

March 2, 110 Tuesday 24 AdarI 3870 10:22 IST



## NGO objects at last minute to ova donation legislation

By JUDY SIEGEL  
01/03/2010

Donor Sibling Registry appeals to media after failing with MKs.

Just weeks before the long-awaited human ova donation bill is due to be passed into representing ova and sperm donors, recipients and offspring has come out against it, can be very dangerous.

The Netherlands-based, non-profit, Web-based organization, the Donor Sibling Registry, has 25,000 members around the world and 100 in Israel.

Sarah Raz, one of its Israeli activists, said the group tried to lobby against the government Knesset member but that effort got them nowhere.

Therefore, at the last minute, it has decided to turn to the press. Just a week ago, the Knesset on Legislation granted the bill continuity status, allowing a second and third reading after it passed on its first reading in the previous Knesset.

If passed, the bill regulating human ovum donations will now allow Israeli women not to undergo fertility treatment to donate ova to those who desperately want to be mothers but have no eggs.

For years, only women undergoing fertility treatment were allowed to donate eggs and the market was very sparse, forcing women to go abroad to purchase them.

The law would give financial compensation – the amount has not yet been decided – to cover the expenses Israeli women donating spare ova undergo, but would prohibit the sale of human eggs in the country.

During the past decade, the bill was formulated by the Health Ministry, specifically its passage ran the gauntlet of a wide variety of doctors, clergymen, medical ethicists and other stakeholders.

emerging in its final form.

Only recently, Deputy Health Minister Ya'acov Litzman – a Gur hassid representing the party – okayed it after discussing it with senior haredi rabbis and realizing that continuing the purchase of eggs from non-Jewish women abroad would be worse.

Raz argued that “egg donation is a risky business for donors. Young women who don't incur infertility, premature menopause, cancer and depression as a direct result of it. Also, an average of two deaths a year of egg donors result in developed countries because of stimulation of the ovaries.”

The DSR demanded that only women who have already had two children should be allowed to donate because of the risk of infertility and early menopause; all prospective egg donors should receive counseling prior to being able to begin the donation process; and that they be supplied with written information in their mother tongue, if their Hebrew is poor, about the real and potential risks.

“Without proper education of donors there can be no real informed consent,” said Raz.

In addition, it called for a mandatory, 30-day cooling-off period between counseling and the donation process. Raz said that a proper compensation scheme should be established so that donors can be compensated as a result of medical harm they sustain in donating. In the case of minors, dependents should be compensated.

She also called for legislation that would prohibit life insurance companies from excluding donors from coverage at any time in the future or charging higher policies due to donors' higher risk.

The organization demands that an egg donor registry be established to track the health of donors on a long-term basis and that offspring be entitled to know the identity of the donor to avoid genetic problems or psychological stresses due to their loss of genetic identity.

Asked to comment, Health Ministry legal adviser Mira Huebner said that the bill includes the requirement that potential donors receive printed information about possible risks and that afterwards, they would have three days to consult with any doctor, rabbi or other person before deciding. A secret registry to ensure that the offspring do not marry siblings would be established, said Huebner, but it would not follow up on donors' health.

Huebner said that only after passage in a few weeks would she meet with Treasury officials to set down regulations to determine the size of financial compensation. It should be high enough to encourage women to sell eggs for profit, as this would be in line with the law.

those rules would be set down as well.

Huebner said that with the large number of gynecologists and other physicians involved, them voicing concern that donations would pose serious harm to participants – with ε for Bioethics approving it – she did not agree with the DSR's conclusions.



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