

Original Article

EV71 infection causes differential expression of microRNAs in colon carcinoma cells

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Abstract: Purpose: We aimed to clarify the mechanism of EV71 infection impacting microRNA (miRNA) expression by identifying the differentially expressed miRNAs and key target genes in human colon carcinoma cells with EV71 infection. Methods: The miRNA expression profile GSE57372 was downloaded from gene expression omnibus database. The differentially expressed miRNAs were identified and target genes were screened using miRWalk, followed by gene ontology (GO) function analysis for the target genes using DAVID. Besides, the co-regulation network was constructed using cytoscape and GO analysis was performed for the co-regulated target genes. Results: A total of 23 differentially expressed miRNAs were identified, including 16 up-regulated miRNAs and 7 down-regulated miRNAs. Total 2501 target genes were screened, which were regulated by 7 miRNAs, including 4 up-regulated miRNAs (hsa-miR-548a-3p, hsa-miR-570, hsa-miR-601 and hsa-miR-638) and 3 down-regulated miRNAs (hsa-miR-29b, hsa-miR-326 and hsa-miR-484). These genes were mainly enriched in the biological processes of neuron differentiation, cell morphogenesis involved in neuron differentiation and cellular component morphogenesis. Total 47 target genes were co-regulated, in which *NDST1*, *DLGAP2*, *PKNOX2* and *MYT1* were identified as key target genes and enriched in processes of neuron project, intracellular signaling cascade and intracellular non-membrane-bounded organelle. The hsa-miR-29b, hsa-miR-484 and hsa-miR-638 were identified as key miRNAs, which regulated all 4 key target genes. Conclusion: EV71 infection altered the expression of hsa-miR-29b, hsa-miR-484 and hsa-miR-638 which may play key roles in the progression of nervous lesions by co-regulating the expression of 4 key target genes, including *NDST1*, *DLGAP2*, *PKNOX2* and *MYT1*.

Keywords: EV71, colon cancer HT29, significant microRNA, target genes, gene ontology terms

Introduction

Enterovirus 71 (EV71) is a virus of the genus *Enterovirus* in the *Picornaviride* family, which is first isolated in California, USA [1]. EV71 is considered to be a major cause of hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) which is characterized by multiple lesions on skins and mucosa of oral, hand and foot [2]. In addition, some severe neurologic complications, such as encephalitis and polio-like paralysis, also develop in patients infected by EV71 [3]. This virus is mainly transmitted by hand contact and young children are the highest risk group [4]. Recently, analysis on mechanism of EV71 infection has been performed, which may provide a new insight for both academic research and clinical treatment.

microRNAs (miRNAs) are endogenous RNA with a length of about 22-nucleotide [5] and serve as major-regulators of gene expression by pairing to the mRNAs of protein-coding genes to direct their posttranscriptional repression [6]. In recent years, miRNAs have been considered as key regulators in many biological processes [7], and the alteration of miRNA expression is highly associated with development of some diseases, such as various human cancers [8]. In case of EV71 infection, Cui et al. [9] identified cellular miRNAs and biological processes involved in the host response to EV71 infection, supporting that certain miRNAs might be essential in the host-pathogen interactions. Thus, further analysis on the miRNAs in EV71 infection is implicated for the research of treatment.

In the present study, we downloaded the miRNA microarray profile of GSE57372 from Gene Expression Omnibus (GEO) database. This dataset was obtained from colon carcinoma cell line HT29 which is isolated from a Caucasian female with colon tumor [10], and is widely used in various researches of intestinal cell function and diseases [11] including EV71 infection [12]. There are EV71 infected samples and not infected samples in this dataset. The differentially expressed miRNAs between the two groups were screened. Then the target genes of miRNAs were performed functional analysis. Besides, co-regulated network was constructed and key target genes were identified. We aimed to clarify the mechanism of EV71 infection impacting miRNA expression by identifying key miRNAs and key target genes in colon carcinoma cells.

Materials and methods

Microarray data and data preprocessing

The miRNA microarray profile of GSE57372 was downloaded from Gene Expression Omnibus (GEO) database in National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/>) based on the platform of GPL14613 [miRNA-2_0] Affymetrix Multispecies miRNA-2_0 Array. The microarray profile contains 6 human colon carcinoma cells (HT29) samples, including 3 EV71 infected samples and 3 not infected samples as control.

