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## **Summaries of the Main Articles**



## **Sixty Years of National Insurance in Israel**

*Abraham Doron<sup>1</sup>*

Sixty years have passed since the National Insurance Institute(NII) began operating in Israel. The radical changes that have taken place in Israeli society over this period have left their imprint on the Institute. These changes have inevitably affected the special status of the NII, its functions, the policies it has pursued, the organisational and managerial manner of its functioning and other aspects of its activities. All these have had an immense impact on the wellbeing of the population as a whole and especially on the welfare of the weaker population groups.

This paper attempts to examine some major features of these changes including the position of the NII within the governmental structure, the changing nature of public control over it, the shift in public attitudes towards its functioning, protection of the value-levels of benefits in times of changing economic circumstances, the extent of theNII's universal approach and its relationship with the insured population. All these issues point to the challenges the NII has had to deal with over the years.

Although the NII was established as part of the government structure, it was initially granted a large degree of autonomy in running its affairs. The main actors involved at the time in planning the national insurance schemes, envisaged the NII as a joint program of the insured population and the government. The special legal status of the NII reflected this understanding. Gradually however, the government limited the NII's freedom of action and finally put its budget entirely under the control of the Treasury. Similarly, the NII was moved from under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of Welfare, thus changing the distinct status of the NII as running the national insurance programs on a universal basis to becoming mainly responsible for the welfare of poor population groups.

One of the more important tasks of the NII was to protect the insured population from erosion of its benefits in times of rapidly changing economic circumstances. This was of particular importance to the elderly in receipt of their NII old age pensions. Over the years the policies of the NII fluctuated in this matter, leaving elderly pensioners with declining incomes in many instances. Moreover, the policy

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introduced in recent years in effect severed the link of NII benefits to the average national wage, thus disassociating beneficiaries from participating in increasing future national prosperity.

The critical problem of the NII remained however, in its relationship with the wider public. Public attitudes toward the NII that were in the past mostly positive, have become in recent years increasingly divergent. The unsatisfactory encounters experienced by parts of the public with NII bureaucracy, turned public opinion sharply against it. In order to ensure continuing public support for the national insurance program it seems that there is an urgent need for the NII to improve its relationship with the population.

## **Public Value Failure and the 2011 Social Protests in Israel**

*Lihi Lahat<sup>1</sup> and Neta Sher-Hadar<sup>2</sup>*

We maintain that Bozeman's concept of public value failure can add another perspective to the understanding of the widespread social protests in Israel in 2011. Analyzing the two main reports that were issued in the wake of these protests, those of the Trajtenberg Committee and the Yonah-Spivak Committee, draws attention to the contribution that the concept of public value failure can make to the design of policy processes. Such an analysis also provides insights into how the market and the state's activities are defined, especially in the age of new governance, and into how policies are decided. These insights may lead to possible models for public administration and contribute to research on policy making in Israel and internationally.

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## **Guardianship – A Critical Review**

*Michal Barel,<sup>1</sup> Israel (Issi) Doron,<sup>2</sup> and Roni Strier<sup>3</sup>*

Guardianship is a legal and therapeutic mechanism used to appoint substitute decision makers to assist vulnerable individuals who, due to some type of diminished capacity, are unable to take care of their personal and/or financial needs. This article reviews the theoretical and empirical literature of guardianship for the elderly in Israel and abroad, the critiques that exist on this subject matter and the reforms which have been implemented in numerous countries around the world. This review is presented from a critical standpoint and follows the decision-making process from a balance of power perspective on the institution of guardianship. In this way, the review relates to the tension between the right to protection versus the right to autonomy, and examines guardianship in Israel in comparison to other countries in the western world concerning the continuum of autonomy and paternalism. The review shows that, although trends towards change exist, Israel has not yet passed the reforms that have been made in other countries and continues to lean toward paternalism.

