

Fertility Treatment Add-On Use, Costs and Information Transparency Patient Survey Findings

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Remaking Fertility in collaboration
with The Fertility Network

This research brief presents the findings of a UK patient survey on fertility treatment add-on use, costs, and information transparency. By gathering insights from current and prospective fertility patients, the findings shed light on how treatment options and associated costs are communicated, revealing key areas for improvement in patient support and decision-making.

Overview

The opacity of pricing and information about fertility treatment creates confusion and financial strain for patients, who may face unexpected costs as they navigate their fertility journey. While UK fertility clinics often advertise basic treatment costs ranging from £3,000 to £7,000 (Perrotta et al., 2024a), a 2022 survey by The Fertility Network UK shows that patients frequently spend an average of £13,750.

This brief presents the findings of a patient survey aimed at understanding how patients gather and assess information on fertility treatment, add-ons and their associated costs, shedding light on a largely unexplored aspect of fertility care in the UK.

Methodology

We conducted an online survey from January to June 2024, aimed at capturing the views of current or prospective patients on fertility treatment and related add-ons, including how they found information about these treatments and their associated costs.

To ensure honest and private participation, the survey was anonymous and participants were required to be 18 years old or above, reside in the UK and identify as (prospective) fertility patients. This project received ethics approval from the School of Business and Management at Queen Mary University of London. For more details on this research, please refer to the associated research article (Perrotta et al., 2024b).

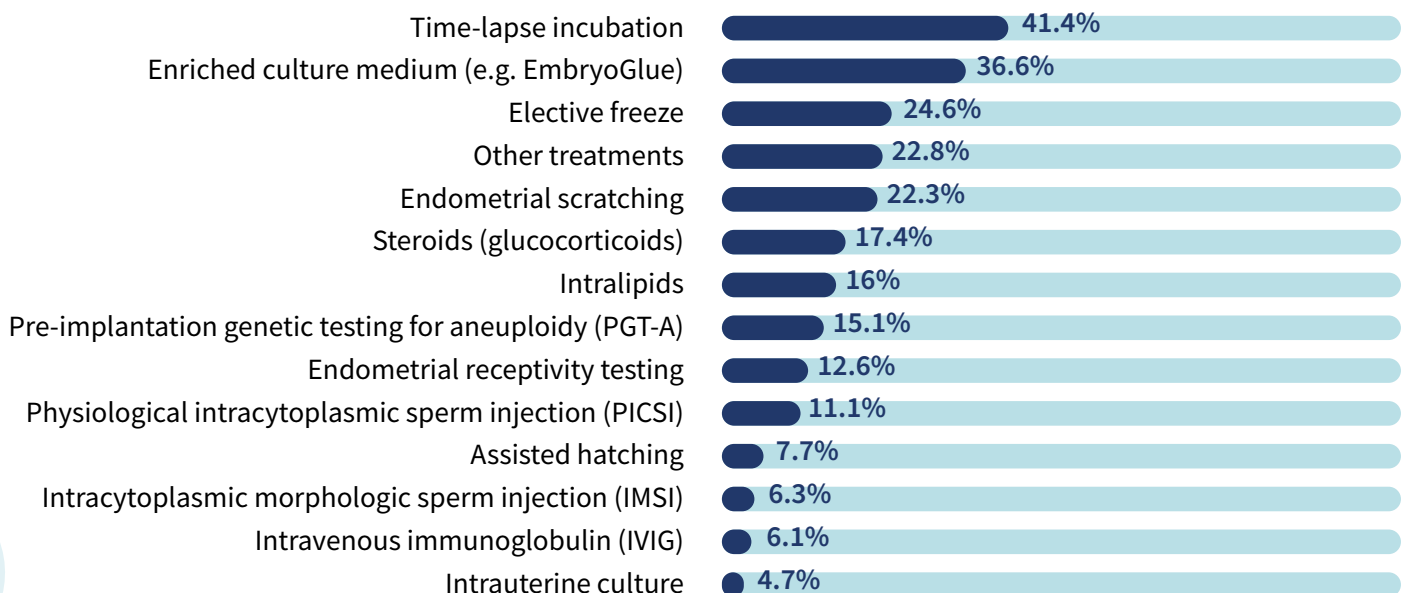
How to read the data in this brief

We collected 306 responses, but not everyone answered every question. The percentages shown in this brief represent the proportion of respondents who chose each option among those who answered each question. For a detailed breakdown of the data, please refer to the available [supplement](#).

