Mortality rates from atherosclerotic diseases have consistently declined in the United States during the last two decades. Numerous pathology studies have clearly demonstrated that Atherosclerosis begins years, perhaps decades, before the onset of clinically observable signs and symptoms. By the time clinical sequelae occur the diseased artery wall is at or near end-stage condition characterized by atheronecrosis, fibrosis, mineralization, hemorrhage and/or ulceration. An important challenge at present is the valid and reliable detection of early atherosclerosis in asymptomatic individuals, and the monitoring of these plaques over time.

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