

You Can't Get Into Pharmacy Through Courses

Two new Health Ministry orders rewrite who is admitted to the profession and what jobs exist inside it – but they codify a pharmacy that has already vanished, and they won't touch the real staffing problem.



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Since 1 September, two Health Ministry orders dated 14 May have been in force. No. 436n sets out who is admitted to the profession; No. 434n, what positions exist within it. Together they describe a pharmacy that no longer exists.

A claim has spread through the sector that you can now enter pharmacy through retraining. So I opened the text. For the "Pharmacy" specialty at the secondary level, there is no retraining route at all – you need a specialized college. Where such a route does exist, it isn't open: the eligible pool is fixed by a closed list of specialties, often with a length-of-service requirement. The order does not regulate program duration, and the words "short courses" appear nowhere in it.

The counter pharmacist (the person at the front counter) is still trained by a college. Worth knowing that before you build a hiring plan around courses.

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What the order actually did. It merged four earlier documents into one: two base sets of requirements, for secondary and for higher education, plus the two that amended them. It runs until 1 September 2032.

And the part that matters most for chains. A specialist with a secondary "Pharmacy" education can now become a pharmacy director, deputy director, or department head. The condition is five years of experience in pharmacist or management roles at a pharmaceutical organization.

I'm all for it. Running a pharmacy is operational management: people, stock, money, service. Five years behind the counter teach you more about that work than a line on a diploma. Experienced pharmacists already run pharmacies in practice; the order simply stopped pretending otherwise.

This won't cure the staffing shortage. A counter pharmacist's pay competes with grocery retail and the marketplaces, while the responsibility and the education bar are higher – so a person will come and leave just as fast if the workload and the pay stay where they were. The root is in the pharmacy's economics, not in the rules of admission.

Now to the positions. A head of a mobilization-reserve medical warehouse made the list. A distance-selling specialist did not – even though online has already taken 16.8% of pharmacy sales.

Same with the fight over the pharmacist-technologist role, kept on despite the position of the National Pharmaceutical Chamber. We argue over the jobs of the compounding pharmacy (one that makes up its own preparations), a mere few percent of the market, and stay silent about the roles retail actually lives on.

Today a pharmacist sees one way up: into a manager's chair. What's needed is a second track — expert growth through pharmaceutical counseling and work with chronic patients.

A new sign on an old door.

SOURCES

- ◆ Russian Health Ministry orders No. 434n and No. 436n, dated 14.05.2026.
- ◆ Online share: DSM Group, Q1 2026.