



FIGURE 299-1 Examples of micro-CT images from vessels defined by radiopaque casts injected into the renal vasculature. These illustrate the complex, dense cortical capillary network supplying the kidney cortex that can either proliferate or succumb to rarefaction under the influence of atherosclerosis and/or occlusive disease. Changes in blood supply are followed by tubulointerstitial fibrosis and loss of kidney function. MV, microvascular. (From LO Lerman, AR Chade: *Curr Opin Nephrol Hyper* 18:160, 2009, with permission.)

large-vessel disease primarily, it has been labeled ischemic nephropathy. Moderately reduced blood flow that develops gradually is associated with reduced GFR and limited oxygen consumption with preserved tissue oxygenation. Hence, kidney function can remain stable during medical therapy, sometimes for years. With more advanced disease, reductions in cortical perfusion and frank tissue hypoxia develop. Unlike FMD, ARAS develops in patients with other risk factors for atherosclerosis and is commonly superimposed upon preexisting small-vessel disease in the kidney resulting from hypertension, aging, and diabetes. Nearly 85% of patients considered for renal revascularization have stage 3–5 chronic kidney disease (CKD) with GFR below 60 mL/min per 1.73 m². The presence of ARAS is a strong predictor of morbidity- and mortality-related cardiovascular events, independent of whether renal revascularization is undertaken.

Diagnostic approaches to renal artery stenosis depend partly on the specific issues to be addressed. Noninvasive characterization of the renal vasculature may be achieved by several techniques, summarized in [Table 299-1](#). Although activation of the renin-angiotensin system is a key step in developing renovascular hypertension, it is transient. Levels of renin activity are therefore subject to timing, the effects of

drugs, and sodium intake, and do not reliably predict the response to vascular therapy. Renal artery velocities by Doppler ultrasound above 200 cm/s generally predict hemodynamically important lesions (above 60% vessel lumen occlusion), although treatment trials require velocity above 300 cm/s to avoid false positives. The renal resistive index has predictive value regarding the viability of the kidney. It remains operator- and institution-dependent, however. Captopril-enhanced renography has a strong negative predictive value when entirely normal. Magnetic resonance angiography (MRA) is now less often used, as gadolinium contrast has been associated with nephrogenic systemic fibrosis. Contrast-enhanced computed tomography (CT) with vascular reconstruction provides excellent vascular images and functional assessment, but carries a small risk of contrast toxicity.

TREATMENT RENAL ARTERY STENOSIS

While restoring renal blood flow and perfusion seems intuitively beneficial for high-grade occlusive lesions, revascularization procedures also pose hazards and expense. Patients with FMD are commonly younger females with otherwise normal vessels and a

TABLE 299-1 SUMMARY OF IMAGING MODALITIES FOR EVALUATING THE KIDNEY VASCULATURE

Perfusion Studies to Assess Differential Renal Blood Flow			
Captopril renography with technetium ^{99m} Tc mertiatide (^{99m} Tc MAG3)	Captopril-mediated fall in filtration pressure amplifies differences in renal perfusion	Normal study excludes renovascular hypertension	Multiple limitations in patients with advanced atherosclerosis or creatinine >2.0 mg/dL (177 μmol/L)
Vascular Studies to Evaluate the Renal Arteries			
Duplex ultrasonography	Shows the renal arteries and measures flow velocity as a means of assessing the severity of stenosis	Inexpensive; widely available	Heavily dependent on operator's experience; less useful than invasive angiography for the diagnosis of fibromuscular dysplasia and abnormalities in accessory renal arteries
Magnetic resonance angiography	Shows the renal arteries and perirenal aorta	Not nephrotoxic, but concerns for gadolinium toxicity exclude use in GFR <30 mL/min/1.73 m ² ; provides excellent images	Expensive; gadolinium excluded in renal failure, unable to visualize stented vessels
Computed tomographic angiography	Shows the renal arteries and perirenal aorta	Provides excellent images; stents do not cause artifacts	Expensive, moderate volume of contrast required, potentially nephrotoxic
Intraarterial angiography	Shows location and severity of vascular lesion	Considered "gold standard" for diagnosis of large-vessel disease, usually performed simultaneous with planned intervention	Expensive, associated hazard of atheroemboli, contrast toxicity, procedure-related complications, e.g., dissection

Abbreviation: GFR, glomerular filtration rate.