Taste Testing Events at Community Dialysis Units
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Introduction
Food is not only important for nutrition and health, it is essential for a sense of comfort and quality of life. Hemodialysis patients have many dietary restrictions that they need to follow in order to maintain metabolic stability and adequate nutrition. These dietary restrictions can make choosing and preparing food a difficult task and negatively impact their enjoyment of food.

In an effort to provide practical ideas for cooking and grocery shopping, we have conducted several recipe and product taste testing events.

Taste Testing Events
A utility cart is prepared with a visual display of food to be tasted. Past themes included:
• Recipes from The Spice It Up® cookbook
• Low K+ fruits and vegetables such as jicama, mandarins, pineapple & apples
• Appropriate portions
• Low sodium seasoning
• Kidney friendly products

Our taste testing events are often a highlight of Nutrition Month, World Kidney Days, Emergency Preparedness and seasonal holidays.

We would either go around the dialysis unit while the patients are being dialyzed, or see the patients in the waiting area. Relevant written material such as recipes or fact sheets are also given out as appropriate.

What we learned
1. It doesn't need to be complicated. It can be as simple as showing what the product looks like, where to purchase it and tasting it. Patients like learning easy recipes.
2. Consider portion size and serving method. The patients may be tasting them while being dialyzed. Bite sized finger food or foods easily eaten with a spoon work well.
3. Learning from our patients. Learning how different cultures prepare their foods.
4. Presentation is important. Demonstrate to patients that a renal diet can be delicious and beautiful!

Conclusion
Taste testing events provide an opportunity for patients and family to try various products and recipes, helping to connect renal diet guidelines to real food. It provides excellent ways to start the conversation and reinforce previous diet instructions. These events also serve to educate other healthcare members about the renal diet.

We are delighted to announce that this initiative has received a grant from the 2017/2018 PHC Enhanced Patient Care Funds, which will allow us to conduct events on a regular basis.

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