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## The influence of Mothers' Ethno-Cultural Background and Health Beliefs on Vaccinating their Infants<sup>1</sup>

Orly Sarid,<sup>2</sup> Yana Shraga,<sup>2</sup> Julie Cwikel,<sup>2</sup> Avihu Pereg,<sup>2</sup>  
and Haim Reuveni<sup>3</sup>

Preventive health services for infants and toddlers are provided for Israel's entire population and include vaccinations for infants. One of the challenges facing the preventive medical services therefore, is to tailor service- provision to meet the needs of diverse ethno-cultural groups. However, the influence of ethno-cultural factors on the vaccination behaviors of Israeli mothers has not been studied extensively. The goals of this study were to examine the beliefs and behaviors concerning infant vaccinations among four groups of mothers from different cultural backgrounds: Israeli-born (Jewish and Bedouin) and immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia. In addition, we also studied the effect of health beliefs on vaccination behavior and estimated the connection between earlier vaccinations and later vaccination behavior.

**Methods:** A comparative cross-sectional study conducted in selected community neighborhoods in the Negev. A quota sample included 100 mothers who had infants aged 18 to 24 months from each of the four ethno-cultural groups. (N = 400). Data were collected through questionnaires and examination of the vaccination history cards from Well Baby Clinics (*Tipat Halav*).

**Results:** Mothers from different cultural backgrounds hold different beliefs regarding their babies' vaccinations. Bedouin mothers are more conscientious compared to those from other groups about vaccinating according to the Ministry of Health guidelines. Our findings indicate that maternal behavior is shaped in the first months of their babies' lives and earlier vaccination behavior is the main

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1 This study was funded by a research grant from the Israel National Institute for Health Policy Research.

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predictor for continuing vaccination at age six months, one year and after one year of age.

**Conclusions and suggestions for policy makers:** In order to expand the response to vaccinating, pregnant mothers or those who have just given birth should be offered culturally-appropriate intervention programmes.

## **"Like Blind Kittens" – Immigrant Families in Israel and the Services for their Children who have Special Needs**

*Yoav Loeff,<sup>1</sup> Dori Rivkin,<sup>1</sup> and Ellen Milshtein<sup>1</sup>*

The Social Service Department at the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption commissioned this study from the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute due to its concern that children with special needs of immigrant parents might not be getting the full range of services enjoyed by the children of non-immigrant Israelis. This concern is consistent with research from abroad about immigrant populations and their difficulties in utilizing services.

The study aimed to examine whether significant barriers are indeed preventing immigrant families from utilizing services for children with special needs effectively, and to describe such barriers. Another goal was to indicate possible responses and solutions that could help overcome these barriers.

The study was limited to families with preschool children (birth to 6 years), as this is a critical stage for identifying special needs and starting treatment. For the purposes of this study, we define children of immigrants as children who immigrated themselves, as well as children born in Israel to parents who immigrated since 1990 (or prior to that year in the case of immigrants from Ethiopia, in keeping with Ministry of Immigrant Absorption policy).

To allow for a full examination of the topic, the study was qualitative and consisted of in-depth interviews with dozens of professionals as well as with immigrant parents of children with special needs. It focused on the predominant immigrant populations – those from the former Soviet Union (FSU) and from Ethiopia.

The study identified multiple barriers that limit immigrant families' ability to utilize services for their children with special needs. Some barriers concerned the characteristics of immigrant families: Difficulties in integrating into Israeli society,

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1 Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.

limited command of Hebrew, and culturally different ideas about child development, about available services and about ways to cope with Israeli bureaucracy. Other noteworthy characteristics of this population include a high rate of single-parent families, economic hardship and living in peripheral areas of Israel. Another group of barriers is connected to a lack of diagnostic procedures that are adapted to the languages and cultures of the immigrant children and to a poor knowledge of cultural differences and their significance among Israeli professional staff members in various services. Some of these barriers affect the whole immigrant population and some are specific to immigrants from the FSU or from Ethiopia.

Many recommendations were collected from parents and professionals interviewed in the study. These recommendations include expanding existing services that have already been successfully tried, sometimes on a limited, local base, and providing others that do not yet exist, but may help overcome the described barriers.

The findings may serve government ministries and other organizations specializing in treating children with special needs and their families as a basis for developing policy and services for such children in immigrant families.