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**Citation for published version (APA):**

Giessen, van der, A. G., Gijsen, F. J. H., Wentzel, J. J., Walsum, van, T., Niessen, W. J., Feyter, de, P. J., Steen, van der, A. F. W., & Vosse, van de, F. N. (2008). *Small coronary calcifications are not detectable by 64-slice CT*. Poster session presented at Mate Poster Award 2008 : 13th Annual Poster Contest.

**Document status and date:**

Published: 01/01/2008

**Document Version:**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

**Please check the document version of this publication:**

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

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# Small coronary calcifications are not detectable by 64-slice CT

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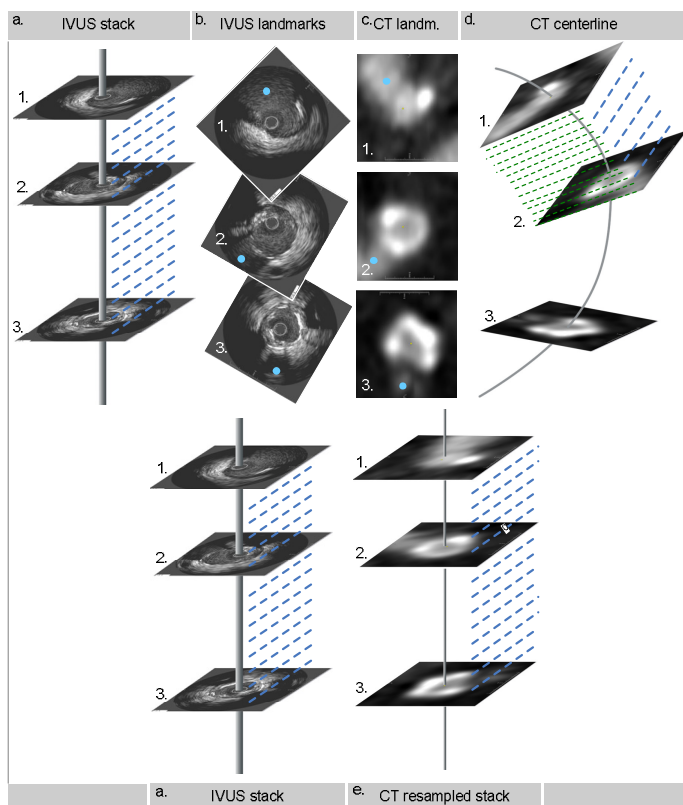
## Background

Multi-slice computed tomography (MSCT) is a promising non-invasive tool for the assessment of plaque composition in coronary arteries. Calcium is one of the components that is frequently associated with plaque rupture. However, it is unknown to which extent calcifications can be detected with MSCT.

**Aim:** to compare the imaging of calcifications with MSCT to intra-vascular ultrasound (IVUS), the in-vivo gold standard for detection of calcifications.

## Methods

The coronary arteries of patients with myocardial infarction or unstable angina were imaged by 64-slice MSCT angiography and IVUS. The MSCT and IVUS images were registered (fig. 1) and the arteries were inspected on the presence of calcifications on both modalities independently. We measured the length and the maximum circumferential angle of each calcification on IVUS.



## Results

In 31 arteries, we found 99 calcifications on IVUS, of which only 47 were also detected on MSCT. The calcifications missed on MSCT were significantly smaller in angle ( $27 \pm 16^\circ$  vs.  $59 \pm 31^\circ$ ) and length ( $1.4 \pm 0.8$  vs.  $3.7 \pm 2.2$  mm) than those detected on MSCT (fig. 2 and 3). Only calcifications larger than 2.1 mm in length or  $36^\circ$  in angle could reliably be detected on MSCT.

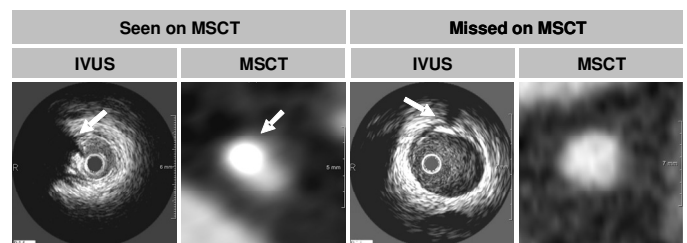


Figure 2: Examples of calcifications (arrows) on IVUS and MSCT.

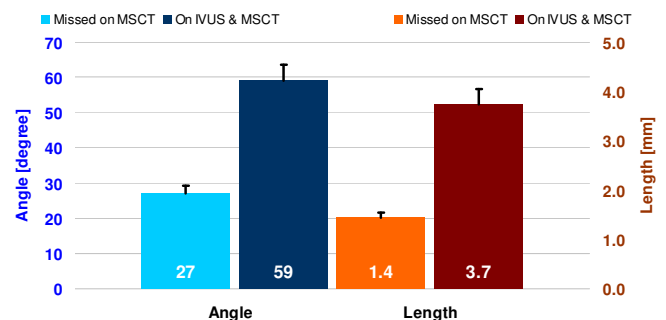


Figure 3: Properties of calcifications. The error bars indicate the SE.

## Discussion

More than half of the calcifications were not visible on MSCT. The missed calcifications were smaller in length and angle. As small calcifications are associated with unstable plaques, the restricted local calcium detection by MSCT may have implications for rupture risk assessment of individual plaques.

Figure 1: Principle of the registration procedure. In the IVUS stack (a) 3 bifurcations (1 to 3) serve as landmarks (indicated by the dots in (b)) for the registration. In the MSCT scan the centerline is tracked through the artery and cross-sectional images are reconstructed (green dotted lines). The three bifurcations in the IVUS stack are identified in the MSCT cross-sections (c). The MSCT data is resampled between the landmarks such that the number of images between landmarks is equal to that in the IVUS stack (e).