The main message of our paper "Medicalisation and Overdiagnosis: what society does to Medicine" was: "instead of solely a result of medicine, medicalisation and overdiagnosis consist of social cultural processes that take place both in and outside medicine."¹ We were privileged to receive the thoughts and comments of three esteemed scholars on our perspective.² Three authors approached the topic from a different angle and contributed to the discussions surrounding it. Hofmann stresses that overdiagnosis indeed is a likely candidate to be a social construct and calls for further research on this topic.² Carter underlines the necessity of conceptually rigorous, well-reasoned and empirically sound work on this important subject. She also presents a meaningful definition of overdiagnosis, which she developed with colleagues.³ Wardrope explains how a definition of medicalisation or model is always a proxy for reality and should not be expected to serve purposes out of its original territory.⁴ Although very different in approach and emphasis, in fact all three address important questions: how to better understand and define medicalisation and overdiagnosis, and how to proceed into meaningful future research?

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underline the possible involvement of non-medical groups, such as consumers or commercial parties. What is essential is the explanation of human problems in medical terms. Nonetheless, we want to stress that whether one regards this stretching of biomedical labels by society as medicalisation, depends on how one defines medicalisation. This may seem axiomatic, but we agree with Carter that “definitional work is not for its own sake, it has consequences.” While every definition is a proxy for reality, the territory one can cover in research depends on how both map and territory are defined. In conclusion and in accordance with the three commenting authors, we want to emphasize that future research on medicalisation and overdiagnosis should start from a clear and well-developed definition of the subject under study. This extends beyond semantics because it helps us interpret and understand the society we study as well as the work of others.

Ethical issues
Not applicable.

Competing interests
Authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors’ contributions
WvD conceptualised the article, all others provided input and suggestions on subsequent version.

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