

## LEGAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR DISTANCE RETAIL SALES OF MEDICINES

Sokolova OV<sup>1</sup> ✉, Kulikova OA<sup>1</sup>, Alekseeva KS<sup>1</sup>, Kulikova AA<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup> Yaroslavl State Medical University, Yaroslavl, Russia<sup>2</sup> Yaroslavl State University named after P. G. Demidov, Yaroslavl, Russia

Distance retail sale of medicines is a mechanism that makes pharmaceutical care more accessible. The objective of the study is to analyze the legal and ethical framework surrounding online retail sales of medicines. The subject of the study is the regulation of ethical standards for consulting in online retail sale of medicines. The study methodology involved first identifying the conditions for remote drug sales and then determining the requirements for this trade method. The research materials included regulatory documents and scientific publications focused on the remote retail sale of medicines. The methods of content analysis, comparison and generalization were used. During the study it has been found out that the current legal frameworks govern how pharmacists comply with ethical standards, specifically addressing the remote sale of medicines. It has been established that, regardless of the method of ordering, information about medicines is provided to customers by a qualified employee of a pharmacy on a professional basis.

**Key words:** medicine, ethics, distance selling, pharmacist

✉ **Correspondence should be addressed:** Olga V. Sokolova  
Saltykova-Shchedrina st., 57/17, ap. 18, Yaroslavl, 150014, Russia; sova293@yandex.ru

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## ПРАВОВОЕ РЕГУЛИРОВАНИЕ ЭТИЧЕСКИХ АСПЕКТОВ РОЗНИЧНОЙ ТОРГОВЛИ ЛЕКАРСТВЕННЫМИ ПРЕПАРАТАМИ ДИСТАНЦИОННЫМ СПОСОБОМ

О. В. Соколова<sup>1</sup> ✉, О. А. Куликова<sup>1</sup>, К. С. Алексеева<sup>1</sup>, А. А. Куликова<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup> Ярославский государственный медицинский университет, Ярославль, Россия<sup>2</sup> Ярославский государственный университет им. П. Г. Демидова, Ярославль, Россия

Розничная торговля лекарственными препаратами (ЛП) дистанционным способом — один из механизмов обеспечения доступности лекарственной помощи населению. Цель исследования — анализ правового регулирования соблюдения профессиональной этики при розничной торговле ЛП дистанционным способом. Предметом исследования стало регламентирование этических норм консультирования при осуществлении розничной торговли ЛП дистанционным способом. Методика исследования включала выявление условий осуществления розничной торговли ЛП дистанционным способом, далее определены требования при реализации данной формы торговли ЛП. Материалами исследования послужили нормативно-правовые документы, регулирующие розничную торговлю ЛП дистанционным способом, научные публикации. Использовались методы контент-анализа, сравнения и обобщения. В результате исследования установлено, что в настоящее время в правовом поле регламентируется соблюдение этических норм фармацевтическими работниками, в том числе при розничной торговле лекарственными препаратами дистанционным способом. Установлено, независимо от способа заказа предоставление информации о лекарственных препаратах покупателям осуществляется квалифицированным работником аптечной организации на профессиональной основе.

**Ключевые слова:** лекарственный препарат, этика, дистанционная торговля, фармацевтический работник

✉ **Для корреспонденции:** Ольга Вячеславовна Соколова  
ул. Салтыкова-Щедрина, д. 57/17, к. 18, г. Ярославль, 150014, Россия; sova293@yandex.ru

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Distance retail sale of medicines is a mechanism that makes medical care available. Many authors are currently researching the remote sale of medications. E-commerce is established to expand access to medical care, especially for such populations as retired people, disabled people, families with young children, and people with limited mobility [1, 2]. The advantages of remote services for citizens have been examined. Thus, customers appreciate online medicine purchases for saving time (80.7%), the possibility of ordering from home (67.2%), shopping from anywhere and at any time that is convenient for them (58.8%), the ability to compare a wide range of products (53.8%) and make all purchases at once (52.1%), as well as for various promotions, promo codes, and loyalty programs (45.4%) [3].

Other authors considered regulatory control of distance selling of medicines focusing on changes in the legislation

and development perspectives. New methods of drug retailing require increased attention to consumer protection [4, 5].

According to the conducted research, distance purchase of medicines increases patient risk by allowing for independent selection, bypassing medical and pharmaceutical oversight [6]. A study found that 93.2% of people believe it's important to consult with a pharmacy specialist when buying medicines [3].

Thus, distance retail sale of medicines can expand access to medicinal products, which aligns with the ethical principles of fairness and protection of public health. It is important to ensure proper consumer protection by providing qualified advice, given the high demand for personal support when purchasing medicines.

