



## Health department prepares group for controversial surrogate parent debate

By Lee I-chia / Staff reporter

Surrogate motherhood is still controversial and some points of contention need to be clarified through citizens' conference meetings, the Bureau of Health Promotion said this weekend.

A two-day preparatory meeting before the formal consensus conference on the issue, scheduled to take place later this month, was held at National Taiwan University's Department of Sociology this weekend, in the hope that 20 participants from the general public could be briefed on the issue.

Associate professor of sociology at the National Taiwan University, Lin Kuo-ming (林國明), said the bureau had commissioned the department to hold a consensus conference on surrogate motherhood in 2004, during which it had been concluded that it was to conditionally endorse surrogate motherhood and that the bureau should draft a surrogacy bill and have it passed by the legislature.

However, nearly eight years have passed and the draft act has yet to win approval. To resolve the controversial issue, the bureau decided to hold a consensus conference again this year in order to provide reference to the government in its policymaking decisions.

The bureau said the main points of controversy that need discussion at the conference include the determination of applicable individuals, how to protect the rights of the consignors, the surrogate mother and the infant during pregnancy, as well as addressing the issue of when parenthood begins. They are also keen to address whether the surrogate mother should receive compensation for her pregnancy.

The controversial point of determining applicable individuals include whether donated sperm and eggs can be used in surrogacy for couples who have difficulty conceiving, the bureau said, adding that the original draft act stated that a child born through surrogacy should be considered the child of the consignors starting from the implant of the fertilized egg, while some experts consider adoption after birth to be a better solution.

The bureau said that although artificial reproductive technology is regulated by the law and managed under strict control in Taiwan, the controversial issue of surrogacy was provisionally excluded from the Artificial Reproduction Act (人工生殖法), and therefore surrogacy is still illegal.

With Web-based surrogacy advertisements becoming common, bureau Deputy Director Kung Hsien-lan (孔憲蘭) said the cases touch on a broad range of regulations which need to be considered.