CLAIMS

1. A method of assessing heart function in a subject, the method comprising:

determining an expression level of a polypeptide encoded by *Sghrt* in a sample obtained from the subject, in which the polypeptide shares at least 90% sequence identity with any one of SEQ ID NO: 1, SEQ ID NO: 2, SEQ ID NO: 3, SEQ ID NO: 4, SEQ ID NO: 5, SEQ ID NO: 6, SEQ ID NO: 7, SEQ ID NO: 18, SEQ ID NO: 22, SEQ ID NO: 23, SEQ ID NO: 24 and SEQ ID NO: 25;

comparing the expression level of the polypeptide to a reference expression level,

in which if the expression level exceeds the reference expression level, the subject is considered to have impaired or deteriorated heart function.

2. A method according to Claim 1, in which the reference expression level comprises:

(a) an expression level of the polypeptide in a healthy population; or

(b) an expression level of the polypeptide in an earlier sample obtained from the subject.

3. A method of identifying a potential drug for treating impaired heart function, the method comprising:

determining a first expression level of a polypeptide encoded by *Sghrt* in a cell, in which the polypeptide shares at least 90% sequence identity with any one of SEQ ID NO: 1, SEQ ID NO: 2, SEQ ID NO: 3, SEQ ID NO: 4, SEQ ID NO: 5, SEQ ID NO: 6, SEQ ID NO: 7, SEQ ID NO: 18, SEQ ID NO: 22, SEQ ID NO: 23, SEQ ID NO: 24 and SEQ ID NO: 25;

exposing the cell to a drug candidate; and

determining a second expression level of the polypeptide after the exposure,

in which if the second expression level is lower than the first expression level, then the drug candidate is identified as a potential drug for treating impaired heart function.