The probe-level data were converted into gene expression measures. If multiple probes corresponded to the same gene expression value, their mean value was calculated as the gene expression value. For probes with missing values, we used KNN method of impute package in R language to supplement the missing values [13]. Quantile normalization was performed by using preprocessCore package in R language [14] and box plots were generated.

Screening of differentially expressed miRNA

After the microarray data were preprocessed, the differentially expressed miRNAs between EV71 infection group and control group were identified by using limma package in R [15] with p -value<0.05 and $|\log_2 \text{FC (fold change)}| > 0.585$.

Prediction and functional analysis of target genes

The target genes of significant differentially expressed miRNAs were identified by using miRWalk [16], in which 10 algorithms were referenced, including DIANA-T, miRanda, miRDB, miRWalk, RNAhybrid, PICTAR4, PICTAR5, PITA, RNA22 and Targetscan. The genes that were detected by more than 5 algorithms were screened for the construction of co-regulation network. Cytoscape [17] was used for visualization of the network. Besides, the target genes of all miRNAs were performed Gene Ontology (GO) biological process (BP) analysis using DAVID [18].

Co-regulation network construction and key target genes analysis

The TRANSFAC database on eukaryotic transcriptional regulation is a database comprises data of transcription factors, target genes and regulatory binding sites [19]. The University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) Genome Browser is a web-based set of tool providing access to a database of genome sequence and annotation [20]. Transcription factors among the target genes were screened based on the TRANSFAC database [21] and the information on transcription regulation was analyzed with UCSC database. In addition, analysis of all three GO terms, including biological process (BP), cellular component (CC) and molecular function (MF), was performed for the target genes coregulated by miRNAs by using DAVID [18] with p -value<0.05.

