

Title:

De Jesus v. Uyloan, Ojeda, and Asian Hospital and Medical Center

Facts:

- **September 13, 2010:** Paolo Anthony De Jesus undergoes an abdomino-pelvic sonogram. Dr. Romeo F. Uyloan diagnoses him with cholelithiasis and recommends laparoscopic cholecystectomy.
- **September 15, 2010:** De Jesus consents to the surgery to be performed at Asian Hospital and Medical Center (AHMC) with Dr. Uyloan and Dr. John Francois Ojeda as his attending and assisting surgeons, respectively. Instead of the expected laparoscopic procedure, an open cholecystectomy is performed without De Jesus's consent.
- **September 19, 2010:** De Jesus is discharged in "good condition," though he experiences severe pain, vomiting, and continuous bile leak shortly thereafter.
- **November 19, 2010:** De Jesus undergoes another operation to correct the complications from the first surgery.

Procedural Posture:

1. **November 10, 2015:** De Jesus files a complaint for damages against Dr. Uyloan, Dr. Ojeda, and AHMC, claiming professional negligence.
2. **Motions to Dismiss:** Dr. Uyloan, Dr. Ojeda, and AHMC file motions to dismiss arguing the action is barred by the statute of limitations, among other defenses.
3. **RTC Decision:** Denies the motion to dismiss, stating prescription is evidentiary and cannot be resolved without trial. Also finds no forum shopping by De Jesus.
4. **RTC Reconsideration:** Denied motions for reconsideration and directs filing of answers by defendants.
5. **CA Appeal:** Dr. Uyloan files a petition for certiorari before the Court of Appeals (CA).
6. **CA Decision:** Reverses RTC, granting the motion to dismiss, holding the action is time-barred by the four-year prescription period for quasi-delicts.
7. **Supreme Court Petition:** De Jesus petitions for review on certiorari under Rule 45.

Issues:

1. Whether De Jesus's case is based on breach of contract or quasi-delict, affecting the applicable prescription period.
2. Whether the action is barred by the statute of limitations.
3. Whether the RTC gravely abused its discretion in denying the motions to dismiss.

Court's Decision:

- **Basis of Claim:** The Supreme Court identified the nature of De Jesus's claims as grounded in medical negligence, classifiable under quasi-delict and subject to a four-year prescription period per Article 1146 of the Civil Code.
- **Prescription Period:** De Jesus's complaint was filed beyond this four-year period (from September 15, 2010, to November 10, 2015), hence it was time-barred.
- **Claims Analysis:** The Court emphasized that the core allegations pertain to professional negligence by the doctors, despite De Jesus's attempt to frame the issue as a breach of contract to benefit from a longer prescription period.
- **Doctrine Application:** De Jesus's action clearly falls under quasi-delict as there was no express agreement promising specific results; thus, the legal obligations arose out of professional negligence.

Doctrine:

- **Prescription Under Quasi-Delict:** Actions based on quasi-delict must be commenced within four years as per Article 1146 of the Civil Code.
- **Medical Malpractice and Contracts:** Without an express agreement promising specific outcomes, medical malpractice claims are governed by the provisions on quasi-delict, not contract law.

Class Notes:

- **Quasi-Delict (Civil Code Article 1146):** Prescriptive period of four years.
- **Medical Malpractice Elements:** Duty, breach, injury, and proximate causation.
- **Civil Code Articles Cited:**
 - Article 1170: Liability for fraud, negligence, delay in obligations.
 - Article 1173: Standards for determining fault or negligence in obligations.
 - Article 1144: Ten-year prescription for written contracts.
 - Article 1145: Six-year prescription for oral contracts.
 - Article 2176: Defines quasi-delict.
- **Interpretation:** When analyzing medical malpractice, it is crucial to determine if the relationship and obligations point to negligence or breach of a specific contractual promise. Absence of an express promise defaults the claim to a quasi-delict.

Historical Background:

- **Development of Medical Malpractice Law:** The evolution of tort law providing recourse for medical negligence reflects the importance placed on standard care within the medical community. This case underlines the consistent application of quasi-delict to govern medical malpractice in the absence of specific legislation, emphasizing the public interest and

professional duty inherent in medical practice.