

**Tentative Rulings for May 15, 2024**  
**Department 502**

**For any matter where an oral argument is requested and any party to the hearing desires a remote appearance, such request must be timely submitted to and approved by the hearing judge. In this department, the remote appearance will be conducted through Zoom. If approved, please provide the department's clerk a correct email address. (CRC 3.672, Fresno Sup.C. Local Rule 1.1.19)**

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There are no tentative rulings for the following cases. The hearing will go forward on these matters. If a person is under a court order to appear, he/she must do so. Otherwise, parties should appear unless they have notified the court that they will submit the matter without an appearance. (See California Rules of Court, rule 3.1304(c).) *The above rule also applies to cases listed in this "must appear" section.*

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The court has continued the following cases. The deadlines for opposition and reply papers will remain the same as for the original hearing date.

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(Tentative Rulings begin at the next page)

# **Tentative Rulings for Department 502**

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(35)

**Tentative Ruling**

Re: ***Kuldeep Dhaliwal v. Joginder Singh, M.D. et al.***  
Superior Court Case No. 21CECG02225

Hearing Date: May 15, 2024 (Dept. 502)

Motion: By Plaintiffs Kuldeep Dhaliwal and Harbans Dhaliwal for Summary Judgment of the First Amended Answer or, in the Alternative, Summary Adjudication

**Tentative Ruling:**

To deny the motion for summary judgment. To deny the alternative motion for summary adjudication in its entirety.

**Explanation:**

Plaintiffs Kuldeep Dhaliwal and Harbans Dhaliwal (collectively "Plaintiffs") seek summary judgment or, in the alternative, summary adjudication of the twenty-three affirmative defenses of the February 21, 2023 Amended Answer<sup>1</sup> by defendants Joginder Singh, M.D., and Mandeep Singh, M.D. (collectively "Defendants").<sup>2</sup>

A trial court shall grant summary judgment where there are no triable issues of material fact and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. (Code Civ. Proc. §437c, subd. (c); *Schacter v. Citigroup* (2009) 47 Cal.4th 610, 618.) The issue to be determined by the trial court in consideration of a motion for summary judgment is whether or not any facts have been presented which give rise to a triable issue, and not to pass upon or determine the true facts in the case. (*Petersen v. City of Vallejo* (1968) 259 Cal.App.2d 757, 775.) The rules applicable to summary judgments apply equally to motions for summary adjudication. (*Blue Shield of Cal. Life & Health Ins. Co. v. Superior Court* (2011) 192 Cal.App.4th 727, 732.)

A party may seek summary adjudication of affirmative defenses. (Code Civ. Proc. § 437c, subd. (f)(1).) Summary adjudication must only be granted if it completely disposes of an affirmative defense. (*Ibid.*)

The moving party bears the initial burden of production to make a prima facie showing of the nonexistence of any triable issue of material fact; if he or she carries this burden, the burden shifts to the opposing party to make a prima facie showing of the existence of a triable issue. (*Aguilar v. Atlantic Richfield Co.* (2001) 25 Cal.4th 826, 849

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<sup>1</sup> Plaintiffs' Request for Judicial Notice is granted.

<sup>2</sup> Though the moving papers included defendants James H. Wilkins and Wilkins, Drolshagen & Czeshinski LLP, on March 28, 2024, by stipulation of the parties, defendants James H. Wilkins and Wilkins, Drolshagen & Czeshinski LLP filed a further amended answer. By the same stipulation, Plaintiffs withdrew the present motion as to defendants James H. Wilkins and Wilkins, Drolshagen & Czeshinski LLP.

["*Aguilar*"].) If the moving papers establish a prima facie showing, that justifies adjudication in the moving party's favor, the burden then shifts to the opposing party to make a prima facie showing of the existence of a triable material factual issue. (*Rehmani v. Superior Court* (2012) 204 Cal.App.4th 945, 950.) The affidavits of the moving party are strictly construed and those of his opponent liberally construed, and doubts as to the propriety of summary judgment should be resolved against granting the motion. (*Slobojan v. Western Travelers Life Ins. Co.* (1969) 70 Cal.2d 432, 436-439.)

