

**\*\*Title:\*\*** \*Dr. Fe Cayao-Lasam vs. Spouses Claro and Editha Ramolete\*

**\*\*Facts:\*\***

On July 28, 1994, Editha Ramolete, who was three months pregnant and experiencing vaginal bleeding, was admitted to Lorma Medical Center (LMC) on the advice of Dr. Fe Cayao-Lasam. A sonogram revealed the fetus had weak cardiac pulsation. Following persistent bleeding, Dr. Lasam performed a Dilatation and Curettage (D&C) procedure on July 30. Editha was discharged the next day but was hospitalized again on September 16 due to severe symptoms, leading to the discovery of a dead fetus, massive hemorrhage, and a ruptured uterus. This necessitated a hysterectomy, rendering Editha unable to bear children. The Ramoletes filed a complaint against Dr. Lasam with the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), alleging negligence. Dr. Lasam countered, attributing complications to Editha's failure to attend a follow-up and an abnormal pregnancy condition unrelated to the D&C procedure. The Board of Medicine initially exonerated Dr. Lasam, but the PRC reversed this, revoking her license. Dr. Lasam then appealed to the Court of Appeals (CA), which deemed her petition improper. Subsequently, she lodged a Petition for Review under Rule 45 of the Rules of Court to the Supreme Court.

**\*\*Issues:\*\***

1. Whether the CA erred in ruling the PRC exempt from the quasi-judicial agencies under Rule 43 of the Rules of Civil Procedure.
2. Whether the CA correctly dismissed the petition for being premature and improper.
3. The applicability of double jeopardy and due process in administrative cases concerning medical practice.
4. The necessity of expert testimony in substantiating the cause of Editha's injury.

**\*\*Court's Decision:\*\***

The Supreme Court granted the petition, reversing the CA's decision. The Court held:

1. Rule 43 encompasses all quasi-judicial bodies, including the PRC, contrary to the CA's ruling.
2. The CA was incorrect to dismiss the petition on procedural technicalities, as appeals from PRC decisions should be cognizable by the CA.
3. Double jeopardy does not apply to administrative cases. However, due process must be observed, which was violated when Dr. Lasam was not notified of the appeal to the PRC.
4. Expert testimony is pivotal in medical malpractice cases to establish standard care and

causation. In this case, Dr. Lasam presented expert testimony that supported her actions as within standard care, and no causation between the D&C procedure and Editha's injury was established, pointing out Editha's failure to follow postoperative advice as a significant factor.

**\*\*Doctrine:\*\***

1. Double jeopardy is inapplicable to administrative cases.
2. Due process must be observed in administrative proceedings, including proper notification of appeals.
3. In medical malpractice cases, expert testimony is essential to establish both the standard of care and the causation of injury.

**\*\*Class Notes:\*\***

- **\*\*Double Jeopardy:\*\*** Does not apply to administrative proceedings. Key for understanding the scope and limitations of legal protections in different case types.
- **\*\*Due Process in Administrative Proceedings:\*\*** Ensures that all parties must be properly notified of proceedings, including appeals. Critical for safeguarding rights in quasi-judicial and administrative matters.
- **\*\*Expert Testimony in Medical Malpractice:\*\*** Necessary to establish breach of standard of care and causation of injury. Essential for analyzing and establishing liability in healthcare-related legal disputes.
- **\*\*Appeal Procedures for Administrative Cases:\*\*** Specific rules govern appeal rights and procedures in administrative cases, including for parties deemed aggrieved by decisions. Important for navigating administrative legal systems.

**\*\*Historical Background:\*\*** This case sheds light on the procedural intricacies involved in professional regulation and the legal mechanisms available for redressing alleged medical malpractice within the Philippine legal system. It highlights the evolving interpretations of rules governing appeals from decisions of regulatory bodies like the PRC and underscores the importance of due process and expert testimony in administrative cases dealing with professional licensure and malpractice claims.