

THE ISSUE of childless couples torn between the desire to continue infertility treatments and the fear of jeopardizing their chances of adopting a child, surfaced at the congress in several stormy sessions between the two sides of the controversy, the gynecologists and the social workers of the Adoption Service.

The congress was conceived by the head of the Israel Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Prof. David Serr of Sheba Hospital. He said that over the last 10 years a "barrier" has arisen between doctors who treat infertile couples and the social workers of the service, so that today there is little communication or co-operation between the two.

The Adoption Service is a small, highly-centralized agency that takes its inspiration from the woman who has headed it for the last 15 years, Aviva Lion. It has 32 case workers who operate out of the service's offices in the three large cities.

The service, which operates in an atmosphere of discretion and secrecy, was said to be reluctant to discuss its policies at the congress.

INTERVIEWED by *The Jerusalem Post*, Serr said that the feelings and knowledge about a couple acquired by a doctor in treating them over the years is

Dispute of disciplines



Prof. David Serr: gynecology

not passed on to the service when they apply to adopt. He said the service asks the doctor for only a brief medical report and recommendation and is not interested in consulting him about the couple's suitability or readiness to be adoptive parents.

Serr proposed that joint consultations, such as occur in Bri-



Aviva Lion: adoption service

tain, should be established, and that a committee be set up to expose the criteria employed by the service to public scrutiny. He also criticized the service for pressuring couples to stop infertility treatments as a condition for being accepted as adoptive parents. He did recommend, however, that a break in treat-

ments for about a year be accepted by a couple preparing itself to receive a child.

Lion rejected most of the proposals raised by Serr and others to involve gynecologists who have treated infertile couples in decisions about adoption. Advising the gynecologists to "stick to their own field of expertise," she stubbornly upheld the doctrine of the service that continuing infertility treatments indicate that a couple is not psychologically ready to adopt.

"It's not the social workers who need the advice of the gynecologists, but the opposite. They make decisions concerning artificial insemination without consulting anyone trained in the social sciences," she argued.

FOREIGN professionals at the congress were themselves divided over whether and in what way gynecologists should be involved in decisions about adoption and about the desirability of continuing infertility treatments while waiting for adoption.

The problem is particularly acute in Israel, however, because the service, which is part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, is the only one of its kind. Private adoptions are illegal, there are no private agencies, and couples turned down by the service have nowhere else to go.

THE SERVICE'S LACK of clear-cut criteria, in addition to the couples' total dependence on it, have generated patterns of deceit. Some of those pressured to stop treatments have nevertheless continued them while concealing the fact from their case worker. At the same time they fail to tell their doctor when their date to receive a child is approaching.

Serr claims that couples are blacklisted if they are discovered continuing treatments after having been warned not to. He argued that joint consultations between a couple's doctor and their social worker could prevent the deception and the unnecessary anxiety generated by it.

As a minor concession, Lion said that a gynecologist would soon be appointed to the service's advisory board, which meets monthly to discuss policy and propose changes.

These issues made headlines recently in the case of Lea and Eliahu Saporta, who received an adopted baby the week that Lea went into hospital for the surgical implantation of a "test-tube baby." The service found out and tried to get the baby back, but the parents eventually won their battle in the High Court and the service's internal appeal system. □

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