faith that medical treatment is a benefit.

The rub, though, is at the margins, in which the desire for solutions for diseases for which there are no easy solutions intersects with padding the profit margins.

These particularly, Cassels advises — much as readers of this book would be best advised — should be taken in small doses, if only to avoid the inevitable urge to seek a pharmacological (or alcoholical) solution to the ensuing depression or paralysis.

Wayne Kondro MA
News editor
CMAJ

Hospital design:
form and function

While conservative in style, hospital buildings pioneered many modern ideas. They were among the first buildings to be mechanically ventilated and to be designed for cars; as early as 1911 the Royal Victoria had parking lots for doctors and private patients. With nurses residences and on-site education, they created opportunities for women outside the home, a dramatic social transformation made easier by the domestic character of hospital spaces.

The book is scholarly but leavened by fascinating early photos (among them an image of the surgical theatre at the Royal Victoria in 1894 with its dramatic semicircular tiered seating) and colourful tidbits. For instance, we are told Florence Nightingale, the pioneer of modern nursing, criticized the design for the Royal Victoria Hospital. “Duty room is as far from the ward as it can be,” she wrote in 1899. “In fact it should called off-duty room.”

Maria Cook
Journalist
Ottawa, Ont.

Maria Cook is a staff writer at the Ottawa Citizen specializing in architecture and urbanism.