

# SHARED RISK® REFUND Case Studies Vol 4.

Helpful examples for practice implementation

**The Shared Risk® Refund Paradox**  
**Patient satisfaction in IntegraMed's IVF-refund program is nearly 100 percent.**  
**You might be surprised why.**

**A survey of 1,000 IVF patients shows that 96% of those enrolled in the IntegraMed™ Shared Risk® Refund Program would recommend the plan to friends and family – including an even higher rate of those who got pregnant on their first cycle and could have spent less.**

*“In almost four years of trying for a baby, the Shared Risk Program was a definite bright point. It really helped alleviate the pressure and stress of the financial end of IVF, and we truly believe this helped us get our son.” - A patient from Midwest Fertility Specialists, Indianapolis, IN*

For Dr. Nancy Klein of Seattle Reproductive Medicine, the experience was an eye-opener: You charge twice the usual price for a fertility treatment that might fail, but if it does, the patient still gets five more attempts. But what if she's successful the first time? Wouldn't the patient feel over-charged, maybe even ripped off?

“It was always clear that patients going through multiple cycles – or who ultimately get a refund – valued the Shared Risk Program. But I was concerned about patients who got pregnant on their first try. I remember the first such patient,” says Dr. Klein. “I worried that she might regret her decision to participate in the Shared Risk Program, due to the extra cost. On the contrary, she told me how glad she was that she had done it that way, that it took away a lot of stress.”

Dr. Klein's patient was a participant in the IntegraMed Shared Risk Refund Program. Under the plan's current terms, patients get up to six treatment attempts for a single fee, with a substantive refund if the patient does not take home a baby.

Since the IntegraMed Shared Risk Refund Program was introduced in 2001, nearly 2,000 patients have enrolled in the Program. Time has proven that the Program translates into superior patient care –

*Shared Risk Program patients stay in treatment an average of 47 percent longer, with 75 percent of enrollees ending up with a take-home baby.*

To many physicians, the surprise has not been that the Program is popular, but rather the delight of Shared Risk Program patients who are *successful after a single IVF cycle*. Paradoxically, they may be the happiest with the Program of all groups.

## PATIENT SURVEY: WHAT PRICE FOR PEACE OF MIND?

Dr. Klein is not the only physician who has conjured up scenes of facing an upset couple who felt they had thrown away thousands of dollars on the Shared Risk Program by getting pregnant after the first cycle. Yet that scene has never played out in the Seattle Reproductive Medicine offices.

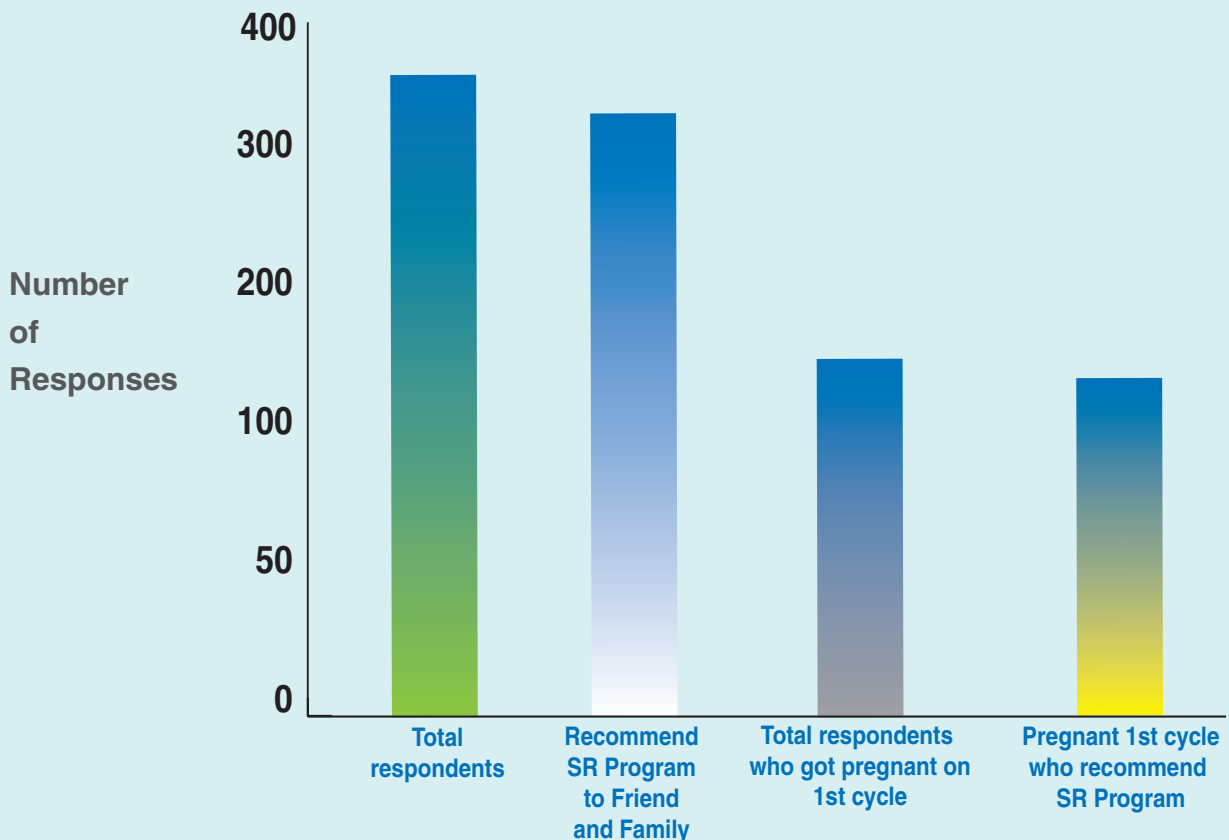
Rather, time after time, a patient successful on the first try is so happy that she plans to return for another pregnancy attempt in a year or two and enroll in the Shared Risk Program again. Patients repeatedly say that the attraction is fixing the cost of multiple IVF cycles and limiting the patient's out-of-pocket expenses if treatment fails.