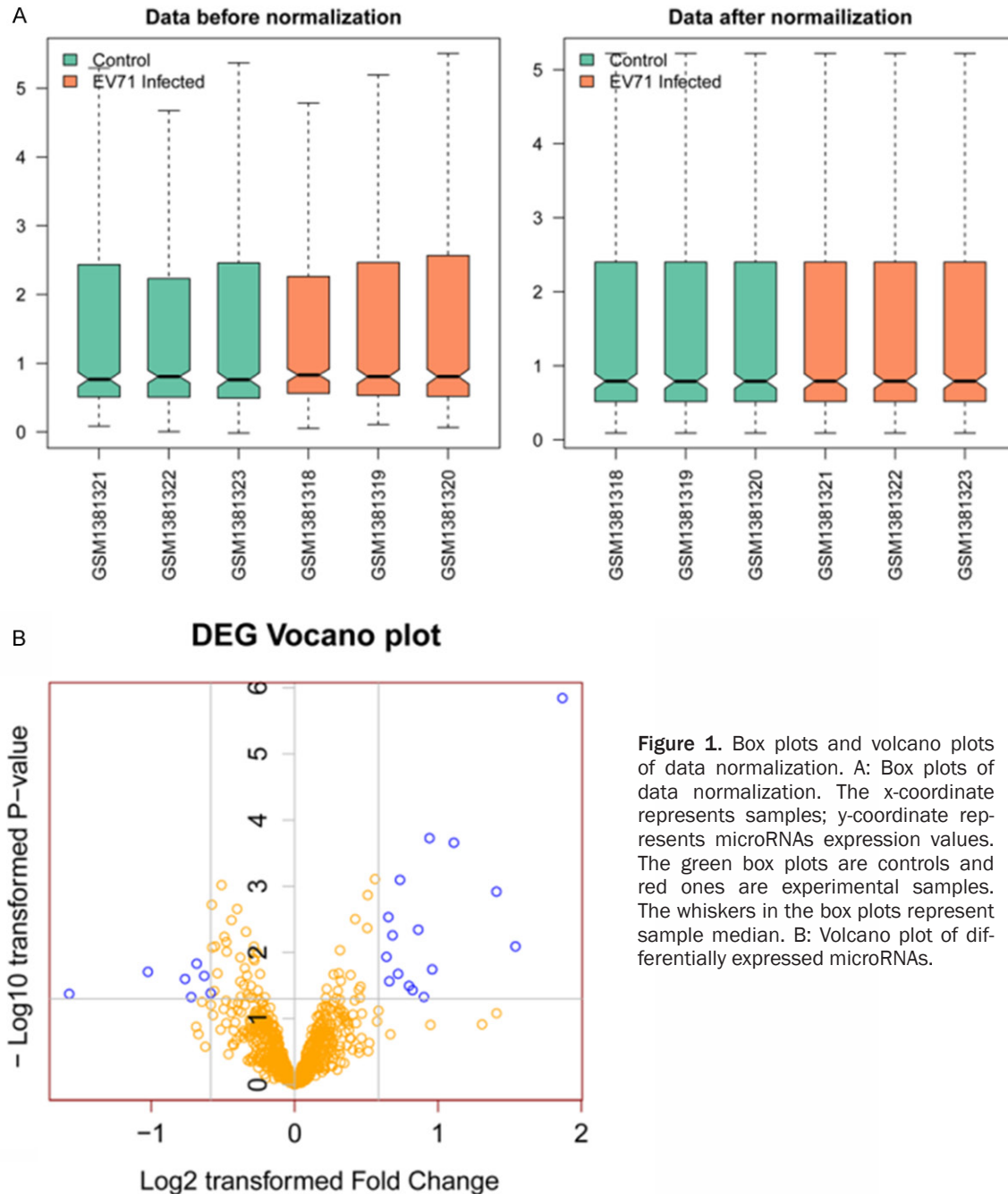
Results

Screening of differentially expressed miRNA

As shown in **Figure 1A**, the obscuring variations in raw expression data were normalized after being preprocessed. A total of 23 significant differentially expressed miRNAs were identified, including 16 up-regulated miRNAs and 7 down-regulated miRNAs. The volcano plot was shown in **Figure 1B**.

Prediction and functional analysis of target genes

According to the 10 algorithms in miRWalk, a network of 3091 interactions were constructed



(Figure 2), in which 7 differentially expressed miRNAs, including 4 up-regulated miRNAs (hsa-miR-548a-3p, hsa-miR-570, hsa-miR-601 and hsa-miR-638) and 3 down-regulated miRNAs (hsa-miR-29b, hsa-miR-326 and hsa-miR-484), and 2501 target genes were involved. In the 2501 target genes, collagen, type XI, alpha 1 (*COL11A1*), collagen, type III, alpha 1 (*COL3A1*) and hemicentin 1 (*HMCN1*) were detected by all 10 algorithms.

The top five significant GO terms for target genes were listed in Table 1. The target genes of up-regulated miRNAs were mainly enriched in cell morphogenesis, cellular component morphogenesis, dendrite development and regulation of transcription from RNA polymerase II promoter. The target genes of down-regulated miRNAs were significantly enriched in the processes of neuron differentiation, cell morphogenesis involved in neuron differentiation,

