

## PROFESSIONAL ETHICS OF PHARMACEUTICAL PROFESSIONALS

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Professional activity in the sphere of pharmacological support means compliance with moral and ethical standards while fulfillment of labor functions by pharmaceutical professionals. The study purpose was to examine requirements for compliance with ethics and deontology placed on pharmaceutical professionals who carry out their professional activity. Study methods: content analysis, sociological survey, comparative analysis, mathematical and statistical methods, and ranking. Study materials: federal laws, orders of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, occupational standards of pharmaceutical professionals, data from questionnaires of 95 pharmaceutical professionals. The performed analysis of regulatory documentation that regulates compliance with ethics and deontology by pharmaceutical professionals, examination of opinions of pharmaceutical professionals about the functions performed by them, identification of knowledge of those interviewed about constituents of ethics and deontology along with labor functions, fulfillment of which requires compliance with moral and ethical standards, displayed the necessity to improve knowledge and skills in the field of ethics and deontology at all educational levels.

**Keywords:** ethics, deontology, pharmaceutical professional, pharmacy, professional activity

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## ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНАЯ ЭТИКА ФАРМАЦЕВТИЧЕСКИХ РАБОТНИКОВ

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Профессиональная деятельность в сфере лекарственного обеспечения предусматривает соблюдение фармацевтическими работниками морально-этических норм при выполнении трудовых функций. Цель исследования: изучить требования по соблюдению этики и деонтологии, предъявляемые к фармацевтическим работникам при осуществлении профессиональной деятельности. Методы исследования: контент-анализ, социологический опрос, сравнительный анализ, математико-статистические методы, ранжирование. Материалы исследования: федеральные законы, приказы Министерства здравоохранения РФ и профессиональные стандарты фармацевтических работников, данные анкет 95 фармацевтических работников. Проведенный анализ нормативно-правовой документации, регламентирующей соблюдение этики и деонтологии фармацевтическими работниками, а также изучение мнений фармацевтических работников о выполняемых ими функциях; выявление знаний респондентов о составляющих аспектах этики и деонтологии, а также трудовых функций, при выполнении которых фармацевтическим работникам необходимо соблюдать морально-этические нормы, показал необходимость повышения уровня знаний и умений в области этики и деонтологии на всех уровнях образования.

**Ключевые слова:** этика, деонтология, фармацевтический работник, аптечная организация, профессиональная деятельность

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To ensure effectiveness of pharmaceutical aid and proper professional activity, pharmaceutical professionals should follow ethical and deontological aspects [1]. Taking into account characteristics of professional activity in the sphere of pharmacological support, a pharmaceutical professional should have certain social and psychological personal traits that comply with requirements of the society, principles of pharmaceutical ethics and deontology [2]. The pharmaceutical community deals with the so-called pharmaceutical ethics that examines moral and ethical culture of a pharmaceutical professional, social significance of professional activity, requirements for the personality of a chemist (pharmacist), standards of behavior and ethical and psychological aspects of interrelations of all participants of pharmaceutical interaction [3].

It should be noted that pharmaceutical ethics is closely associated with pharmaceutical deontology, as they include

general humane and common to humanity values, standards and rules of morality passing from generations to generations.

'Pharmaceutical deontology' currently includes the doctrine about the duty of pharmaceutical professionals, principles of behavior and attitude to their professional responsibilities aimed to provide specialists with knowledge necessary to carry out their functional duties that arise from the social value of the profession of a chemist (pharmacist) [3].

The category of debt has two levels: objective and subjective ones. The objective level is a set of responsibilities arising from a professional activity. The subjective level displays the attitude of pharmaceutical professionals to fulfillment of their responsibilities.

The interrelation between ethics of a chemist (pharmacist) and pharmaceutical deontology emerges from this unity [4].

Pharmaceutical ethics and deontology cover all types of professional activity of chemists and pharmacists, as

professional errors or crimes can inflict moral trauma on a person and social harm on the entire society; they also diminish the distinctive value of a pharmaceutical professional [5].

Thus, examination of issues of pharmaceutical ethics and deontology is considered pressing.

Study purpose: examine requirements for compliance with ethics and deontology placed on pharmaceutical professionals while performing a professional activity.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methods of content analysis, sociological interview, comparative analysis, mathematical and statistical methods, and ranging have been used during the study.