Here, Plaintiffs seek summary judgment of all affirmative defenses raised by the Amended Answer on the basis of responses to Form Interrogatory 15.1. Specifically, Plaintiffs submit that Defendants provided a verified response that each of them "did not possess any facts supporting any of [each of their] affirmative defenses alleged in the Amended Answer to Plaintiffs' First Amended Complaint." (Plaintiffs' Undisputed Material Fact ["UMF"] No. 12, 13.) These answers, generally, indicate that affirmative defenses were stated in preservation, and that at the time the discovery was propounded, these Defendants offered no facts, with anticipation that further investigation and discovery will disclose such facts. (E.g., Plaintiffs' Statement of Evidence, p. 27.)

Plaintiffs fail to meet their burden as the moving party to demonstrate a lack of triable material facts as to Defendants' affirmative defenses. The purpose of contention interrogatories is to not tie down a party in such a way as to deprive substantive rights. (*Singer v. Superior Court of Contra Costa County* (1960) 54 Cal.2d 318, 324-325 ["*Singer*"].) Interrogatories are not meant to limit a person answering to the facts set forth in those answers. (*Id.* at p. 325.) Accordingly, answers to interrogatories do not prevent a responding party at trial from relying on subsequently discovered facts. (*Ibid.*) Even if a responding party knew the facts at the time of answering, a showing of oversight in good faith would allow those facts to be considered. (*Ibid.*) Accordingly, responses to these interrogatories do not have the legal effect, as Plaintiffs argue, of a concession or admission for the purposes of summary judgment. Even where, as Plaintiffs contend, the interrogatory seeks a response containing "all facts", a response that qualifies that the answers provided are subject to producing subsequently discovered facts is sufficient to protect against a concession. (*Singer, supra*, 52 Cal.2d at pp. 325-326.) Such is the case here, where Defendants' responses indicate "at the present time" and "it is anticipated that further investigation and discovery in this matter will disclose facts." (E.g., Plaintiffs' Statement of Evidence, p. 27.)

Plaintiffs' reliance on *Cornell v. Berkeley Tennis Club* does not command a different result. ((2017) 18 Cal.App.5th 908 ["*Cornell*"].) There, the question posed was whether the initial burden was met on summary judgment, whether the moving party, the defendant, sufficiently demonstrated that the opposing party, the plaintiff, did not possess, and cannot reasonably obtain, evidence to refute an issue. (*Id.* at p. 931; *Aguilar, supra*, 25 Cal.4th at p. 845.) The standard for a moving plaintiff is to present evidence that would require a reasonable trier of fact to find any underlying material fact more likely than not. (*Aguilar, supra*, 25 Cal.4th at p. 845.) For the purposes of summary judgment, discovery responses, aside from requests for admissions, do not constitute a judicial admission, which gives a conclusive effect to the truth of the matter admitted. (See *Scalf v. D.B. Log Homes, Inc.* (2005) 128 Cal.App.4th 1510, 1522 [considering whether deposition testimony constitutes an incontrovertible judicial admission].) In any event, the responses here were qualified as to knowledge at the time of the response, sufficient to guard

against any conclusory effect. (*Singer, supra*, 52 Cal.2d at pp. 325-326; compare *Andrews v. Foster Wheller LLC* (2006) 138 Cal.App.4th 96, 104 [noting that the interrogatory response merely listed locations and dates, and a generic statement with no qualifications] and *Field v. U.S. Bank National Assn.* (2022) 79 Cal.App.5th 703, 705 [reviewing on summary judgment, an interrogatory response of “Unsure.” with no qualifications].) Thus, to the extent that Plaintiffs complain that the qualified responses given were incomplete or otherwise evasive, Plaintiffs’ remedy was to seek further responses. (Code Civ. Proc. § 2030.300, subd. (a).)