1. Add-on use, information sources and how reliable patients find them

This section highlights key insights into the add-ons our respondents used (Figure 1), the sources they consulted for information (Figure 2) and their views on the reliability of these sources (Figure 3).

Figure 1: Add-ons used



Confirming previous research, 60.7% of patients who used add-ons were treated in private clinics, while 13.3% received treatment through the NHS and 13.7% through a mix of NHS and private care.

While patients often rely on multiple sources for information about add-ons, their trust in these sources varies significantly. See Figure 3 for a breakdown of the percentage of respondents who rated each source as either rather or extremely reliable.

Figure 2: Sources patients used for info on add-ons

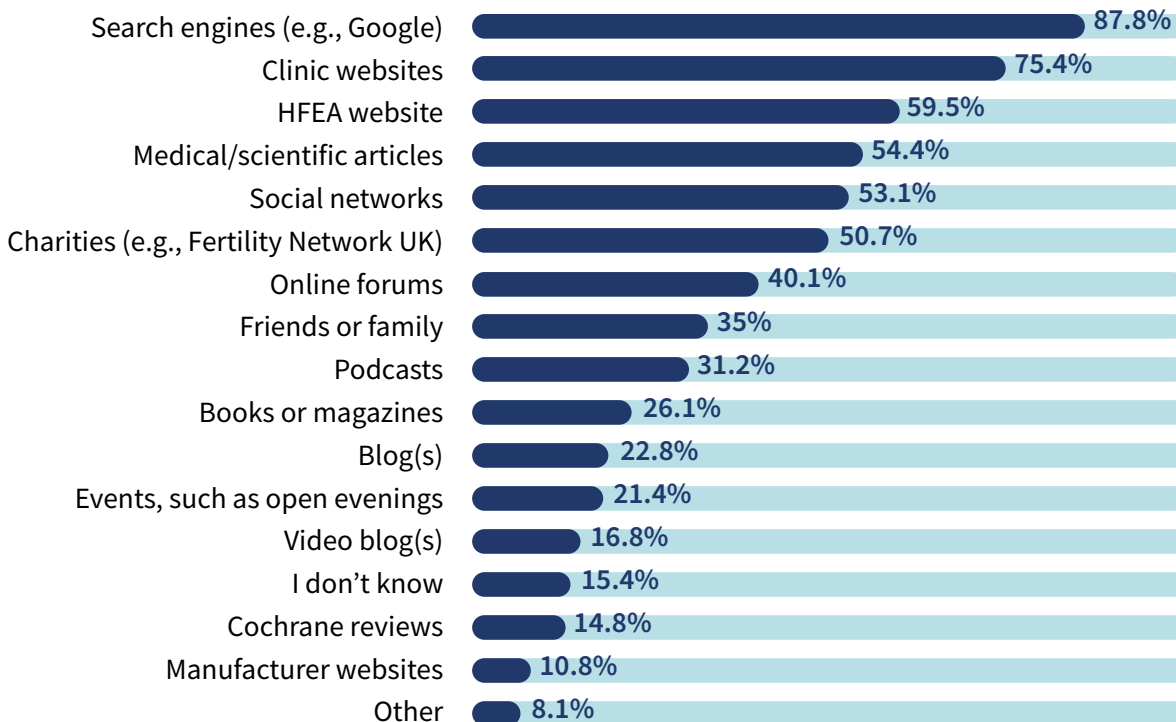
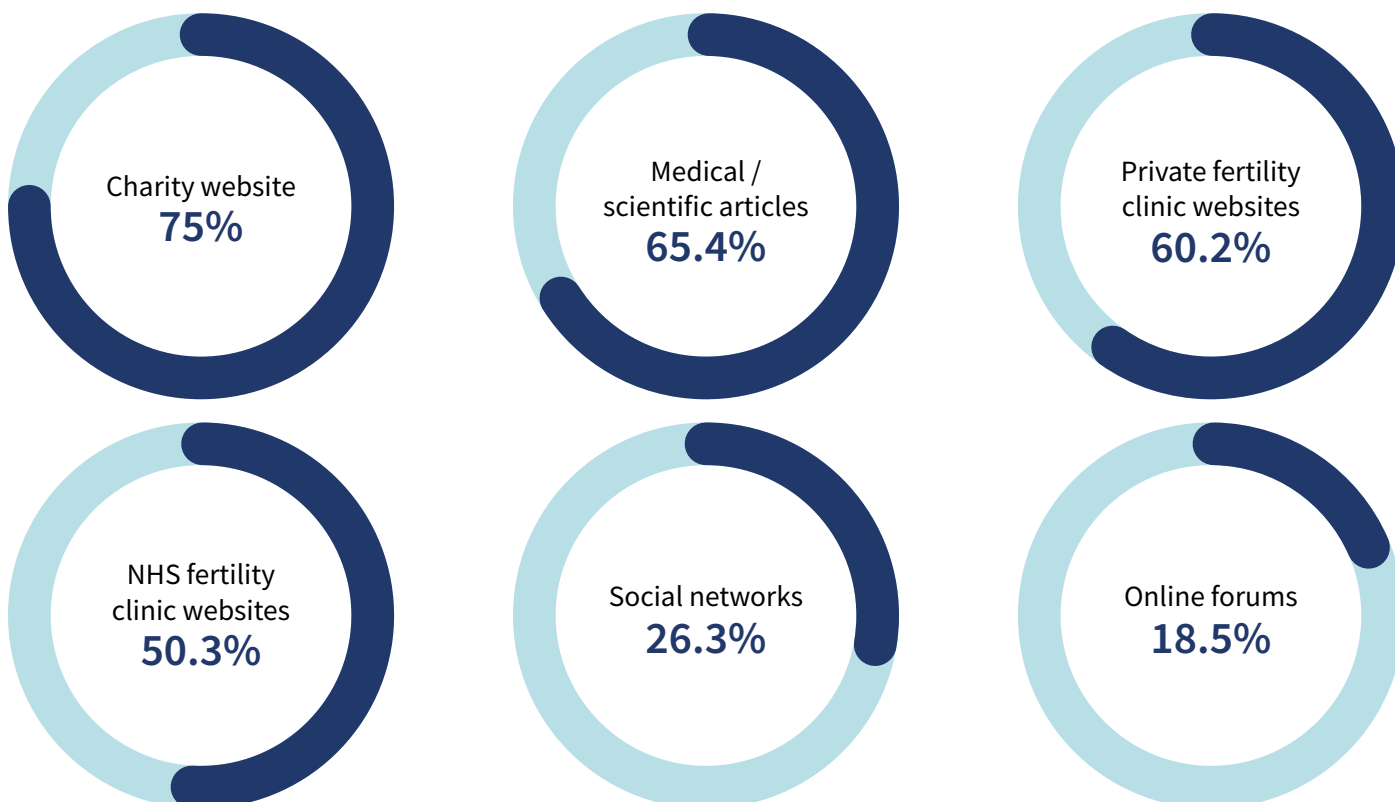