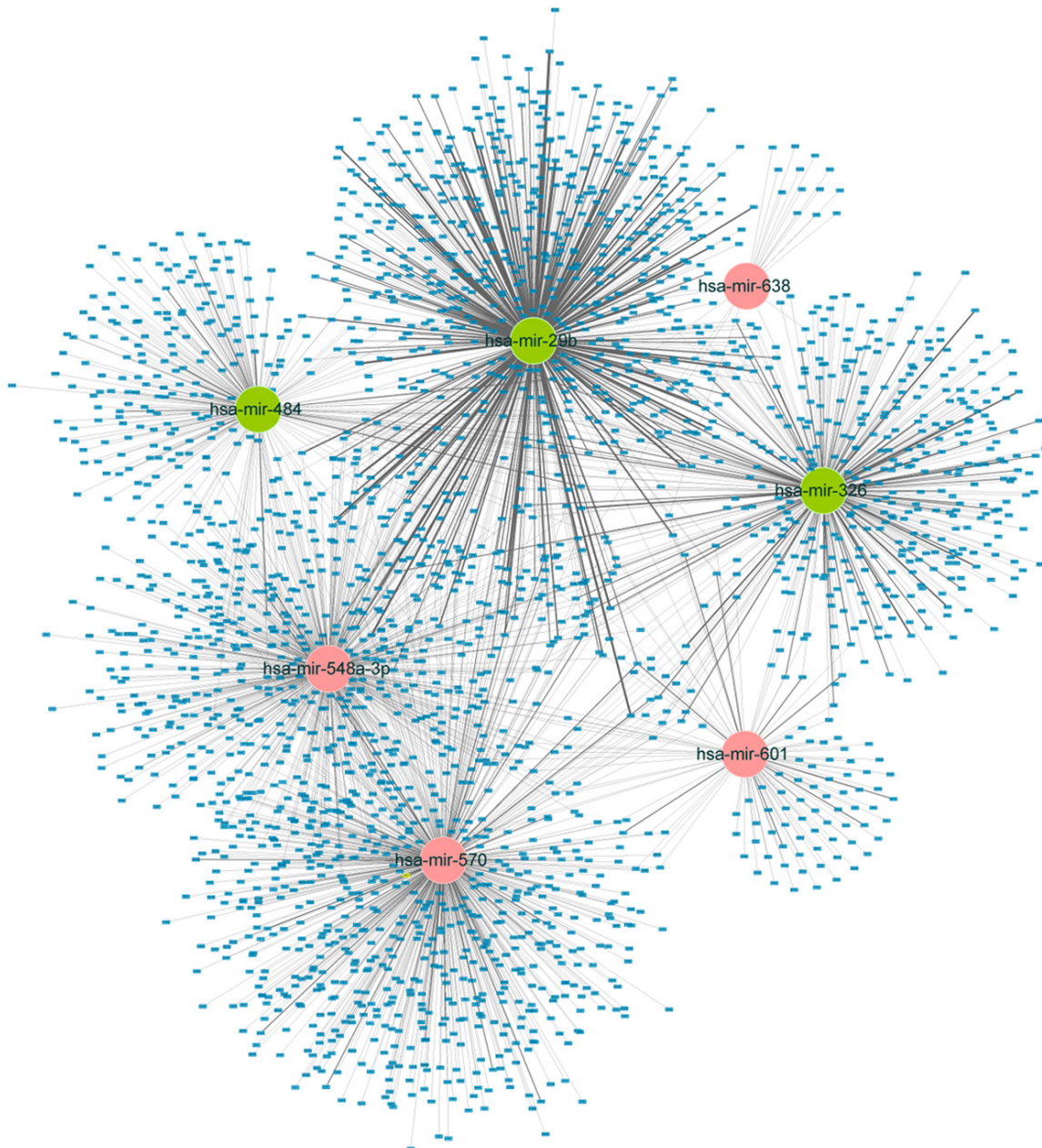


Figure 2. microRNA regulation network. Red nodes: up-regulated microRNAs; green nodes: down-regulated microRNAs; blue nodes: target genes.

intracellular transport, and cardiac muscle tissue development.

Co-regulation network construction

A target gene may be regulated by multiple miRNAs. As shown in **Figure 3**, 47 target genes were found to be regulated by more than 3 miRNAs. Among them, N-deacetylase/N-sulfotransferase (heparan glucosaminyl) 1 (*NDST1*) was regulated by 4 miRNAs (hsa-mir-601, hsa-

mir-484, hsa-mir-638 and hsa-mir-29b) and discs, large (Drosophila) homolog-associated protein 2 (*DLGAP2*) was regulated by 5 miRNAs (hsa-mir-638, hsa-mir-29b, hsa-mir-484, hsa-mir-326 and hsa-mir-548a-3p).

Key target genes analysis

By using TRANSFAC database, 3 transcription factors including PBX/knotted 1 homeobox 2

MiRNAs in EV71 infected colon cancer cells

Table 1. BP Terms of target genes regulated by 7 differentially expressed microRNAs

