

Despite memory concerns, hiker reaches new heights on the Arizona Trail

Video	Audio
(reporter)	Meet Burke a 71-year-old from Arizona diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment often a precursor to Alzheimer's disease. Like many people in his situation uncertainty grows as his memory becomes a concern.
Burke Patient Mayo Clinic	"And I cannot tell you when it began to happen because you know it just happened slowly."
(reporter)	But as a lifelong lover of the outdoors, Burke wasn't going to let his condition slow him down. He decided he would literally take a different path.
(Burke)	"It's something I've always wanted to do. I love living in Arizona, it's where I became a Christian, it's where I fell in love, got married, all my kids have been born here. So, I said sure I'll do the Arizona trail."
(reporter)	The Arizona trail is a popular and rigorous trail that links Mexico with Utah, covering 800 miles of Arizona deserts, mountains, canyons and forests. It's a challenge for even seasoned hikers.
Richard Caselli, M.D. Neurology Mayo Clinic	"Why don't we all go hike the Arizona trail? He makes it sound so easy, right, 800 miles."
(reporter)	Dr. Richard Caselli is a neurologist with Mayo Clinic who specializes in the study and treatment of neurologic conditions that lead to memory loss including Alzheimer's. Dr. Caselli said, that while every patient is different, their journey with these conditions is often influenced by their outlook.

(Dr. Caselli)	<p>"When you're confronting something that could be an early stage of Alzheimer's, of course there's worry. What's going to happen to me? Until that glorious day when we have a cure or something, we can meaningfully do to prevent it from getting worse, the best we can do is to try to encourage people that their life is not yet over."</p>
(Burke)	<p>"This is my new life, am I going to be good with it or not? I can't change it, so I said, you know what I'm going to be good with it. I'm going to have a positive attitude and if I forget things every once in a while, ah so what. You try to do better the next time and you just keep going."</p>
(Dr. Caselli)	<p>"He to me really is the epitome of the encouragement that I try to give my patients of not giving up on life, continuing to live. From a number of health studies in general not limited to dementia or Alzheimer's, people with positive attitudes tend to do better."</p>
(Burke)	<p>"You're coming at the end of the day and you got another pass that you need to go over, you got to go up. Got to go 2,000 feet or more, there's a sense oh do you have it, are you going to do it and you say yeah, I'm going to do it. You just start walking."</p>
(reporter)	<p>For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm DeeDee Stiepan.</p>