  |                         |                   |                   | miR-93        |         |                   |                |                |
| 45  |                         | miR-98            |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 46  |                         |                   |                   | miR-99a       |         |                   |                |                |
| 47  |                         |                   |                   | miR-100       |         |                   |                |                |
| 48  |                         |                   |                   | miR-101       |         |                   |                |                |
| 49  |                         | miR-103           |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 50  |                         | miR-106a          |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 51  | miR-106b                | miR-106b          | miR-106b          |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 52  |                         | miR-107           |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 53  |                         | miR-122           |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 54  |                         |                   | miR-124           |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 55  |                         |                   |                   | miR-125a      |         |                   |                |                |
| 56  | miR-125b                |                   |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 57  |                         | miR-126           | miR-126           | miR-126       |         |                   |                |                |
| 58  |                         |                   |                   | miR-126*      |         |                   |                |                |
| 59  |                         |                   | miR-127-3p        |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 60  |                         |                   |                   | miR-128b      |         |                   |                |                |
| 61  | miR-130a                | miR-130a          |                   | miR-130a      |         |                   |                |                |
| 62  |                         |                   |                   | miR-130b      |         |                   |                |                |
| 63  |                         |                   | miR-134           |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 64  |                         |                   | miR-135b          |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 65  |                         |                   | miR-136*          |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 66  |                         |                   | miR-138-1         |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 67  |                         |                   | miR-139-5p        |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 68  |                         |                   | miR-140-3p        |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 69  |                         |                   | miR-140-5p        |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 70  | miR-143                 | miR-143           | miR-143           | miR-143       |         |                   |                |                |
| 71  |                         |                   |                   | miR-144*      |         |                   |                |                |
| 72  |                         | miR-145           | miR-145           | miR-145       |         |                   |                |                |
| 73  |                         |                   |                   | miR-145*      |         |                   |                |                |
| 74  |                         |                   | miR-148a          | miR-148a      |         |                   |                |                |
| 75  |                         | miR-149*          |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 76  |                         |                   | miR-150           |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 77  |                         |                   | miR-151-3p        |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 78  | miR-151-p               | miR-151-5p        |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 79  |                         | miR-152           |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 80  |                         |                   |                   | miR-154*      |         |                   |                |                |
| 81  |                         |                   |                   |               | miR-155 |                   |                |                |
| 82  | miR-181a                | miR-181a          |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 83  |                         | miR-181b          |                   |               |         |                   |                |                |
| 84  |                         |                   |                   | miR-185       |         |                   |                |                |

| No. | Heinzelmann et al. [20] | White et al. [21] | Slaby et al. [23] | present study |  | miRNAs present in |                |                |
|-----|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|--|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
|     |                         |                   |                   |               |  | all 4 studies     | 3 of 4 studies | 2 of 4 studies |
| 85  |                         |                   |                   | miR-188       |  |                   |                |                |
| 86  | miR-191                 |                   |                   | miR-191       |  |                   |                |                |
| 87  |                         |                   |                   | miR-191*      |  |                   |                |                |
| 88  |                         | miR-192           |                   | miR-192       |  |                   |                |                |
| 89  |                         | miR-194           |                   | miR-194       |  |                   |                |                |
| 90  |                         | miR-195           | miR-195           | miR-195       |  |                   | red            | blue           |
| 91  |                         | miR-196a          |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 92  |                         | miR-197           |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 93  |                         |                   | miR-198           |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 94  |                         | miR-200a          |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 95  |                         | miR-200b          |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 96  |                         | miR-200c          |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 97  |                         | miR-204           |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 98  |                         |                   |                   | miR-212       |  |                   |                |                |
| 99  |                         | miR-215           |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 100 | miR-221                 |                   |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 101 | miR-222                 |                   |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 102 |                         |                   |                   | miR-223       |  |                   |                |                |
| 103 |                         |                   |                   | miR-296-5p    |  |                   |                |                |
| 104 |                         |                   | miR-299-3p        |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 105 |                         |                   | miR-299-5p        |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 106 |                         |                   | miR-302c          |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 107 |                         |                   |                   | miR-338       |  |                   |                |                |
| 108 |                         |                   |                   | miR-339       |  |                   |                |                |
| 109 |                         | miR-361-5p        |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 110 |                         |                   | miR-363           |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 111 |                         |                   |                   | miR-370       |  |                   |                |                |
| 112 |                         |                   | miR-374a          | miR-374a      |  |                   |                | blue           |
| 113 |                         | miR-374b          |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 114 |                         |                   | miR-376a          |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 115 |                         |                   | miR-376c          |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 116 |                         |                   | miR-382           |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 117 |                         |                   | miR-409-3p        |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 118 |                         |                   | miR-411           |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 119 |                         |                   |                   | miR-422b      |  |                   |                |                |
| 120 |                         |                   |                   | miR-425       |  |                   |                |                |
| 121 |                         |                   | miR-431           |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 122 | miR-451                 |                   | miR-451           | miR-451       |  |                   | red            | blue           |
| 123 |                         |                   |                   | miR-452       |  |                   |                |                |
| 124 |                         | miR-455-3p        |                   |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 125 |                         |                   |                   | miR-486-5p    |  |                   |                |                |
| 126 |                         |                   | miR-487b          |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 127 |                         |                   | miR-490-3p        |               |  |                   |                |                |
| 128 |                         |                   |                   | miR-494       |  |                   |                |                |

