



Quality over Quantity



Much has been made of the ongoing impact of the SARS-CoV2 pandemic on human activities worldwide, and after nearly two years we are not out of the woods yet, as the recent emergence of the omicron variant has demonstrated. The scientific evidence is however increasingly telling us that the evolution of the virus combined with robust immune responses from prior infection or vaccination is progressively reducing the disease's severity; will 2022 see the 'beginning of the end' of the pandemic? With some cautious optimism, it seems likely.

On this topic, an interesting question was posed to the SAIMM Journal's publications committee several months ago. A reader observed that the number of papers being published in each edition has decreased in recent history. Pulling the data from the last few years and performing some basic analysis and visualization of the results showed that there has indeed been a statistically significant drop in the number of papers reaching final publication in the *Journal*, from roughly eleven per edition in 2019 to between six and seven in 2021. Interestingly enough, the number of papers submitted to the *Journal* was relatively unaffected over the same period.

Due to the timing it is tempting to present pandemic effects as the sole cause, but there are other considerations. Firstly, the decision taken by the *Journal* to cease republishing of selected conference proceedings papers occurred at approximately the same time – historically this has contributed several papers to most editions. Secondly, the peer review process was extended to include a pre-screening stage which has increased its rigour and quality considerably. These changes aim to bring you, the members and readers, an improved and more focused *Journal* in the new year and beyond.

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