In accordance with the set purpose, content analysis of regulatory documents was done in the system of legal regulation of activity of pharmaceutical professionals and sociological study by questioning with Google-forms.

Federal laws, orders of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation and professional standards of pharmaceutical professionals were selected as research material for content analysis to detect requirements for compliance with ethics and deontology.

A questionnaire consisting of two sections was developed for the purpose of sociological research. The first section includes filter questions (gender, age, education, place of work, position, etc.) to reveal social and demographic characteristics of those interviewed. The second section embraces the basic issues grouped into four blocks that consider results of analysis of regulatory documents. The first block reflects opinions of pharmaceutical professionals about the performed functions, whereas the second and third ones are aimed to detect what those interviewed know about constituents of ethics and deontology; the fourth block consists of labor functions fulfillment of which must be accompanied by compliance with moral and ethical standards.

The study objects included 95 pharmaceutical professionals with 96.8% of them being women. The majority of those interviewed (39.7%) are elder than 50 years old, one-third part (34.7%) are younger than 40, and about one-fourth part (27.4%) are 40 to 50. 44.2% of those interviewed have higher education. 28.4% work as pharmacy heads, 21.1% as chemists and 48.4% as pharmacists. One responder (1.1%) is an individual entrepreneur with a license for a pharmaceutical activity. Those interviewed have a different length of service: over 15 years in 46.3%, 10 to 15 years in 14.7%, 5 to 10 years in 16.8% and not longer than 55 years in 22.1%. The majority of pharmaceutical professionals (64.2%) work at a pharmacy, one-third of them (30.5%) are employed at pharmacy branches, whereas 4.2% work at pharmacies of medical organizations. Almost two-third of them (63.2%) are employed by pharmacy networks.

The study method consisted of several stages. To analyze the survey results, those interviewed are subdivided into two groups: chemists and pharmacists. A percentage of those who selected separate options of responses is calculated during the first stage, the obtained results were ranked lately with a comparative analysis of groups being performed.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The necessity to comply with ethics and deontology while performing a professional activity is recorded in a number of regulatory instruments of the Russian Federation.

In accordance with art. 73 of Federal Law No. 323 'On fundamental healthcare principles in the Russian Federation' as

of November 21, 11 [6], pharmaceutical professionals conduct their activity in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation following the principles of medical ethics and deontology. Pharmaceutical professionals are responsible for compliance with medical confidentiality, including data about referral for medical aid, condition of health and diagnosis, and other data obtained during medical examination and treatment. Article 74 of the Federal Law [6] imposes restrictions on pharmaceutical professionals while performing a professional activity.

Compliance with professional ethics is one of the basic functions of pharmaceutical workers in accordance with the Rules of proper pharmacy practice regulated by Order of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation No. 647H as of August 31, 2016 [7]. The regulatory document also approves primary and subsequent preparation of workers regarding the issues of compliance with restrictions imposed on pharmaceutical workers while performing a professional activity in accordance with the schedule approved by the pharmacy supervisor [7].

Such professional standards as 'Pharmacist' [8], 'Chemist' [9] and 'Specialist Who Manages a Pharmaceutic Activity' [10] regulate a necessity to comply with professional ethics and deontology while performing a professional activity.

Analysis of requirements of professional standards to pharmaceutical professionals is provided in table 1.

The 'Pharmacist' standard [8] requires to comply with pharmaceutical ethics and deontology only while performing two general labor functions of a pharmacist out of three ones. Thus, while performing such a labor function as 'Retail trade and dispensing of medicinal products (MP)', it is necessary to perform professional communication with adherence to business etiquette and pharmaceutical deontology, whereas performing such a labor function as 'Wholesale of MP' requires compliance with ethical standards and knowing the rules of business communication, culture and professional ethics.