For the above reasons, Plaintiffs’ motion for summary judgment is denied. Plaintiffs’ alternative motion for summary adjudication is denied in its entirety.

Pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 3.1312(a), and Code of Civil Procedure section 1019.5, subdivision (a), no further written order is necessary. The minute order adopting this tentative ruling will serve as the order of the court and service by the clerk will constitute notice of the order.

**Tentative Ruling**

**Issued By:**           **KCK**  **on 05/13/24**  .

(Judge's initials)

(Date)

(37)

**Tentative Ruling**

Re: **Ana Escobar v. Vallarta Supermarkets**  
Superior Court Case No. 22CECG03950

Hearing Date: May 15, 2024 (Dept. 502)

Motion: By Plaintiff Ana Escobar to Quash Defendant Vallarta Food Enterprises, Inc.'s Subpoenas for Medical Records

**Tentative Ruling:**

To grant in part. The following providers shall produce all records specified in the subpoenas relating to plaintiff from December 11, 2010 to the present:

1. American Ambulance
2. Community Regional Medical Center (Medical)
3. Community Regional Medical Center (Radiology)
4. Community Regional Medical Center (Billing)
5. Central California Faculty Medical Group
6. Accident Recovery Center (Medical/Radiology)
7. Accident Recovery Center (Billing)
8. Central California ENT Medical Group
9. Precise Imaging
10. Jonathan D. Caldwell, M.D.
11. Ali Najafi, M.D.
12. Ali Najafi, M.D. (Billing)
13. 3H Medical Group, Inc.
14. California Heart Medical Associates

To award monetary sanctions in favor of plaintiff against defendant Vallarta Food Enterprises, Inc. in the amount of \$810. Sanctions shall be payable within 30 days of service of this order by the clerk.

**Explanation:**

Code of Civil Procedure section 1987.1 authorizes a party to make a motion to quash a subpoena requiring production of documents. This section provides that the court may either quash the subpoena entirely, modify it, or direct compliance on terms or conditions the court declares, including protective orders. (Code Civ. Proc., § 1987.1, subd. (a).) Here, plaintiff seeks to limit the 14 subpoenas sent to her medical providers, which seek records dating to 15 years prior to the date of her injury. Plaintiff requests the court limit the production of the relevant medical records to 10 years prior to the date of her injury.

The records sought here are plaintiff's medical records in relation to a personal injury complaint. While plaintiff has placed her medical condition at issue, implicitly waiving her privacy rights as to her medical records, such a waiver "encompasses only discovery *directly relevant* to the plaintiff's claim and essential to the fair resolution of the lawsuit." (*Davis v. Superior Court* (1992) 7 Cal.App.4th 1008, 1014, emphasis in original.) Additionally, the "scope of any disclosure must be narrowly circumscribed, drawn with narrow specificity, and must proceed by the least intrusive manner." (*Ibid.*)

The burden is on the party seeking discovery to demonstrate the direct relevance of otherwise constitutionally protected information. (*Id.* at p. 1017.) Here, plaintiff concedes that her medical records are directly relevant, but that this should be limited to the 10 years prior to her injury. Defendant has not opposed this motion and therefore has not demonstrated the direct relevance of medical records extending to 15 years before the date of plaintiff's injury. As such, the court limits the 14 subpoenas to 10 years prior to plaintiff's injuries.

Code of Civil Procedure section 1987.2 provides a basis for awarding reasonable attorney's fees and costs for bringing a motion to quash. Here, the court awards sanctions representing three hours for preparation of this motion at a billing rate of \$250 per hour and the \$60 filing fee for the motion, bringing the total monetary sanctions to \$810.

Pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 3.1312(a), and Code of Civil Procedure section 1019.5, subdivision (a), no further written order is necessary. The minute order adopting this tentative ruling will serve as the order of the court and service by the clerk will constitute notice of the order.

