

Results The majority of participants described a desire to reunify before end of life. Indeed, later life events such as illness, the death of a friend, or one's own impending death often triggered an intense need to attend to wills, determine legacy items, write letters and maybe even reunify with an estranged child. While participants expected their estranged child to come to their bedside if they—or their spouse—became critically ill, their actual experiences of this eventuality were mostly of non-reunification and a significant grief response ensued.

Discussion The ambiguous nature of intergenerational estrangement and its social disenfranchisement often intensifies the grief and loss associated with it. Later life is a period when 'making sense' or 'meaning' of estrangement can be particularly pertinent.

Conclusion This study suggests a significant role for allied health and human service workers in the preparation of estranged older people for the end of life regardless of reunification possibilities.

39

THE REUNIFICATION EXPECTATIONS OF ESTRANGED ELDERS TOWARDS THE END OF LIFE

K Agllias¹ ¹University of Newcastle, NSW, Australia

10.1136/bmjspcare-2013-000491.39

Background Intergenerational estrangement is not uncommon in later life families. While the response to estrangement can range from relief to devastation, many older people feel a need to 'make things right' before their death.

Aim To examine the experience of parents estranged from at least one adult child in later life, with a focus on preparations for end of life and reunification expectations.

Methods This paper reports primarily on a qualitative study conducted between 2009 and 2010—which utilised two in-depth interviews and diaries—with 25 older people estranged from at least one adult child.