**Table.** Information provided to customers using distance retailing of medicines

|                                                                                                          |                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Order of the Ministry of Health of Russia dated 04/29/2025 No. 259n                                      | Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 05/16/2020 No. 697 |
| rules of storage at home                                                                                 | rules of storage                                                            |
| food-drug interactions                                                                                   | drug interactions                                                           |
| use of medicinal products, including:<br>– route of administration,<br>– dosing regimen                  | drug indications                                                            |
| therapeutic action                                                                                       | retail price                                                                |
| contraindications                                                                                        | expiry date                                                                 |
| information about the availability of medicinal products with the same international nonproprietary name | dispensing requirements                                                     |
| information about the availability of medicinal products with a lower price                              | –                                                                           |

Professional activities in drug provision require pharmacists to adhere to specific moral and ethical standards in their work [7]. Professionalism is a key principle of ethics. Licensing requirements are a type of educational and qualification requirements for employees [8]. Also, compliance with the principles of medical ethics and deontology by pharmacists is regulated by good pharmacy practice (GPP) [9]. It is crucial to study these aspects during consultation when selling medicines remotely.

The purpose of the study was to analyze the legal regulations governing the professional ethics of distance retail sales of medicines.

The object of the study was distance retail sale of medicines. The subject of the study is the regulation of ethical standards for consulting during distance retail drug sales.

#### PATIENTS (MATERIALS) AND METHODS

The research methodology first identified the conditions for distance pharmaceutical selling, then established the requirements for this type of business. The research materials consisted of regulatory documents that govern the online retail sale of medicines and scientific publications. The combination of content analysis, comparison, and generalization was used.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A comparative analysis of “a pharmaceutical activity” and “a pharmacy” shows they both encompass the retail sale of medicines, including remote sales through online platforms. However, online retail is not currently considered part of a pharmacist’s official responsibilities [10, 11].

In accordance with GPP, the head of a retail entity must ensure that employees obtain initial and subsequent training on the requirements to pharmacies selling medicines online through various retail services as per the approved plan [9, 12]. Consequently, the pharmaceutical employee of the pharmacy is charged with such duties.

Pharmacists must provide complete and reliable information about medicines, even when retailing remotely. In this regard, regulatory documentation requirements to information were analyzed (table).

The table shows that the scope of information provided to a buyer during the retail sale of medicines, including

distance selling, varies according to the submitted regulatory documents. Thus, Order No. 259h covers more parameters that have to be taken into consideration when informing buyers.

A distance-selling pharmacy must have as follows:

- a web-site or a mobile app;
- an agreement with the owner of an aggregator that provides information about goods or services under the Russian law on consumer rights protection. In this case, a pharmacy acts as the seller, so the purchase and sale agreement is concluded on its behalf.

It is stated that regulations for the remote retail sale of medicines generally cover the receipt, placement, storage and delivery of orders for medicines, while explicitly excluding prescription medicines [12].

Remote orders for medicines can be received through several ways:

- when the buyer contacts a pharmacy through the website (mobile application) of the pharmacy;
- when the owner of the aggregator is contacted through the website (mobile application) of the owner;
- by calling the medicine ordering service or the help desk of another structural unit of the pharmacy that accepts drug orders.

Confidentiality of the buyer's personal data is an ethical principle that requires both the pharmacy and the aggregator to follow the laws of the Russian Federation.

When taking remote orders for medicines, an employee of the pharmacy or an aggregator must inform the buyer about the drug's indications, retail price, expiration date, dispensing conditions, storage rules, and interactions with other drugs.

The procedure for informing buyers varies depending on how they apply to order medicines (Fig.)

A pharmacy is responsible for informing the public about a medicine, regardless of how it is ordered, because it is the seller.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Regulatory and legal documents govern how pharmaceutical workers comply with the ethical standards, especially in case of distance retail selling of medicines. So, customers receive professional, qualified advice on medications regardless of how they order them.

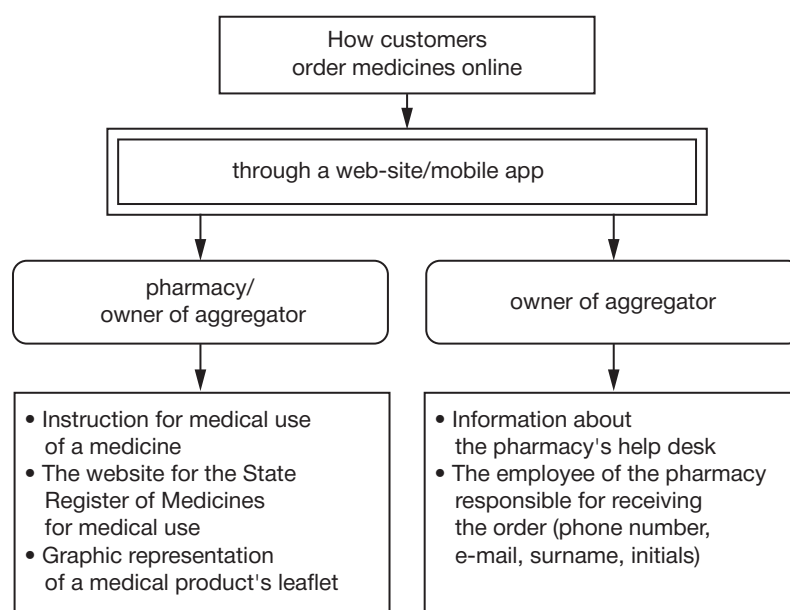


Fig. Ways of ordering medicines online and informing procedure during distance ordering of medicines

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