Figure 3: Percentage of respondents who rated each source as either rather or extremely reliable



2. Cost of treatment and transparency

Survey respondents reported significant variation in the cost of privately funded fertility treatments. The cost of their most recent treatment ranged from £5,000 to £13,000, with an average expenditure of £11,950.



Patients who received **self-funded** treatment at **NHS facilities** reported an average cost of **£6,990**.

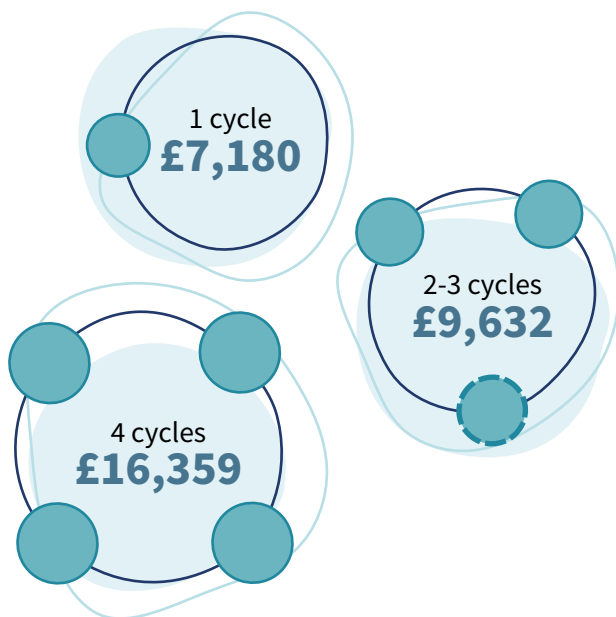


Patients treated in **private clinics** faced higher costs averaging **£12,977**.