| No.                  | Heinzelmann et al. [20] | White et al. [21] | Slaby et al. [23] | present study |           | miRNAs present in |                |                |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                      |                         |                   |                   |               |           | all 4 studies     | 3 of 4 studies | 2 of 4 studies |
| 129                  |                         |                   | miR-495           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 130                  |                         | miR-498           |                   |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 131                  |                         |                   | miR-499-5p        |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 132                  |                         |                   | miR-504           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 133                  |                         |                   | miR-511           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 134                  |                         |                   |                   | miR-513       |           |                   |                |                |
| 135                  |                         |                   | miR-516a-5p       |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 136                  |                         |                   | miR-520b+F65      |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 137                  |                         |                   | miR-525-3p        |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 138                  |                         |                   | miR-539           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 139                  |                         |                   | miR-543           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 140                  |                         |                   | miR-558           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 141                  |                         |                   | miR-561           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 142                  |                         |                   |                   | miR-564       |           |                   |                |                |
| 143                  |                         |                   |                   | miR-572       |           |                   |                |                |
| 144                  |                         |                   |                   | miR-575       |           |                   |                |                |
| 145                  |                         |                   | miR-591           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 146                  |                         |                   | miR-605           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 147                  |                         |                   |                   | miR-630       |           |                   |                |                |
| 148                  |                         |                   | miR-635           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 149                  |                         | miR-638           |                   | miR-638       |           |                   |                |                |
| 150                  |                         |                   | miR-639           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 151                  |                         |                   | miR-649           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 152                  |                         |                   | miR-655           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 153                  |                         |                   |                   | miR-660       |           |                   |                |                |
| 154                  |                         | miR-663           |                   | miR-663       |           |                   |                |                |
| 155                  |                         |                   |                   | miR-671       |           |                   |                |                |
| 156                  |                         | miR-720           |                   |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 157                  |                         |                   |                   | miR-765       |           |                   |                |                |
| 158                  |                         |                   |                   | miR-766       |           |                   |                |                |
| 159                  | miR-768-3p              |                   |                   |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 160                  |                         |                   |                   | miR-801       |           |                   |                |                |
| 161                  |                         |                   | miR-874           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 162                  |                         |                   | miR-890           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 163                  |                         |                   | miR-935           |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 164                  |                         | miR-1469          |                   |               |           |                   |                |                |
| 165                  |                         | miR-1915          |                   |               |           |                   |                |                |
| <b>No. of miRNAs</b> | <b>33</b>               | <b>65</b>         |                   | <b>64</b>     | <b>57</b> |                   | <b>2</b>       | <b>13</b>      |
|                      |                         |                   |                   |               |           |                   |                | <b>35</b>      |

<sup>e</sup>References correspond to citations in the Reference list of the main text.

