Purpose: This plenary lecture provides an overview of existential issues in end-of-life care, with an emphasis on the important role of “meaning”. A novel counseling intervention for patients with advanced cancer, entitled “Meaning-Centered Psychotherapy (MCP)” will be described. The basic concepts of Meaning-Centered Psychotherapy will be described. Two forms of MCP have been developed: Meaning Centered Group Psychotherapy and Meaning Centered Psychotherapy. A detailed description of the interventions and the content of each session will be provided. Both interventions are manualized and several randomized controlled trials have been conducted. The results of these studies will be presented which demonstrate that MCP enhances spiritual well-being and meaning, improves quality of life, decreases depression, anxiety, hopelessness and desire for hastened death. In addition, adaptations of Meaning-Centered Group Psychotherapy for advanced cancer patients, an “NCI designated Research Tested Intervention” for end of life despair. He has had continuous NIH RO1 funding of investigator initiated research since 1989. Dr. Breitbart was PI of the “Network Project, NCI R25 grant (1992-98) which trained clinicians in cancer pain management and psycho-oncology. He is currently PI of R25 CA190169 which is training a national cohort of cancer care clinicians in Meaning Centered Psychotherapy. He has over 500 peer review publications, chapters and review papers, and 13 textbooks including: Psycho-oncology - 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Editions; Psychosocial Palliative Care; Handbook of Palliative Medicine – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Editions; and the treatment manuals for Meaning-Centered Group Psychotherapy in Advanced Cancer Patients; and Individual Meaning-Centered Psychotherapy for Advanced Cancer Patients; and Meaning-Centered Psychotherapy in the Cancer Setting from Oxford University Press. Dr. Breitbart is Editor-in-Chief, of Cambridge University Press’ international palliative care journal entitled, “Palliative & Supportive Care”.

# Learning Objectives:
1. Understand the importance of meaning, as a component of spiritual well-being, and its relationship to depression, hopelessness and desire for death.
2. Describe a structured, didactic and experiential 8 session intervention for advanced cancer patients aimed at sustaining or enhancing a sense of meaning in the face of terminal illness.

# References: