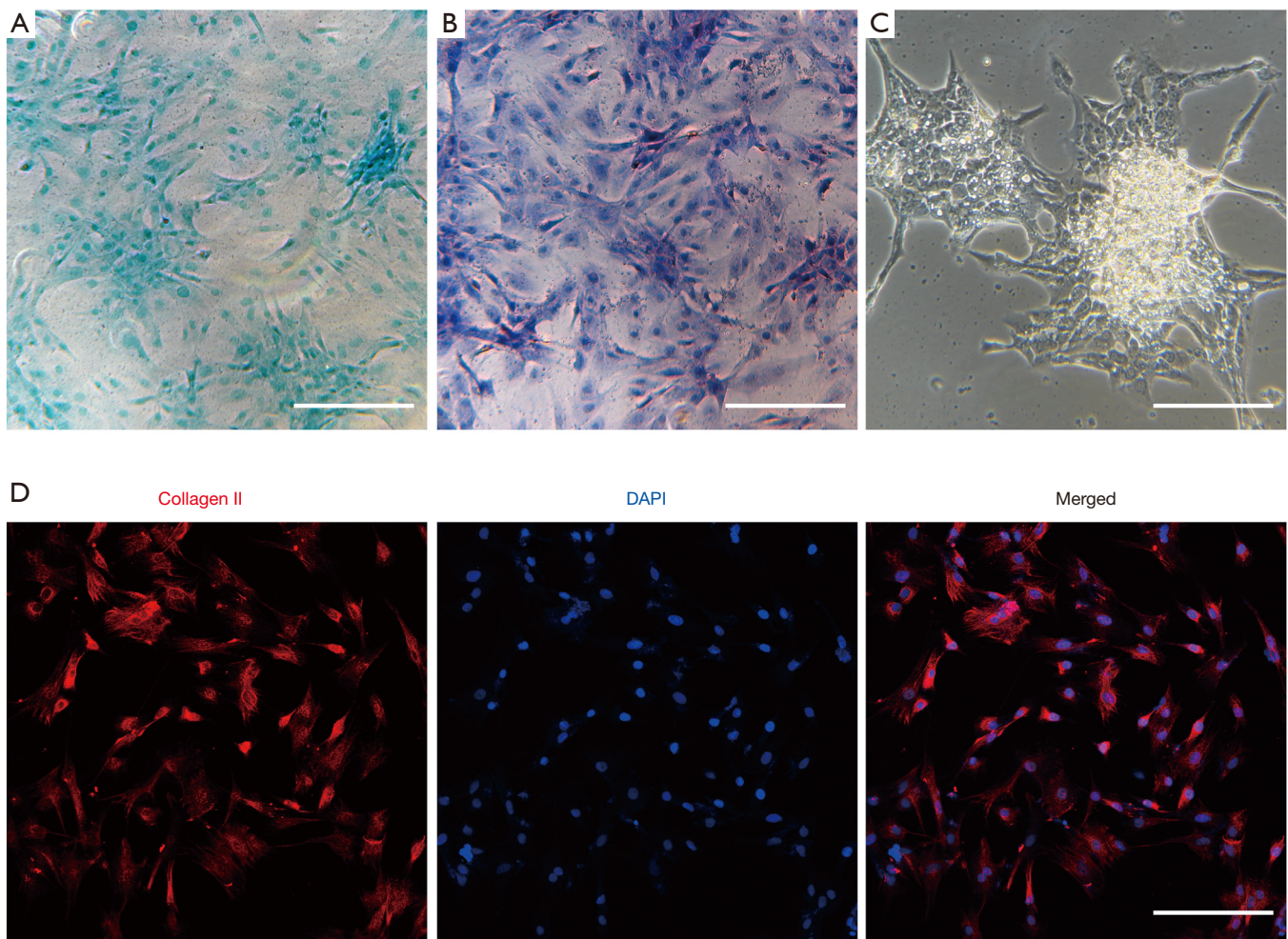


## Supplementary

**Table S1** Clinical characteristics of patient samples

	Sex	Age	Pfirrmann grade	Segment
Patient 1	Male	71	IV	L5/S1
Patient 2	Male	66	V	L5/S1
Patient 3	Male	51	IV	L5/S1
Patient 4	Female	61	IV	L4/L5
Patient 5	Female	55	IV	L5/S1
Patient 6	Male	49	V	L4/L5
Patient 7	Female	58	V	L5/S1



**Figure S1** Identification of primary cultured rat NPCs. (A) Alcian blue, (B) Toluidine blue O, (C) NPC morphology under a light microscope and (D) immunofluorescence of collagen II. scale bar: 100  $\mu$ m. **NPCs**, nucleus pulposus cells.