**B. miRNAs associated with metastasis in renal cell carcinoma examined by RT-qPCR in five studies<sup>†</sup>**

miRNAs highlighted in yellow were shown as associated with metastasis

| No. | Slaby et al. [19] | Heinzemann et al. [20] | Khella et al. [22] | Slaby et al. [23] | present study | miRNAs present in<br>all 5 or 4 studies | 3 of 5 studies | 2 of 5 studies |
|-----|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1   |                   | let-7a                 |                    |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 2   |                   | let-7b                 |                    |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 3   |                   | let-7c                 |                    |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 4   |                   |                        | miR-10b            | miR-10b           | miR-10b       |                                         |                |                |
| 5   |                   |                        |                    |                   |               | miR-19a                                 |                |                |
| 6   |                   |                        |                    |                   |               | miR-19b                                 |                |                |
| 7   |                   |                        |                    |                   |               | miR-20a                                 |                |                |
| 8   |                   |                        |                    |                   |               | miR-21 ns                               |                |                |
| 9   |                   | miR-26a                |                    | miR-26a           | miR-26a       |                                         |                |                |
| 10  |                   |                        |                    |                   |               | miR-29a                                 |                |                |
| 11  |                   |                        |                    |                   |               | miR-29b                                 |                |                |
| 12  |                   |                        |                    |                   |               | miR-29c                                 |                |                |
| 13  |                   | miR-30a                |                    |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 14  |                   | miR-30c                |                    |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 15  |                   |                        |                    |                   | miR-100       |                                         |                |                |
| 16  |                   |                        |                    |                   | miR-101       |                                         |                |                |
| 17  | miR-106a          |                        |                    |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 18  | miR-106b          |                        |                    |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 19  |                   |                        | miR-126            | miR-126           | miR-126       |                                         |                |                |
| 20  |                   |                        |                    | miR-127           | miR-127       |                                         |                |                |
| 21  |                   |                        |                    |                   | miR-130a      |                                         |                |                |
| 22  |                   |                        |                    | miR-136*          |               |                                         |                |                |
| 23  | miR-141           |                        |                    |                   | miR-141       |                                         |                |                |
| 24  |                   |                        |                    | miR-143           | miR-143       |                                         |                |                |
| 25  |                   |                        |                    | miR-145           | miR-145       |                                         |                |                |
| 26  |                   |                        |                    |                   | miR-148a      |                                         |                |                |
| 27  | miR-155           |                        |                    |                   | miR-155       |                                         |                |                |
| 28  | miR-182           |                        |                    |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 29  |                   |                        | miR-192            |                   | miR-192       |                                         |                |                |
| 30  |                   |                        | miR-194            |                   | miR-194       |                                         |                |                |
| 31  |                   |                        |                    | miR-195           | miR-195       |                                         |                |                |
| 32  |                   |                        | miR-196a           |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 33  | miR-200b          |                        |                    |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 34  | miR-200c          |                        |                    |                   | miR-200c      |                                         |                |                |
| 35  |                   |                        | miR-204            |                   |               |                                         |                |                |
| 36  | miR-210           |                        |                    |                   | miR-210       |                                         |                |                |
| 37  |                   |                        | miR-215            |                   | miR-215       |                                         |                |                |
| 38  |                   |                        |                    |                   | miR-223       |                                         |                |                |
| 39  |                   |                        |                    |                   | miR-224       |                                         |                |                |

| No.                  | Slaby et al. [19] | Heinzelmann et al. [20] | Khella et al. [22] | Slaby et al. [23] | present study | miRNAs present in  |                |                |           |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|
|                      |                   |                         |                    |                   |               | all 5 or 4 studies | 3 of 5 studies | 2 of 5 studies |           |
| 40                   |                   |                         |                    |                   | miR-296       |                    |                |                |           |
| 41                   |                   |                         |                    |                   | miR-370       |                    |                |                |           |
| 42                   |                   |                         | miR-409-3p         |                   |               |                    |                |                |           |
| 43                   |                   |                         |                    |                   | miR-451 ns    |                    |                |                |           |
| 44                   |                   |                         |                    |                   | miR-494 ns    |                    |                |                |           |
| 45                   |                   |                         |                    |                   | miR-514       |                    |                |                |           |
| 46                   |                   |                         |                    |                   | miR-638       |                    |                |                |           |
| <b>No. of miRNAs</b> | <b>8</b>          | <b>6</b>                | <b>7</b>           | <b>9</b>          | <b>33</b>     |                    | <b>0</b>       | <b>3</b>       | <b>12</b> |

<sup>†</sup>References correspond to citations in the Reference list of the main text.

### 3.3 Publikation 3: Clin Chim Acta 2013;416:5-10

**Wotschofsky Z**, Busch J, Jung M, Kempkensteffen C, Weikert S, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Miller K, Kristiansen G, Erbersdobler A, Jung K.

Diagnostic and prognostic potential of differentially expressed miRNAs between metastatic and non-metastatic renal cell carcinoma at the time of nephrectomy.

Clin Chim Acta 2013;416:5-10. doi: 10.1016/j.cca.2012.11.010

Impact Factor (IF): 2.996

#### **4. LEBENSLAUF**

Mein Lebenslauf wird aus datenschutzrechtlichen Gründen in der elektronischen Version meiner Arbeit nicht veröffentlicht.

## 5. PUBLIKATIONSLISTE

### 5.1 Originalartikel

Publikationen von 5 bis 9 sind unter meinem Geburtsnamen "Kijas Z" zu finden.

