Sally Mordike\textsuperscript{a} BA(Hons), BSW, Grad CertPast Couns and Rev Prof Elizabeth MacKinlay\textsuperscript{a,b,c,d,6} AM, FACN, PhD
\textsuperscript{a}Charles Sturt University  \textsuperscript{b}Centre for Public and Contextual Theology  \textsuperscript{c}Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture  \textsuperscript{d}Colloquium for Ageing Perspectives and Spirituality

**Frailty**: described as ‘a parasitic syndrome that arises due to multiple deficits to body systems,’ has attracted increasing interest in the last decade. The time of frailty and dependency is fearing by many.\textsuperscript{1} When attention is focused solely on deficits in frailty, the reality of life for older people may be misconstrued, and the importance of meaning in their lives missed.

**Spirituality**: is at the very core of our being, an essential dimension which brings meaning to life. It is the deepest dimension of all life; the ultimate ground of all our questions, hopes, fears, and loves, strengths, losses, self-worth, meaning, and relationships.\textsuperscript{2} A new paradigm is needed, beyond the biomedical model.\textsuperscript{3} There is potential for frail people to find meaning in life in the very end.

**Methodology**

Initial qualitative study (n=10) and extended mixed methods project (n=25) using in-depth interviews and psychometric tests. Participants were aged between 71 and 102 years, from different cultures and religious faiths, and none; residing in residential aged care; and were cognitively competent and understood English.

Psychometric tests included socio-demographics, Daily Spiritual Experience Scale,\textsuperscript{4} Self-Transcendence Scale,\textsuperscript{6} Geriatric Depression Scale,\textsuperscript{7} Self-Rated Physical and Mental Health,\textsuperscript{8} and Katz Index of ADL.\textsuperscript{9}

In-depth interview questions explored matters around meaning of life, experiences of vulnerability and frailty, relationship, life struggle, self-transcendence, hope, and joy.

Examples include:
- *Where do you find greatest meaning in life now?*
- *What is the hardest thing for you now?*
- *What does the word spirituality mean for you?*
- *What gives you joy now?*
- *If you were to think about God, what do you say you think God is like?*
- *What gives you inner strength to face things in your life now?*
- *What do you hope for now?*
- *What gives you hope for now?*

**Results**

From participants’ narratives:
- Relationships: vital for human flourishing, yet with complexities
- Meaning: found in connections with family, with friends, with God; Ultimate ‘Other’
- Inner strength: ability to deal with anything, indicator of spiritual well-being
- Jay: a deep sense of well-being, found in relationships, nature, faith, music
- Fear no fear of death: nothing to fear but falls
- Isolation/tolness: difficulty accepting circumstances
- Loss: of relationships through death; of independence, contact with friends, abilities and physical functions; living with chronic pain: acceptance an important factor
- Opportunity: the crucial importance of access to spiritual and/or religious expression
- Humour: an indicator of self-transcendence
- Hope for peace, love, ability to practice faith, to win Lottos

**Discussion**

‘The spiritual dimension is increasingly being recognized as the most important dimension in healthcare today.’\textsuperscript{10} These results align with MacKinlay’s\textsuperscript{2} model of spiritual processes and tasks of ageing.

**Outcomes**

Greater understanding of what the final life journey is like from the ‘insiders’ point of view; informing care modalities to assist and empower older people to find meaning when frail; informing models of spiritual growth and care in line with the new Quality Aged Care Standards.\textsuperscript{11}