microRNA	Term	Description	Count	P-value
Up-regulated miRNAs				
hsa-mir-548a-3p	GO:0006350	transcription	107	9.89E-06
	GO:0000902	cell morphogenesis	29	3.20E-05
	GO:0032989	cellular component morphogenesis	30	8.90E-05
	GO:0045449	regulation of transcription	121	1.40E-04
	GO:0031175	neuron projection development	22	1.74E-04
hsa-mir-570	GO:0016358	dendrite development	10	3.95E-06
	GO:0006357	regulation of transcription from RNA polymerase II promoter	50	4.44E-05
	GO:0045893	positive regulation of transcription, DNA-dependent	37	5.02E-05
	GO:0051254	positive regulation of RNA metabolic process	37	5.98E-05
	GO:0010557	positive regulation of macromolecule biosynthetic process	45	1.16E-04
hsa-mir-601	GO:0008219	cell death	13	0.003696468
	GO:0016265	death	13	0.003907906
	GO:0016568	chromatin modification	7	0.011474331
	GO:0030148	sphingolipid biosynthetic process	3	0.019102083
	GO:0043516	regulation of DNA damage response, signal transduction by p53 class mediator	2	0.020483938
hsa-mir-638	GO:0048568	embryonic organ development	4	0.001097795
	GO:0048562	embryonic organ morphogenesis	3	0.008827332
	GO:0030182	neuron differentiation	4	0.009143578
	GO:0045664	regulation of neuron differentiation	3	0.011426398
	GO:0030900	forebrain development	3	0.011557697
Down-regulated miRNAs				
hsa-mir-29b	GO:0048511	rhythmic process	18	1.02E-05
	GO:0009891	positive regulation of biosynthetic process	51	2.28E-05
	GO:0031328	positive regulation of cellular biosynthetic process	50	3.22E-05
	GO:0010557	positive regulation of macromolecule biosynthetic process	48	4.18E-05
	GO:0045935	positive regulation of nucleobase, nucleoside, nucleotide and nucleic acid metabolic process	46	5.62E-05
hsa-mir-326	GO:0030182	neuron differentiation	31	2.25E-06
	GO:0048667	cell morphogenesis involved in neuron differentiation	20	3.30E-06
	GO:0007409	axonogenesis	19	4.17E-06
	GO:0048666	neuron development	26	4.49E-06
	GO:0000904	cell morphogenesis involved in differentiation	21	8.88E-06
hsa-mir-484	GO:0046907	intracellular transport	19	0.006751147
	GO:0009628	response to abiotic stimulus	13	0.007131466
	GO:0009314	response to radiation	9	0.008491462
	GO:0048738	cardiac muscle tissue development	5	0.009120295
	GO:0007517	muscle organ development	9	0.011512654

BP: biological process; GO: gene ontology.

(PKNOX2), myelin transcription factor 1 (MYT1) and hepatic leukemia factor (HLF) were identified among 47 coregulated target genes. After GO terms analysis for the 47 coregulated genes we found that these target genes were significantly enriched in functions associated with neuron development and differentiation (**Table 2**).

Discussion

EV71 infection is a major cause of HFMD and other neurologic complications [3]. As miRNAs have been recognized to play important roles in

the development of some diseases [22], analysis of key miRNAs altered by EV71 infection may provide new insights for the nosetiology research of these diseases. In this study, we identified 23 differentially expressed miRNAs in human colon carcinoma cells with EV71 infection. The target genes of the differentially expressed miRNAs were predicted. A co-regulation network with 47 target genes, such as *NDST1*, *DLGAP2*, *PKNOX2*, and *MYT1*, and 7 significant differentially expressed miRNAs, including hsa-miR-29b, hsa-miR-326, hsa-miR-484, hsa-miR-570, hsa-miR-548a-3p, hsa-miR-601 and hsa-miR-638 was constructed. The 4

Table 2. GO Terms of 47 co-regulated target genes

GO: gene ontology; BP: biological process; CC: cellular component; MF: molecular function.

target genes significantly enriched in the biological processes including neuron project, intracellular signaling cascade and intracellular non-membrane-bounded organelle.

Both hsa-miR-29b and hsa-miR-484 were key down-regulated miRNAs and regulated the expression of all 4 key genes (*NDST1*, *DLGAP2*, *PKNOX2*, and *MYT1*). hsa-miR-29b has been reported in various diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease [23] and lung cancer [24]. Virus infection was considered as a cause of hsa-miR-29b aberrant expression. For example, in the serum with avian-origin influenza A (H7N9) infection, hsa-miR-29b is detected to be down-regulated expressed [25]. Besides, H7N9 infection has also been found alter the expression of hsa-miR-484 which has been reported to be related with apoptosis in cardiomyocytes [26]. However, hsa-miR-29b and hsa-miR-484 have not been found to be affected by EV71 infection. Based on the analysis in this study, we speculated that hsa-miR-29b and hsa-miR-484 may be important targets of EV71 by regulating 4 key target genes.

DLGPA2 was a key target gene in this study and was mainly enriched in processes associated with neuron projection and intracellular non-membrane-bounded organelle. *DLGPA* family encode isoforms of SAP90/PSD95 associated proteins (SAPAPs), which are involved in the pathophysiology of various psychiatric disorders [27]. *DLGPA2*, also known as 2 (SAPAP2), is a member of *DLGPA* family [28]. As one of the main components of postsynaptic scaffolding proteins, *DLGPA2* interacts with discs, large homolog 4 (*DLG4*) and SH3 and multiple ankyrin repeat domains 3 (*SHANKs*) to form the *DLG4-DLGAPs-SHANKs* complex, which plays critical roles in synaptic morphogenesis and functions [29], and are involved in the stabilization of synaptic junction and regulation of neurotransmission. Therefore, the appropriate expression of *DLGPA2* is related to the function of neural communication. The mutation of *DLGPAs* has been reported to be associated with some diseases, such as Tourette syndrome [30], progressive epilepsy [31] and schizophrenic [32]. Thus, we speculated that the aberrant of *DLGPAs* caused by the coregulation of hsa-miR-29b and hsa-miR-484 may be a major cause of the neurologic complications symptom with EV71 infection.

