

**Figure 2. Administration of z-VAD-FMK and the vehicle does not affect hair cell density or protein levels.** (A)Representativeconfocal images of middle turn cochlear hair cells stained with DAPI (blue) and Phalloidin (yellow) captured at 20x magnification. Data recovered at 28 post interventions is shown for the vehicle-only (n=4) and z-VAD-FMK-only (n=4) groups. (B) Quantified cochlear hair cells per 150um area from the apical, middle, and basal turns across all groups.(C) Representative protein band images from western blot analyses conducted on all groups(n=3/group). (D) Relative protein expression levels for each group presented as median and lower and upper quartiles. Statistical comparisons between the noise-exposed (black) and the noise + z-VAD-FMK (red) groups, as well as between the noise and noise + vehicle (gray) groups are shown. IHC=inner hair cells; OHC= outer hair cells; Casp-9= caspase-9; Casp8= caspas-8; IL-1B= interleukin-1B, TNF-alfa= tumor necrosis factor-alfa.