**Tentative Ruling**

**Issued By:** \_\_\_\_\_ **on** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Judge's initials) (Date)





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**Tentative Ruling**

Re: ***Sarmiento v. The Neil Jones Food Company***  
Superior Court Case No. 21CECG03825

Hearing Date: May 15, 2024 (Dept. 502)

Motion: Plaintiff's Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Settlement

**Tentative Ruling:**

To continue the motion to Thursday, June 13, 2024, to allow time for the moving party to submit a copy of the settlement agreement, the class notice, and supplemental declaration(s)/exhibit(s) regarding class counsel's work performed in this case. All papers must be submitted no later than on Thursday, May 30, 2024.

**Explanation:**

"A settlement or compromise of an entire class action, or of a cause of action in a class action, or as to a party, requires the approval of the court after hearing." (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 3.769(a).) "If the court has certified the action as a class action, notice of the final approval hearing must be given to the class members in the manner specified by the court." (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 3.769(f).)

The memorandum of points and authorities indicates that the settlement agreement between the parties and the proposed class notice are attached as Exhibit "1" of the declaration of counsel, Vedang J. Patel. However, the court finds that there are no exhibits attached to Mr. Patel's declaration.

Additionally, class counsels have not provided the court with any explanation of the work done on the case or how the requested fees were calculated and why the requested fees are reasonable. While the court may approve attorney's fees based on a percentage of the common fund, it can also conduct a lodestar cross-check of the requested fees. (*Laffitte v. Robert Half Intern. Inc.* (2016) 1 Cal.5th 480, 503-504.) Here, counsel has not even discussed what work was done on the case or why the requested fees are reasonable in relation to the work performed. Nor has counsel provided the court with a summary of the hours worked, which attorneys did the work, or what their hourly rates are.

Accordingly, the matter is continued to allow time for the moving party to submit a copy of the settlement agreement, the class notice, and supplemental declaration(s)/exhibit(s) regarding class counsel's work performed in this case.

Pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 3.1312(a), and Code of Civil Procedure section 1019.5, subdivision (a), no further written order is necessary. The minute order adopting this tentative ruling will serve as the order of the court and service by the clerk will constitute notice of the order.



(20)

**Tentative Ruling**

Re: **Avendano v. Graney et al.**  
Superior Court Case No. 22CECG03985

Hearing Date: May 15, 2024 (Dept. 502)

Motion: Unopposed Demurrer by Matthew Graney to Second Amended Complaint

**Tentative Ruling:**

To overrule the special demurrers. (Code Civ. Proc., § 430.10, subd. (f)). To sustain the demurrer to the SAC as a whole as to defendant Graney Revocable Living Trust. As to Matthew Graney, an individual, to overrule general demurrers to the first, second, third, fifth, causes of action; and to sustain general demurrers to the sixth, seventh, eleventh, thirteenth causes of action, without leave to amend. Matthew Graney shall file his answer to the SAC within 10 days of service of the order by the clerk.

**Explanation:**

**Special Demurrers**

As to causes of action 1-3, 6, and 8-14, Graney argues that the SAC is uncertain in that it fails to identify the parties affected thereby. Graney cites to *Williams v. Beechnut Nutrition Corp.* (1986) 185 Cal.App.3d 135, 139, which does *not* in fact stand for the proposition that a demurrer may be sustained simply because the cause of action headers do not identify the parties against whom they are brought. The demurrer for uncertainty includes no discussion of the substance of any cause of action, and is therefore overruled. The court already stated in ruling on the demurrer to the FAC that it would not do defense counsel's work for them. The court still declines to do so.

**General Demurrers**

*As to the Graney Revocable Trust*

The SAC fails to state facts sufficient to state a cause of action against "Graney Revocable Living Trust" ("the Trust"). The SAC includes no allegations of any actions taken by Graney in his capacity as trustee of the Trust. Plaintiff does not allege any duties by the Trust owed to plaintiff. The accordingly, the court intends to sustain the demurrer to the SAC as a whole as to the Trust.