In terms of total spending, 90.1% of respondents reported having spent between a few thousand pounds and up to £300,000 overall throughout their fertility journey. The average total expenditure was £20,536, with 37.1% having already spent £20,000 or more, and 2% reporting spending over £100,000 on fertility treatments.

Despite the substantial costs of treatments, transparency remains an issue. While 66.8% of respondents found the cost-related information provided by their clinic to be clear and reliable, 20.2% did not. Additionally, 48.2% of respondents received complete cost information before starting treatment, while 27.2% received only partial details.

The data also shows that treatment costs tend to rise as patients undergo more cycles:



“Price lists are easily supplied by clinics but they need translating to you by the clinic so you understand which costs may apply to you. We struggled to fully understand the pricing until we had been provided with our treatment plan at which point the finance team explained how it worked.”

– respondent 1

3. Cost information sources

Before starting fertility treatment, 96% of respondents sought information from private fertility clinic websites, 75.8% engaged in conversations with clinic staff, 58.3% consulted NHS fertility clinic websites and 51.7% referred to clinic leaflets.

Regarding reliability, 69.3% of patients rated private fertility clinic websites as rather or extremely reliable, compared to just 41.1% for NHS fertility clinic websites. In terms of cost information, 49.5% said they found full details on clinic websites, 30.2% found only basic treatment costs and 9.8% found no cost information at all.

4. Policy recommendations informed by patient perspectives

The survey explored a range of potential actions to ensure that fertility clinics uphold high standards of information accuracy. Figure 4 ranks the actions that patients consider most important for achieving this goal.

Figure 5 shows the percentage of respondents who rated each proposal as either rather or extremely helpful.



