

74-Year-Old Army Vet Thanks Medicare for Covering Sex-Change Surgery

Medicare may soon start covering sex-reassignment surgery, reports *The New York Times*.

The Department of Health and Human Services appeal board made the ruling Friday, reversing a Medicare policy that has been in place since 1981.

The board ruled that the current exclusion was “no longer reasonable” because the procedure is safe and effective and cannot be considered experimental anymore.

In addition to Medicare considering adding the surgery, an increasing number of university health plans and large companies—like Fortune 500 companies Shell Oil and Campbell Soup—have begun to cover gender reassignment procedures.

Medicare’s decision—which applies to health plans for older Americans and people with disabilities—will also cover other treatments, like hormones. The decision does not apply to Medicaid, which is regulated by the states and provides health coverage to low-income individuals and families.

Denee Mallon, a 74-year-old Army veteran who was born male but now identifies as female, challenged Medicare’s coverage exclusion policy after his request for the surgery was denied.

“This is a big, big decision; I’ve wanted the operation since I was probably 11 years old and knew about it,” Mallon said, according to the *Times*.

He now plans to undergo gender reassignment surgery.

“I expect a certain amount of criticism because of my

age—generally you're considered over the hill at 70, why have an operation—but it's a medical decision, and I want congruence between what I am as a human and my body," Mallon explained.

According to the Transgender Law Center in Oakland, California, the cost of the procedure typically ranges from \$7,000 to \$50,000.