*First and Second Causes of Action for Wrongful Ouster and Ejectment*

The SAC alleges that Graney is a lessee pursuant to a Lease between Graney and plaintiffs' siblings (see ¶¶ 54, 55, 63, 64, and 105). In fact, paragraph 105 of the SAC alleges: "The Avendano Siblings are responsible for 'the Property' being leased to Graney who subsequently leased the property to another party." As tenant/lessee Graney, as a tenant/lessee, is entitled to quiet enjoyment of the Property. (Civil Code § 1927.) The SAC

does not show that Graney was in a position to commit an ouster or ejectment, nor is there an allegation in the pleading that plaintiff was in possession of the subject property at any time to have been ousted or ejected. Accordingly, the demurrer to these causes of action should be sustained.

#### *Third Cause of Action for Negligence*

The demurrer is premised on the contention that the SAC fails to allege the requisite elements of existence of a duty to use reasonable care to prevent harm to the plaintiff, failure to use reasonable care, or causation. (See CACI 400, 401.) As was the case with the demurrer to this cause of action in the FAC, the points and authorities are conclusory without any discussion or analysis of the SAC's allegations, or application of law to facts.

#### *Fifth Cause of Action for Private Nuisance*

To establish an action for private nuisance, (1) "the plaintiff must prove an interference with his use and enjoyment of his property"; (2) "the invasion of the plaintiff's interest in the use and enjoyment of the land must be substantial, that is, that it causes the plaintiff to suffer substantial actual damage"; (3) "the interference with the protected interest must not only be substantial, but it must also be unreasonable, i.e., it must be of such a nature, duration, or amount as to constitute unreasonable interference with the use and enjoyment of the land." (*Mendez v. Rancho Valencia Resort Partners, LLC* (2016) 3 Cal.App.5th 248, 262-263, citations, italics, brackets, and quotation marks omitted.)

One tenant in common may, "by either lease or license, ... confer upon another person the right to occupy and use the property of the co-tenancy as fully as such lessor or licensor himself might have used or occupied it if such lease or license had not been granted. (*Lee Chuck v. Quan Wo Chong & Co.* (1891) 91 Cal. 593, 598-99.)

Here, plaintiff alleges that he was a tenant in common. (SAC ¶¶ 95-96.) Graney's interest in the property was as lessee and tenant as well as purchaser. (SAC ¶¶ 7-19.) The moving still do not adequately address Graney's status as purchaser who excluded plaintiff from the property by reason of his ownership of the property. The moving papers assert that plaintiff admits there was a valid contract for Graney to purchase the Property, and it is plaintiff who is in breach of the contract. This assertion simply ignores the allegations of the SAC. Plaintiff has at all times disputed the validity of Graney's purchase of the property. (See SAC ¶¶ 22, 69.) As the moving party Graney repeatedly fails to adequately address the allegations of the complaint.

#### *Sixth Cause of Action for Intentional Misrepresentation*

This cause of action is premised on filings by Armando and Graney in the probate matter pertaining to the right to sell the property (FAC ¶¶ 167-168) and information conveyed to the Orange Cove Police Department and City Hall regarding who held rightful title to the property (SAC ¶¶ 170-171).

A cause of action for intentional misrepresentation must allege that: (1) defendant represented to the plaintiff that an important fact was true; (2) defendant's

representation was false; (3) defendant knew that the representation was false when he or she made it; (4) defendant intended that the plaintiff rely on the representation; (5) plaintiff reasonably relied on defendant's representation; (6) plaintiff was harmed; and (7) plaintiff's reliance on defendant's representation was a substantial factor in causing his or her harm. (1-1900 CACI 1900.)

Fraud must be pleaded with specificity, to provide the defendants with the fullest possible details of the charge so they are able to prepare a defense to this serious attack. To withstand a demurrer, the facts constituting every element of the fraud must be alleged with particularity, and the claim cannot be salvaged by references to the general policy favoring the liberal construction of pleadings. (*Committee on Children's Television, Inc. v. General Foods Corp.* (1983) 35 Cal.3d 197, 216.) This particularity requirement necessitates pleading facts which "show how, when, where, to whom, and by what means the representations were tendered." (See *Hills Trans. Co. v. Southwest Forest Industries Inc.* (1968) 266 Cal.App.2d 702, 707.)

