The Kidney Diet app by Pain Free Living, Inc. claims to help people with Chronic Kidney Disease “watch the 3 P’s”. Although a fair first attempt at helping CKD patients monitor their potassium, phosphorus, and protein intake via mobile technology, the Kidney Diet app version 2.3 has a limited database that may leave patients stumped when trying to find their favorite foods.

The app has clear instructions that lead the user to input a dietary prescription, which the instructions state should be obtained from their physician. The user enters phosphorus, potassium, protein, fluids, sodium, carbohydrates. Users are able to leave fields blank for any nutrients they do not wish to track.

Once the diet prescription is entered, a simple blank screen allows the user to add foods one by one via an “add new item” button. Alternatively, one can choose from a scrolling alphabetized list of foods. Once selected, each food has a drop-down menu from which portion size can be selected, and a second drop-down to choose the number of portions. Portions for some foods are easily measured by the user, for example, the choices for Rice Krispies include 1.25 cups (the NLEA serving size) or 1 cup. However, other foods follow the USDA database portions and are less easily measured by the average layperson: red sweet peppers (sautéed) only have a 100 gram portion listed. The screen then lists the nutrient content of the food chosen, with undesirable amounts of a nutrient highlighted in red. It should be noted that 361 mg of potassium in a small banana was not highlighted in red, despite the 2000 mg potassium diet restriction entered. Additionally, certain foods only have one preparation listed; for the red sweet peppers, raw red sweet pepper was not an option, only sautéed. At any time, the user can consult a comparison of their daily total nutrient intake to the physician prescription they entered. If the user has consumed more than the prescribed amount of a nutrient, the total will appear in red.

Another feature of the app is a tab with basic ESRD guidelines and a note stating that a CKD patient not on dialysis may have different nutrient needs. There are also portion size tips and unit conversions, but these are very limited.

The primary limitation of the Kidney Diet app is the small size of the database. Although some fast food options are available (McDonald’s, Taco Bell), others had no listings. Although it may not be desirable for CKD patients to consume some of these items on a regular basis, the reality is that patients will partake of these from time to time, and therefore should have access to the nutrient information for such choices.

Future updates of this app should bring an expanded database. The website does have a “contact us” section for users to send comments and database food addition suggestions. Overall, the price of $4.99 may be more than the app is worth. Food diary app prices range from free to $9.99. Some with more comprehensive databases and additional features, such as Calorie Counter by MyFitnessPal.com, are offered for no charge. However, the Kidney Diet app has potential to become a very useful tool for people with CKD.

Link: http://kidneydiet.com/