1. **Wotschofsky Z**, Busch J, Jung M, Kempkensteffen C, Weikert S, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Miller K, Kristiansen G, Erbersdobler A, Jung K. Diagnostic and prognostic potential of differentially expressed miRNAs between metastatic and non-metastatic renal cell carcinoma at the time of nephrectomy. *Clin Chim Acta* 2013;416:5-10.
2. **Wotschofsky Z**, Liep J, Meyer HA, Jung M, Wagner I, Disch AC, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Busch J, Weikert S, Miller K, Erbersdobler A, Mollenkopf HJ, Jung K. Identification of metastamirs as metastasis-associated microRNAs in clear cell renal cell carcinomas. *Int J Biol Sci* 2012;8:1363-74.
3. **Wotschofsky Z**, Meyer HA, Jung M, Fendler A, Wagner I, Stephan C, Busch J, Erbersdobler A, Disch AC, Mollenkopf HJ, Jung K. Reference genes for the relative quantification of microRNAs in renal cell carcinomas and their metastases. *Anal Biochem* 2011;417:233-41.
4. Chen W, Ullmann R, Langnick C, Menzel C, **Wotschofsky Z**, Hu H, Doring A, Hu Y, Kang H, Tzschach A, Hoeltzenbein M, Neitzel H, Markus S, Wiedersberg E, Kistner G, van Ravenswaaij-Arts CM, Kleefstra T, Kalscheuer VM, Ropers HH. Breakpoint analysis of balanced chromosome rearrangements by next-generation paired-end sequencing. *Eur J Hum Genet* 2010;18:539-43.
5. Chen W, Kalscheuer V, Tzschach A, Menzel C, Ullmann R, Schulz MH, Erdogan F, Li N, **Kijas Z**, Arkesteijn G, Pajares IL, Goetz-Sothmann M, Heinrich U, Rost I, Dufke A, Grasshoff U, Glaeser B, Vingron M, Ropers HH. Mapping translocation breakpoints by next-generation sequencing. *Genome Res* 2008;18:1143-9.
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7. Winter J, Lehmann T, Krauss S, Trockenbacher A, **Kijas Z**, Foerster J, Suckow V, Yaspo ML, Kulozik A, Kalscheuer V, Schneider R, Schweiger S. Regulation of the MID1 protein function is fine-tuned by a complex pattern of alternative splicing. *Hum Genet* 2004;114:541-52.
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## 5.2 Vorträge und Poster

1. **Wotschofsky Z**, Meyer HA, Jean-Noel Billaud, et al. Integrated microRNA and mRNA signature associated with the transition from the locally confined to the metastasized renal cell carcinoma. Abstract number: E17-0965 European Cancer Congress, Reinforcing Multidisciplinarity, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, October 2013, submitted.
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3. **Wotschofsky Z**, Meyer HA, Jung M, Wagner I, Disch AC, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Busch J, Weikert S, Miller K, Erbersdobler A, Mollenkopf H-J, Jung K. Metastamirs as metastasis-associated microRNA in clear cell renal cell carcinomas. [Abstract P1.3: Urologe 2013;52:105]. 4. Symposium Urologische Forschung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Urologie, Berlin, 8.-10.11.2012.
4. **Wotschofsky Z**, Busch J, Reichelt U, Miller K, Erbersdobler A, Jung K, Kilic E, Rabien R. Immunohistochemical analysis of miRNA regulators: Ago1, Ago2, and Dicer as potential prognostic markers in clear cell renal cell carcinoma. [Abstract P1.4: Urologe 2013;52:105-106]. 4. Symposium Urologische Forschung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Urologie, Berlin, 8.-10.11.2012.
5. **Wotschofsky Z**, Busch J, Jung M, Kempkensteffen C, Weikert S, Schaser KD, Melcher I, Kilic E, Miller K, Kristiansen G, Erbersdobler A, Jung K. MiR-514 and miR-122a as predictors of tumor recurrence in clear cell renal cell carcinoma patients following radical nephrectomy. [Abstract V7.4: Urologe 2013;52:124]. 4. Symposium Urologische Forschung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Urologie, Berlin, 8.-10.11.2012.
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8. Ratert N, **Wotschofsky Z**, Fendler A, Weikert S, Busch J, Miller K, Meyer HA, Stephan C, Jung K. Validierte miRNA-Referenzgene bei urologischen Tumoren. [Abstract P1.1: Urologe 2012;51:99-100]. 3. Symposium Urologische Forschung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Urologie, Jena, 17.-19.11.2011.

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