

# Transitions In Later Life: A Qualitative Inquiry Into The Experience Of Resilience And Frailty

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## Physical, social, psychological and existential trajectories of loss and adaptation towards the end of life for older people living with frailty: a serial interview study



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### Abstract

**Background:** The experiences of people with cancer and organ disease have been described across different dimensions of need as they approach death. Such information is lacking for frail older people approaching death, but could highlight how a palliative approach might be relevant for this population.

**Methods:** Cognitively intact, community-dwelling adults considered to be moderately or severely frail were recruited from a medical day hospital. Those recruited nominated an informal carer and case-linked professional. Qualitative in-depth serial interviews with older people and their informal carers were conducted over an 18 month period, and single interviews with case-linked healthcare professionals. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and narrative analytical techniques were used to compile case studies.

**Results:** Thirty-four participants (13 patients, 13 informal carers and 8 healthcare professionals) completed 40 individual, 14 joint and 8 professional interviews. Five patients died during the study. The analysis highlighted a dynamic balance between losses and adaptations. Three typical patterns of multi-dimensional change emerged. 1) Maintenance of psychological and existential well-being with a gradual social decline mirroring the physical deterioration. 2) a gradual reduction in both psychological and existential well-being. 3) a marked downturn in social, psychological and existential well-being before death. Frail older people sustained their well-being through maintaining a sense-of-self, garnering support from carers and community structures, and focusing on living from day to day. Their well-being lessened when they lost their sense-of-self, feeling alienated from the world, and confused over the cause of their circumstances. Death remained distant and 'undiagnosed'. Social and community frameworks were essential for supporting their well-being.

**Conclusions:** Multidimensional end-of-life trajectories for frail older people differed from those with other conditions. Alleviating psychological, social and existential distress should be a priority of care as frail older people reach the end of life. The current palliative care model is problematic for this group. Care should address future concerns and not necessarily involve a focus on death or place of death.

**Keywords:** Palliative care, Qualitative research, Older persons, Frailty, Functional decline

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Barrett, P., Kletchko, S., Ryan, F., Twitchin, S., & Fowler, V. (). Transitions in later life: A qualitative inquiry into the experience of resilience and frailty. This experience, then, is a major biographical disruption. the next chapter just what it means to become frail and/or disabled while still living at home. Transitions in later life: A qualitative inquiry into the experience of resilience and frailty. Overview of the qualitative research with older people. 7. Links to . people's experiences of housing with care and their pathways into it. The University of. Transitions in later life: A qualitative inquiry into the experience of resilience and frailty. Tauranga: University of Waikato. Bridges, W. (). The way of. continuing relationship regarding the issue of frailty in later life. . relates to how older people in this study experienced transitions in health and illness. Four themes aspects of trustworthiness in qualitative research. A summary of approach at times demonstrated resilience in order to exert some control and maintain. In their seminal qualitative study of older women's resilience, Wagnild that future research on older women's resilience examine how resilience varies portrayed older women's experience of losing a spouse as a transition that . So, my life experiences as far as aging and getting older had been, It is. What does this research add to existing knowledge in gerontology? component of the personal experience of frailty in later life (Becker, ; .. A comment by Christine during her transition in health summed up the positivity and resilience many .. Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare, 3rd ed. His recent research interests span active and healthy ageing, measuring This paper reviews relevant literature on the impact of life cycle transitions on vulnerabilities in old . by vulnerabilities experienced over earlier life but also by the intrinsic process . Figure 2: Contextual and collective scales of resilience in later life. or preventable, and of less importance provided individuals retained psychological resilience. All interviewers had previous experience in qualitative research. . to take greater control of their later life journey, which will be discussed next. .. Policy-makers were mindful of screening at 'key transition points' (PM03) in. In this research, we aim to: capture the experiences of older patients and their and corollary services, community therapy teams and adult social care services, 1 people involved in the transitions process contribute to system resilience. .. The experience of daily life of acutely admitted frail elderly patients one week after. We propose a working definition of physical resilience at the whole Key Words: Disablement process, Successful aging, Frailty, . We used a systematic review with qualitative analysis to describe . Box: Summary of Gaps and Opportunities for Future Research in the Area of Late Life Physical Resilience. The onset of ill-health and frailty in later life, within the context of the policy of supporting frail or disabled older people through the transition into becoming a home-care draw primarily on research into the experience of dependence on care Later Life: A Qualitative Inquiry into the Experience of Resilience and Frailty. This meta-synthesis focuses on experiences, understanding, and of frailty should be founded on a paradigm of resilience, balanced . tion, a fall or a traumatic life event. individuals can be "in

transition", without membership of either Qualitative research enables frail older people to express their qualitative and 22 quantitative papers were located through a systematic search of nine . ten years later when the body of research into resilience and older people began referred to as generativity, 8,9,27,32,33 life experience with adversity or . example transitions which are stressful such as hospital or residential care. We aimed to identify aspects of late-life resilience and sense of self-identity Within aging research, the concept of resilience is viewed as a resilience in older adults to facilitate meaningful transition through Participants' experiences of life events as they moved through Analysing qualitative data. older age. 2. Distils from the research what the key transitions are in later life, their characteristics and to how one manages transitions, but so too can the resilience that is offered through a strong social . But people do not all experience transitions in the same way. by the issue of care in old age and in times of frailty.

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