In sustaining the demurrer to the FAC, the court noted that the pleading identified no such filings by Graney. This remains the case. Moreover, the SAC alleges no misrepresentation by Graney to plaintiff, or any representation on which plaintiff relied. Nor does the cause of action allege any representation that Graney knew to be false. There is no indication from the SAC that Graney did not honestly believe that he held valid title to the property. The SAC adds an allegation about an agreement by Graney to settle the property dispute (SAC ¶ 169), but the allegations do not show that an enforceable agreement was ever reached. The demurrer should be sustained without leave to amend, as the demurrer is unopposed.

#### *Seventh Cause of Action for Trespass*

"Trespass is an unlawful interference with possession of property." (*Staples v. Hoefke* (1987) 189 Cal.App.3d 1397, 1406, 235 Cal.Rptr. 165.) The elements of trespass are: (1) the plaintiff's ownership or control of the property; (2) the defendant's intentional, reckless, or negligent entry onto the property; (3) lack of permission for the entry or acts in excess of permission; (4) harm; and (5) the defendant's conduct was a substantial factor in causing the harm. (See CACI No. 2000.)

(*Ralphs Grocery Co. v. Victory Consultants, Inc.* (2017) 17 Cal.App.5th 245, 261–262.)

As noted above, plaintiff alleges in SAC ¶¶ 54, 55, 63, 64, and 105 that Graney had a lease of the Property from plaintiff's siblings who are owners of the property as tenants-in-common. Plaintiff fails to show that Graney's use or occupancy with the permission of the Plaintiff's tenants-in-common siblings can constitute trespass. Accordingly, the demurrer to this cause of action should be sustained without leave to amend.

#### *Eighth Cause of Action for Trespass to Chattels*

The elements of a claim for trespass to chattels are (a) that defendant intentionally did one or more of the following: (i) interfered with plaintiff's use or possession of items of personal property; or (ii) damaged an item of personal property; (b) That plaintiff did not

consent; and (c) that defendant's conduct was a substantial factor in causing plaintiff harm. (CACI 2101).

Plaintiff alleges that the Property was filled with his mother's personal belongings, which were willed to her heirs equally. Only Armando and Graney had access to the Property, and the house was empty when plaintiff entered the Property in July of 2022. (SAC ¶¶ 184-187.) However, plaintiff still does not explicitly allege that Graney did anything to or with any item of personal property. Accordingly, the demurrer should be sustained without leave to amend.

#### *Ninth Cause of Action for Conversion*

Referencing the allegations of the eighth cause of action, plaintiff adds a tenth cause of action for conversion. The claim is conclusory and unsupported by allegation of fact. The demurrer should be sustained without leave to amend for the same reason as the eighth cause of action.

#### *Tenth Cause of Action for Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress*

This cause of action is only challenged as to the Graney Trust, but not as to Graney as an individual, and need not be addressed separately in light of the sustaining of the demurrer to the SAC as a whole as to the Graney Trust.

#### *Eleventh and Twelfth Causes of Action (42 U.S.C. § 1983 and 42 U.S.C. § 1986)*

The court sustained the demurrer to the FAC's section 1983 claim without leave to amend. It was improperly included in the SAC.

It is unclear why Graney demurs to the twelfth cause of action, as it includes no allegations against him or the trust.

#### *Thirteenth Cause of Action for Breach of Oral Agreement to Settle Dispute*

The court sustained the demurrer to this cause of action in the FAC with leave to amend. There does not appear to be any substantive change to this cause of action in the SAC. Accordingly the demurrer is sustained on the same grounds as stated in the October 10, 2023 Minute Order, but this time without leave to amend.

