

Japanese city offering public funds to freeze women's eggs (Update)

June 16 2016, by Satoshi Sugiyama



Urayasu Mayor Hideki Matsuzaki, right, speaks next to Dr. Iwaho Kikuchi of Juntendo University Urayasu Hospital during a press conference in Urayasu near Tokyo, Thursday, June 16, 2016. The Tokyo suburb will help women cover the cost of freezing their eggs in a pilot program aimed at tackling the nation's declining birth rate. The Japanese city of Urayasu, about 14 kilometers (9 miles) east of Tokyo, is allocating 90 million yen (\$850,000) over three years to fund the research project conducted by the hospital. Matsuzaki said low birthrate is "a national problem." (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)

A Tokyo suburb will help women cover the cost of freezing their eggs in a pilot program aimed at countering Japan's declining birth rate.

The city of Urayasu, about 14 kilometers (9 miles) east of Tokyo, is allocating 90 million yen (\$850,000) over three years to fund the research project conducted by Juntendo University Urayasu Hospital.

The hospital hopes that preserving eggs will encourage women to give birth when they are ready instead of giving up having children.

Dr. Iwaho Kikuchi of the hospital said Thursday that using public funds to support this kind of study may be a first in the world.

The average cost of such procedure is around 500,000 to 600,000 yen (\$4,700 to \$5,700), but a woman will only pay 20 percent of the cost with the subsidy. Women between the age of 25 and 34 who live in Urayasu, also home to Tokyo Disneyland, are eligible to participate.

Kikuchi said 12 women are in the process of starting the freezing process, and about two-thirds of them or their husbands have some sort of health issue.

The success rate of pregnancy from frozen eggs is slim. If a woman freezes eggs at the age of 25, the chance of successfully giving birth is 30 percent. At the age of 34, it drops to 20 percent.



Dr. Iwaho Kikuchi of Juntendo University Urayasu Hospital speaks during a press conference regarding the city's pilot project that will help women freeze their eggs in Urayasu near Tokyo, Thursday, June 16, 2016. The city in Tokyo suburb will become the first city in Japan to offer public funding to the pilot program to tackle the nation's declining birth rate. (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)

Japan has been struggling to boost its declining birth rate, which would depress the working population and increase the financial burden on them as the older generation retires.

Urayasu mayor Hideaki Matsuzaki called the low birthrate a national problem.

"In general, pregnancy and childbirth is an individual issue. But when the situation has become this far, I consider it a social problem," Matsuzaki said. "I view using public expenditure as the right thing to do."



Urayasu Mayor Hideki Matsuzaki, right, speaks next to Dr. Iwaho Kikuchi of Juntendo University Urayasu Hospital during a press conference in Urayasu near Tokyo, Thursday, June 16, 2016. The Tokyo suburb will help women cover the cost of freezing their eggs in a pilot program aimed at tackling the nation's declining birth rate. The Japanese city of Urayasu, about 14 kilometers (9 miles) east of Tokyo, is allocating 90 million yen (\$850,000) over three years to fund the research project conducted by the hospital. Matsuzaki said low birthrate is "a national problem." (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)



Dr. Iwaho Kikuchi of Juntendo University Urayasu Hospital speaks during a press conference in Urayasu near Tokyo, Thursday, June 16, 2016. The Tokyo suburb will help women cover the cost of freezing their eggs in a pilot program aimed at tackling the nation's declining birth rate. (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)

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