The 'Chemist' standard [9] demands knowing the basis of professional ethics and pharmaceutical deontology while performing all five labor functions of a chemist as the necessary ones. Other characteristics include adherence to moral and ethical standards within the professional activity while performing all labor functions of a chemist. According to 'Specialist Who Manages a Pharmaceutic Activity' standard [10], pharmaceutical ethics and deontology should be complied only when two out of six labor functions are performed. Explanatory work ensuring compliance with the principles of pharmaceutical deontology should be performed during 'Organization of work by the personnel of a pharmaceutical organization'. Performance of such a labor function as 'Organization of information and consultation aid for population and medical workers' requires knowing the basis of professional ethics and deontology only. Moreover, 'Other characteristics' section sets compliance with moral and ethical standards, principles of medical and pharmaceutical deontology within a professional activity while performing the labor function.

The performed analysis shows that the professional standards contain requirements to adherence to pharmaceutical ethics and deontology, though they are mentioned not in all labor functions and differ depending on the category of a pharmaceutical professional.

Analysis of knowledge of pharmaceutical professionals about basic functions performed while conducting a professional activity is presented in table 2.

It is seen from table 2 that those interviewed with higher and general education believe that compliance with professional

Table 1. Professional standards

Labor functions	Required skills/ knowledge/other characteristics	The content of requirements
The 'Pharmacist' professional standard		
Retail trade and dispensing of MP	Required skills	Perform professional communication with compliance of business etiquette and pharmaceutical deontology
	Required knowledge	–
Preparation of MP by pharmacies and veterinary pharmacy organizations	Required skills	–
	Required knowledge	–
Wholesale trade of MP	Required skills	Adherence to ethical standards
	Required knowledge	Rules of business communication, culture and professional ethics
The 'Chemist' professional standard		
Wholesale, retail trade and dispensing of MP and other pharmacy products	Required knowledge	Basis of professional ethics, pharmaceutical deontology
	Other characteristics	Compliance with moral and ethical standards within professional activity
Acceptance control of incoming MP and other pharmacy products	Required knowledge	Basis of professional ethics, pharmaceutical deontology
	Other characteristics	Compliance with moral and ethical standards within professional activity
Storage of MP and other pharmacy products	Required knowledge	Basis of professional ethics, pharmaceutical deontology
	Other characteristics	Compliance with moral and ethical standards within professional activity
Informing population and medical workers about MP and other pharmacy products	Required knowledge	Basis of professional ethics, pharmaceutical deontology
	Other characteristics	Compliance with moral and ethical standards within professional activity
Making MP at pharmacies	Required knowledge	Basis of professional ethics, pharmaceutical deontology
	Other characteristics	Compliance with moral and ethical standards within professional activity
The 'Specialist Who Manages a Pharmaceutic Activity' standard		
Planning the activity of a pharmaceutical organization	Required skills	–
	Required knowledge	–
Ensuring resource provision of a pharmaceutical organization	Required skills	–
	Required knowledge	–
Organizing the work of the personnel of a pharmaceutical organization	Required skills	Perform professional communication on compliance with the principles of pharmaceutical deontology
	Required knowledge	–
Management of quality of results of the current activity of a pharmaceutical organization	Required skills	–
	Required knowledge	–
Management of information and consultation aid for population and medical workers	Required knowledge	Basis of professional ethics, pharmaceutical deontology
	Other characteristics	Compliance with moral and ethical standards and principles of medical and pharmaceutical deontology during a professional activity
Management of financial and economic activity of a pharmaceutical organization	Required skills	–
	Required knowledge	–

Table 2. Basic functions of pharmaceutical workers

Functions	Chemist		Rank	Pharmacist		Rank
	n = 42	Percentage, %		n = 53	Percentage, %	
Sale of pharmacy products of a proper quality	42	100.0	1	53	100/0	1
Provision of true information about pharmacy products, their cost, pharmaceutical counselling	41	97.6	2–3	51	96.2	3
Informing about the rational use of MP for the purpose of responsible self-therapy	40	96.0	4	49	92.5	4
Making MP in accordance with recipes and inventories of MO	18	42.9	6	15	28,3	6
Registration of accounting records	36	85.7	5	43	81.1	5
Compliance with professional ethics	41	97.6	2–3	52	98.1	2

ethics occupies 2<sup>nd</sup> position amongst basic functions of pharmaceutical professionals.

Results of analysis of knowing the aspects of ethics by pharmaceutical professionals are presented in table 3.

