***eLife’s* transparent reporting form**

We encourage authors to provide detailed information *within their submission* to facilitate the interpretation and replication of experiments. Authors can upload supporting documentation to indicate the use of appropriate reporting guidelines for health-related research (see [EQUATOR Network](http://www.equator-network.org/%20)), life science research (see the [BioSharing Information Resource](https://biosharing.org/" \t "_blank)), or the [ARRIVE guidelines](http://www.plosbiology.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pbio.1000412) for reporting work involving animal research. Where applicable, authors should refer to any relevant reporting standards documents in this form.

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**Sample-size estimation**

* You should state whether an appropriate sample size was computed when the study was being designed
* You should state the statistical method of sample size computation and any required assumptions
* If no explicit power analysis was used, you should describe how you decided what sample (replicate) size (number) to use

Please outline where this information can be found within the submission (e.g., sections or figure legends), or explain why this information doesn’t apply to your submission:

Our study investigates the biochemical activities of a Dicer endonuclease enzyme in vitro. The question of sample size is not relevant to the study.

**Replicates**

* You should report how often each experiment was performed
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* The data obtained should be provided and sufficient information should be provided to indicate the number of independent biological and/or technical replicates
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* High-throughput sequence data should be uploaded before submission, with a private link for reviewers provided (these are available from both GEO and ArrayExpress)

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All assays were replicated at least twice. The only quantitative data is in Figure 4, which includes a plot of mean values for triplicate reactions, with error bars showing the standard error of the mean. This is described in the methods section. An excel spreadsheet with the quantitative data used to calculate the mean and standard error of the mean is provided as source data for Figures 4A and 4B.

**Statistical reporting**

* Statistical analysis methods should be described and justified
* Raw data should be presented in figures whenever informative to do so (typically when N per group is less than 10)
* For each experiment, you should identify the statistical tests used, exact values of N, definitions of center, methods of multiple test correction, and dispersion and precision measures (e.g., mean, median, SD, SEM, confidence intervals; and, for the major substantive results, a measure of effect size (e.g., Pearson's r, Cohen's d)
* Report exact p-values wherever possible alongside the summary statistics and 95% confidence intervals. These should be reported for all key questions and not only when the p-value is less than 0.05.

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The RNA substrate cleavage assays are qualitative rather than quantitative such that statistical analyses are generally not relevant, except in Figures 4A and 4B, for which gel bands of triplicate reactions were quantified and plotted, with means and standard errors of the mean calculated.

(For large datasets, or papers with a very large number of statistical tests, you may upload a single table file with tests, Ns, etc., with reference to sections in the manuscript.)

**Group allocation**

* Indicate how samples were allocated into experimental groups (in the case of clinical studies, please specify allocation to treatment method); if randomization was used, please also state if restricted randomization was applied
* Indicate if masking was used during group allocation, data collection and/or data analysis

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No grouping or masking was involved in the study.

**Additional data files (“source data”)**

* We encourage you to upload relevant additional data files, such as numerical data that are represented as a graph in a figure, or as a summary table
* Where provided, these should be in the most useful format, and they can be uploaded as “Source data” files linked to a main figure or table
* Include model definition files including the full list of parameters used
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* Avoid stating that data files are “available upon request”

Please indicate the figures or tables for which source data files have been provided:

All data generated or analyzed during this study are included in the manuscript and supporting files. Raw images for Figures 1-6 have been uploaded as Figure 1 - source data, Figure 2 - source data, Figure 3 - source data, Figure 4 - source data, Figure 5 - source data, and Figure 6-source data.