

# Reimbursement consultant sees gold in drug, device firms

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After nearly 10 years serving clients outside of the Memphis area, Global Integrated Reimbursement Services Inc. is looking inward at local medical device and drug companies.

GIRS, which specializes in consulting on reimbursement and pricing, is expecting its revenue to grow nearly 50 percent to just under \$5 million in 2012, after seeing it increase 20 percent in 2011.

The reason, says [Sajini Thomas](#), the company's president, is the increase in work from its existing clients, who continue to bring products to market.

Thomas says for a client with a new product, GIRS will examine the pricing and market for competing products, as well as the reimbursement rate for insurance companies to help determine market value and pricing for the device or drug.

In the Medicare system alone, there are thousands of codes for different products, says [Terry Colip](#), managing member of Denver-based Cell>Point LLC, a biotech company and GIRS client that specializes in imaging for cancer and cardiac diseases. Colip says the company needed to determine its pricing in order to raise capital to continue product trials.

GIRS charges a consulting fee for its clients, based on the amount of time and effort needed to understand their products. Thomas says it is preferable for clients to be involved with GIRS during the early stages of development for new products.

“It is a long, time-consuming process, so we have to make sure they have the resources to pay for it, then we write a proposal,” she says. “This isn't something you can turn around immediately. It could take up to 12 weeks, or it could take a few years. But we try to build a relationship and work together.”

The company was founded in 2003 by Thomas in Maryland. She had worked with large device companies setting up reimbursement departments before coming to Memphis in 2004 to work

with Wright Medical Group Inc. as director of reimbursement for some of the company's flagship products.

GIRS currently has five employees in Memphis and eight in Maryland. It plans to hire up to 10 more before the end of the year.

While GIRS currently has biologics, physical therapy device, surgical supply and pharmaceutical clients in New Jersey, Texas, California, Illinois and Massachusetts, Thomas says the company is positioning itself to reach out to local biotech companies through the [Memphis Bioworks Foundation](#). GIRS is also looking to expand its reach internationally, working with companies in Brazil and other locations in South America.

[Alan Crone](#), attorney and partner at law firm Crone & McEvoy, has worked with device companies on patents and product development. He says those companies have to be prepared to invest thousands of dollars in bringing products to market, and it is an almost impossible task for people without expertise in that area to do.

“A company like that has done the hard work and knows where the levers are to apply pressure or friendly persuasion, so that service would be quite valuable,” Crone says. “It's not one-stop shopping because you have to go to each individual insurance carrier in individual states.”

Thomas says as changes in health care laws begin to take effect, it'll be even more important for insurance companies to be educated in the technologies medical device companies have to offer for patients. She says one of her future initiatives will be to add a coding division of GIRS to assist doctors and hospitals.

“Our clients are satisfied with our work, so they keep working with us and adding more products,” Thomas says. “It's a long-term approach.”

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