

The IRAC method provides a comprehensive and detailed analysis of a legal case.

IRAC stands for:

- **Issue- What is the legal question/issue of the case?**
- **Rule- What is the rule of law governing the issue?**
- **Application/Analysis- How does the issue and rule of law fit the specific facts of the case/scenario**
- **Conclusion- What is your conclusion based upon the above elements of the IRAC method? What is your answer to the question asked?**

The IRAC method is used to explain legal principles and their application to both real and hypothetical scenarios. Before you begin crafting your IRAC analysis, you will need to read the scenario and summarize the relevant facts.

The example below explains how to apply the IRAC method.

You are given the following scenario:

A patient goes to the emergency room complaining of severe stomach pains. The doctor in the ER does not believe that he has legitimate pain, but is only “trolling” for drugs and is already under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or both. The doctor refuses to see the patient or treat him. The doctor instructs the ER staff to ignore him and maybe he will go to another hospital or just go away. The patient will not leave and waits in the ER for a total five hours, undiagnosed and untreated. The entire time he complains of severe stomach pain and wants to see a doctor. After sitting there for five hours and being ignored by the hospital staff, he gets up, walks out, and collapses dead in the hospital parking lot.

We can break down the legal issues and analyze the case applying the IRAC method.

**Facts:** Stated above.

**Issue:** The legal question in this case is did the doctor fail to meet the standard of care in treating this patient?

**Rule of law:** The rule that applies in this case relating to the standard of care is medical malpractice. Medical malpractice is a type of professional negligence applied in the healthcare environment. A successful negligence claim requires that the plaintiff prove four elements: duty, breach, cause, and harm.

**Application/Analysis:** First, the plaintiff must establish that the defendant had a **duty** to the plaintiff. The ER doctor as a medical professional employed by the hospital is required to treat all patients that come into the ER. As a result, he or she owes a duty to

treat patients regardless of personal bias. ER doctors do not get to pick and choose which patients they will treat.

Next, the plaintiff must establish that the defendant **breached** that duty. The doctor in this scenario not only did not treat the patient, but showed contempt and indifference toward the patient in violation of the doctor-patient relationship. This refusal to treat the patient was a breach of the doctor's obligation to treat all patients that come to the ER.

Third, the plaintiff must establish that when the defendant breached his duty to the plaintiff, he **caused** the injury suffered by the plaintiff. In this case, we know there were not any other intervening factors that could have been responsible for the patient's death. He sought treatment from the ER doctor who actively refused to see him or treat him. The doctor abandoning the patient caused him to leave the ER when he was in obvious medical distress. The patient was leaving the facility when he collapsed independent of any other factors. This links the doctor's actions directly to the plaintiff.

Finally, the plaintiff must establish that as a result of the defendant's action, he or she suffered **harm**. In the event of the death of the plaintiff, surviving relatives may bring a claim for wrongful death and negligence on behalf of the plaintiff's estate. In this case specifically, the harm suffered was the death of the patient.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, based upon the above analysis, the plaintiff can bring a successful claim against the doctor for negligence. The plaintiff has met all the requirements to establish the defendant committed medical malpractice/professional negligence against the plaintiff which directly resulted in his death. **The defendant did not meet the standard of care in this case.**

The above IRAC method breaks down the facts and complicated legal issue of the scenario so it can be interpreted and analyzed which will determine whether or not the plaintiff's claim could succeed. By going through the IRAC format, we are able to answer the original question: Did the doctor fail to meet the standard of care?

This is an abbreviated format of an IRAC analysis. Students should summarize and analyze each part of the IRAC formula in order to answer the question. You must be able to provide support for your argument using the facts provided in the legal scenario.