

# It makes financial sense to subsidize IVF tech, BGU says

• By JUDY SIEGEL

While human life should not be thought of in financial terms, a master's degree candidate in business at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev has calculated that it is monetarily worthwhile for the government to pay for in-vitro fertilization for infertile women.

Lital Wiersch, supervised by Prof. Dan Greenberg and Prof. Rami Yosef, found that the taxes and other monies that would be paid through a person's lifetime are higher than the amount spent by the public purse to create the individual. Her research was reported last week at a conference of the National Institute for Health Policy Research.

Israel offers full public

funding for IVF to any Israeli woman irrespective of her marital status or sexual orientation, until she has two children with her current male partner. The number of treatment cycles funded publicly is unlimited, but the age of the woman entitled to such treatment is limited to 45 for the purpose of oocyte (egg) retrieval.

As life expectancy is increasing and women around the world are becoming more educated and more integrated in the labor market, many women postpone pregnancy, which is more difficult to achieve naturally, said Wiersch, who decided to evaluate the lifetime public costs for an individual whose birth resulted from IVF as compared to his or her lifetime financial

contribution to the economy.

She looked into the possibility that the individual's financial contribution would be greater than total public outlays (including the funding of IVF) for the same individual throughout her or his life and that the use of IVF technology in women who have a higher chance of getting pregnant (for example, a third child for a woman who gave birth twice using IVF) "may be an effective way to increase the number of people who will participate in the employment market in Israel."

The BGU researcher concluded that the financial contribution of the individual was greater.

"The country's highest public expense was on education, then on healthcare, after that



A NURSE HOLDS a newborn at Hadassah Ein Kerem Medical Center in Jerusalem. (Ronen Zvulun/Reuters)

on welfare and last on public funding of IVF," Wiersch said. She is reportedly the first to

study the economic benefits to the Israeli economy of an individual born with the assis-

tance of IVF technology.

"The study results may help decision-makers in deciding

whether to reduce or expand the current public funding of treatments," she concluded.