NDST was identified as a key target gene in this study and enriched in the biological process of intracellular signaling cascade. *NDST* encodes a bifunctional enzyme that catalyzes both the N-deacetylation and the N-sulfation of glucosamine in heparin sulfate (HS) [33]. HS is a highly sulfated linear polysaccharide ubiquitously present on the cell surface and in the extra cellular matrix, and influences diverse biological functions, including organogenesis, growth factor, angiogenesis and cell adhesion [34]. HS influences these processes by the ionic interaction binding with a variety of proteins, which depends on the charge and structure of HS chain [35]. The *NDST* interaction is the first major modification in the process of HS biosynthesis and important for the subsequent interactions [36]. Thus EV71 infection may impair the expression of *NDST* by regulating miRNAs expression, which leads to the lesion of organogenesis and angiogenesis.

PKNOX2 and *MYT1* were identified as transcription factors. *PKNOX2* was enriched in some key processes including microtubule cytoskeleton, intracellular non-membrane bounded organelle and non-membrane bounded organelle. The encoded protein *PKNOX2*, also known as *PREP2*, is a member of *PREP* family, which belongs to the TALE (three amino acid loop extension) class of homeodomain-containing transcription factors [37]. The TALE proteins, such as *PREP1* and *PREP2*, are regulators of Pbx activity and form transcriptionally active complexes with Pbx [38], which play a central role in the development of organogenesis [39]. For example, during organogenesis, Pbx-1 has a potential function in determining cell fate in various tissues that depends on mesenchymal-epithelial interactions for the coordinate morphogenesis [40] and Pbx-1-deficient is related closely with the embryonic lethal phenotype [41]. Therefore, the lesion symptom on organs caused by EV71 infection may result from the disordered expression of *PKNOX2*, which was regulated by hsa-miR-29b and hsa-miR-484. *MYT1* encodes a zincfinger DNA binding protein that indicates a potential role in regulating oligodendrocyte progenitor cell proliferation [42]. It is originally identified based on binding affinity within the promoter region of the proteolipid gene, which is the most abundantly transcribed myelin gene in central nerves system [43]. Besides, *MYT1* acts synergistically with neuro-

genin in the notch signaling pathway to promote the neuronal differentiation [44] and is necessary for the endocrine islet development [45]. Aberrant expression of *MYT1* may cause variable oligodendrocyte development, which can contribute to demyelinating disease and leukodystrophies [46]. EV71 infection altered the expression of *hsa-mir-29b*, *hsa-mir-484* that target *MYT1*, which may result in abnormal neuronal impulse conduction and neurologic dysfunction.

hsa-miR-638 was identified as a key upregulated miRNA and regulated the expression of *DLGPA2* and *NDST*. The main GO terms enriched by the target genes of *hsa-miR-638* included embryonic organ development and neuron differentiation. *hsa-miR-638* has been reported to be expressed aberrantly in some lesion cells, such as human lung cancer cells [47], lupus nephritis glomerular cells [48] and immortalized human bronchial epithelial cells exposed to benzopyrene [49]. However, the correlation between *miR-638* and EV71 infection has been scarcely reported. In this study, among two target genes of *hsa-miR-638*, *NDST* was mainly functions in the organogenesis, while *DLGPA2* was associated with the neurologic projection. We speculated that the up-regulation of *hsa-miR-638* caused by EV71 infection might alter the expression of *NDST* and *DLGPA2*, leading to the lesion symptoms of both organogenesis and nervous system.

In conclusion, EV71 infection altered the expression of *hsa-mir-29b*, *hsa-mir-484* and *hsa-miR-638*. These miRNAs may play key roles in the progression of nervous lesions caused by EV71 infection by regulating *NDST1*, *DLGAP2*, *PKNOX2* and *MYT1* which were enriched in processes of neuron project and organogenesis. However, the sample size of the microarray is small, which may be a limitation of our conclusion. Besides, experiments should be performed for the verification of our conclusion.

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

None.

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