"Patients want to be successful as quickly as possible," Dr. Klein says, "while insuring against the worst-case scenario. From a perspective of patient satisfaction and customer service, peace of mind is a real plus."

To measure patient satisfaction with the Shared Risk Program, IntegraMed conducted a survey of 1,000 participants in the Program. Among the findings:

- Overall, 96 percent of respondents would recommend the Program to friends and family.
- More revealingly, 98 percent of those who were successful on their first attempt would recommend the program to friends and family, despite having paid more than the price of a single IVF cycle.

### Nearly 100% of participants would recommend the Shared Risk Program to friends and family



## “I WANTED THE SECURITY BLANKET”

Take Tina Killman of Topeka, Kansas, for whom the pursuit of motherhood wasn't so much a matter of a ticking clock but wondering if the clock had ever even started. Married at age 31, Tina had made starting a family a top priority. Yet a gut feeling said the odds were very long.

“I have never had regular periods,” says the now-35-year-old YWCA executive. “It was always a big concern. Then on top of that, I was married at a later age.”

After two years of unsuccessful pregnancy attempts on her own, Tina underwent Clomid treatments, then two rounds of IUI. Nothing worked. Referred to Dr. Rodney Lyles of Reproductive Resource Center of Kansas City, she learned about the IntegraMed Shared Risk Refund Program on her initial visit. “I wanted the security blanket,” she says. “I had heard so many stories from others who had failed with IVF. But with Shared Risk, I never thought there was a possibility IVF *wouldn't* work for me.”

Tina became pregnant after the first cycle and now says she never looked back. “Of course, it would have been nice to have paid less. But I was so grateful it worked the first time that it just didn't matter.”

## THE SCIENCE OF NUMBERS

The IntegraMed Shared Risk Refund Program was not born in haste. Rather, IntegraMed developed the plan through actuarial analysis, evaluating statistics on pregnancy and birth rates, along with demographic and medical factors.

Additionally, IntegraMed positioned itself as a third-party administrator to gain distinct advantages:

- *More patients accepted* – The actuarial analysis enables IntegraMed to manage the patient's, physician's and IntegraMed's risk and broaden the spectrum of patients who can be accepted into the Program. As a result, to-date 75 percent of all applicants have been approved for the Program.
- *Economies of scale* – To support the volume of Shared Risk Program participants, IntegraMed has a full-service call center, a sophisticated database tracking system (fully secure, encrypted and backed-up daily) and the means to constantly assess and adjust the program's performance – all of which benefits patients and physicians, and are components practices cannot afford to offer on their own.
- *Conflict of interest avoidance* – The IntegraMed Shared Risk Refund Program allows physicians to focus exclusively on patient care, since they receive payment from IntegraMed for each cycle attempted, regardless of outcome. This completely allays a patient's concern that physicians may have to balance cost of care and treatment issues.

Since the launch of the Shared Risk Program, IntegraMed has paid more than \$4.2 million in patient refunds – demonstrating a commitment to the terms of the agreement with patients.

## SURVEY GIVES PATIENTS THE PODIUM

In the patient survey, IntegraMed sent questionnaires to all Shared Risk Program enrollees from July 2003 through December 2005. Approximately 375 responded. In mail-based surveys, a 10-percent return rate is considered extraordinary. A response rate almost four times that clearly indicated a strong patient interest in sharing experiences. Here's what patients revealed:

- *A total of 279 had completed the Program, with 222 (80 percent) taking home a baby and 20 percent receiving a refund. Another 85 were currently enrolled.*
- *IntegraMed Shared Risk Refund Program enrollees are not being "cherry picked." Using the most recent data available from 2004, 40.7 percent of Shared Risk cycles resulted in a live birth – a rate that is within a few percentage points of the national average for IVF cycles initiated.*
- *Of those whose first cycle resulted in pregnancy, 98 percent would recommend the plan to friends and family.*
- *The most powerful appeal is the multi-cycle treatment plan. The IntegraMed Shared Risk Refund Program represents a relatively affordable way to increase a patient's access to multiple cycles if needed. A sample of participant comments hand-written on questionnaires:*

*"Although I got pregnant on my first round, I firmly believe it was due to the lack of stress placed on the first cycle. I will never regret doing it and I feel it was the best option for our family!" (patient was successful on first attempt).*

*"A program of this sort is critical to the emotional and financial well-being of couples going through IVF... I was surprised by how many people don't know the Program is available." (patient was successful on second attempt).*

*"I was happy you allowed us to withdraw from the Program, no questions asked. Although IVF did not work for us, being part of the Shared Risk Program was a positive experience." (patient withdrew after two failed IVF cycles).*

*"Much to our surprise, IVF worked on our first try, and our twins are now seven months old. If it weren't for your Program we would not have attempted IVF and wouldn't have the joy the twins bring to our lives."*

"Over the hundreds of Shared Risk Program patients we have seen," says Dr. Michael Levy of Shady Grove Fertility Reproductive Science Center in Rockville, Maryland, "not once have I been approached by a patient who got pregnant on her first cycle who regretted enrolling in Shared Risk – not once. When a Shared Risk Program patient fails in treatment, the discussion focuses on the next treatment step, not on how to pay for it. That's a much easier discussion to have."