

## Supplemental materials and methods

### Antibody

Anti  $\beta$ -catenin mAb was purchased from BD Bioscience.

### Apoptosis assay

AV-heart explants were prepared as described in the Materials and methods. After 48 h of incubation ex vivo, explants were fixed and apoptosis was quantified by measuring DNA fragmentation (TUNEL detection method; Roche Diagnostic).

### Nuclear localization of $\beta$ -catenin

Cells were serum starved for 24 h and treated for 3 h with 6 mM LiCl and 5 ng/ml Leptomycin B (Sigma-Aldrich) in the presence of 15% FCS. Cells were fixed and stained for  $\beta$ -catenin as described in the Materials and methods.