Figure 4: Patient perspectives on effective measures for clinic website accuracy

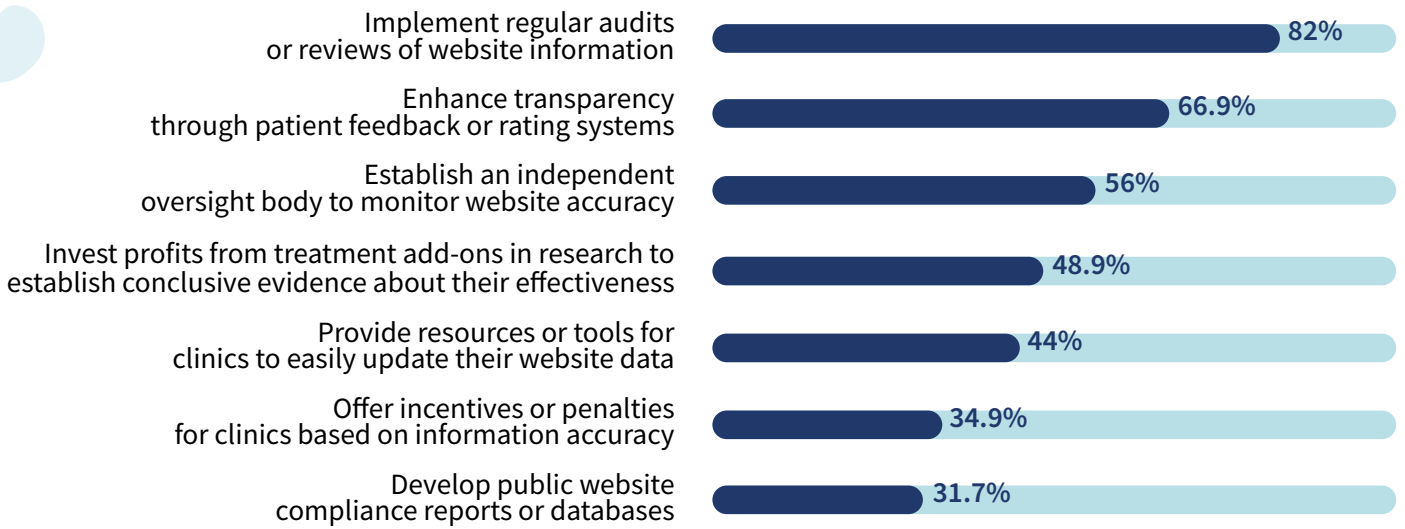
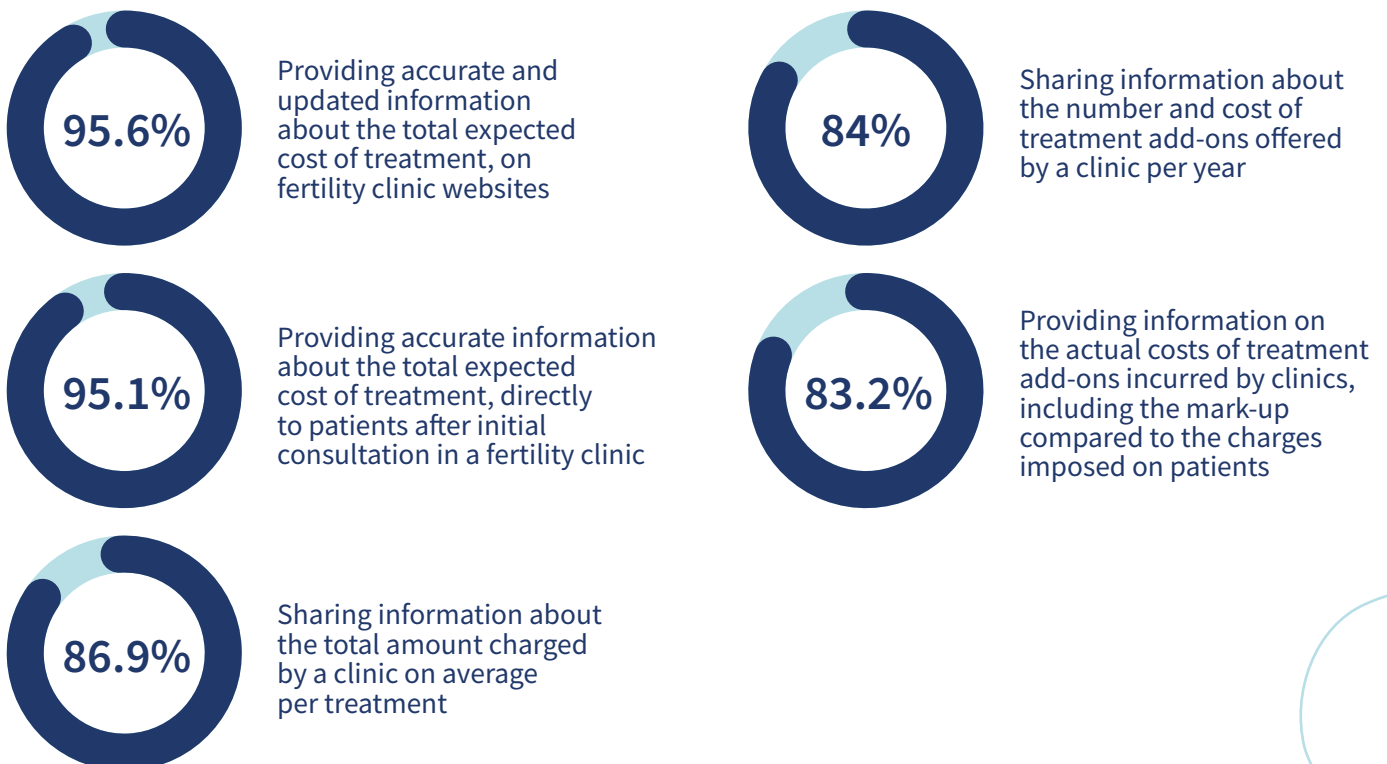


Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who rated each proposal as either rather or extremely helpful



Underpinning research

Perrotta, M., Smietana, M., Adesina, M. and Wilkinson, J. (2024). 'Exploring fertility treatment add-on transparency in the UK: Patient survey results on information and costs'. Pre-print available at www.qmul.ac.uk/remaking-fertility/survey-results.

References

Fertility Network UK (2023), 'The impact of fertility challenges and treatment'. Available at <https://fertilitynetworkuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Fertility-Network-Infertility-and-Fertility-treatment-Impact-report-2022.pdf>

Perrotta, M., Zampino, L., Geampana, A. and Bhide, P. (2024). 'Analysing adherence to guidelines for time-lapse imaging information on UK fertility clinic websites'. *Human Fertility*, 27(1), 2346595. Available at www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14647273.2024.2346595

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Her main research interests concern the relation between the emergence of new technologies and the co-production of knowledge in health organisations.

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