Only 42.9% of chemists and 58.5% of pharmacists selected all constituent of ethics. Meanwhile, only 21.7% of pharmacy heads are well aware of ethical aspects. According to the majority of those interviewed, pharmaceutical ethics

**Table 3.** Constituents (aspects) of ethics

Ethical aspects	Chemist		Rank	Pharmacist		Rank
	n = 42	%		n = 53	%	
Moral and ethical culture of a pharmaceutical worker	40	95.2	2	51	96.2	1–2
Social significance of a professional activity	28	66.7	4	33	62.3	5
Requirements to the personality of a pharmaceutical worker	26	61.9	5	39	73.6	4
Rules of behavior of a pharmaceutical worker	42	100.0	1	51	96.2	1–2
Ethical and psychological aspects of interrelations of participants in the area of circulation of MP	37	88.1	3	48	90.6	3
Other	–	–	–	–	–	–

**Table 4.** Constituents (aspects) of deontology

Aspects of deontology	Chemist		Rank	Pharmacist		Rank
	n = 42	%		n = 53	%	
Relation to professional duties	30	71.4	2	42	79.3	2
Principles of behavior in a professional activity	39	92.9	1	48	90.6	1
The problem of debt while performing a professional activity	27	64.3	3	31	58.5	3

**Table 5.** Labor functions performance of which requires to observe the standards of ethics and deontology

Labor functions	Chemist		Rank	Pharmacist		Rank
	n = 42	%		n = 53	%	
Retail trade and dispensing of MP	39	92.9	1–2	47	88.7	1
Wholesale trade of MP	21	50.0	4	24	45.3	7
Making MP by pharmacies	16	38.1	8	18	34.0	8
Informing population and medical workers about MP and other pharmacy products	39	92.9	1–2	32	60.4	4
Acceptance testing of incoming MP and other pharmacy products	17	40.5	6–7	28	52.8	5–6
Storage of MP and other pharmacy products	17	40.5	6–7	28	52.8	5–6
Organizing the work of personnel of a pharmaceutical organization	34	81.0	3	40	75.5	2
Control of quality of results of the current activity of a pharmaceutical organization	19	45.2	5	34	64.2	3

primarily includes standards of behavior of a pharmaceutical professional.

Analysis of knowledge of deontology aspects by pharmaceutical professionals is presented in table 4.

According to the interview results, 47.6% of chemists and 47.2% of pharmacists know all aspects of deontology. Only 34.8% of pharmacy heads mentioned all constituents of pharmaceutical deontology. In accordance with the majority of those interviewed, the basic constituents included principles of behavior in the professional activity.

The results of analyzed opinions of pharmaceutical professionals by labor functions performed by them, fulfillment of which requires compliance with ethical and deontological standards, are presented in table 5.

In accordance with table 5, only 28.6% of chemists and 32.1% of pharmacists noted that it's necessary to comply with moral and ethical standards while performing all labor functions. Only 17.4% of interviewed pharmacy heads adhere to this point of view.

According to the majority of those interviewed, compliance with ethics and deontology are primarily expected while performing such a labor function as 'Retail trade and dispensing of MP'. Chemists also give the first place to 'Information of population and medical workers about MP and other pharmacy products', whereas it is only ranked 4<sup>th</sup> by pharmacists. Meanwhile, pharmacists stick to the opinion that it is necessary to comply with ethics and deontology while performing a labor function more than chemists. Besides, the interviewed pharmaceutical professionals mentioned the necessity of

compliance with ethical and deontological principles while performing the labor function called 'Management of quality of results of the current activity of the pharmaceutical company' though this professional standard section lacks knowledge and skills in the field of ethics and deontology.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study has shown that pharmaceutical professionals are not completely familiar with regulatory documentation. This is primarily reflected in limited comprehension of their basic functions. Pharmaceutical professionals are not well aware of basic aspects of ethics and deontology. They also underestimate the value of ethical and moral standards while conducting their labor responsibilities.

Supervisors of pharmaceutical organizations should ensure effective development of their personnel, which includes compliance with ethical and deontological principles required for professional activity.

Improved level of knowledge and skills associated with ethics and deontology should be given attention to during both the pre- and post-degree education. When future pharmaceutical professionals are being trained, the issues of ethics and deontology should be included into the programs of professional disciplines. As far as pharmaceutical specialists go, the ethical and deontological aspects should be included into advance training cycles and programs of continuous medical and pharmaceutical education.

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