tive system validation testing, requiring less manually intensive hands-on testing. End-users then enjoy a far better understanding of their processes through the macro script definitions.

Conclusions

The business environment of the 1990s calls for systems which can adapt to change with a minimum of disruption. Most of the commonly available table-driven laboratory information management systems, while easy to implement, may suffer from an inflexibility which progressively constrains their effectiveness over time. Custom-developed systems suffer from a similar problem, to which must be added the substantial expense of maintenance.

Language-based LIMS offer a way out of this dilemma, presenting the user with a familiar language from which to draw commands, and the customer with a system which can expand to meet the needs of the laboratory as they evolve. Developers, however, will find it somewhat more difficult to implement the language-based LIMS initially, although with experience they will find they can leverage their knowledge across the full spectrum of applications.

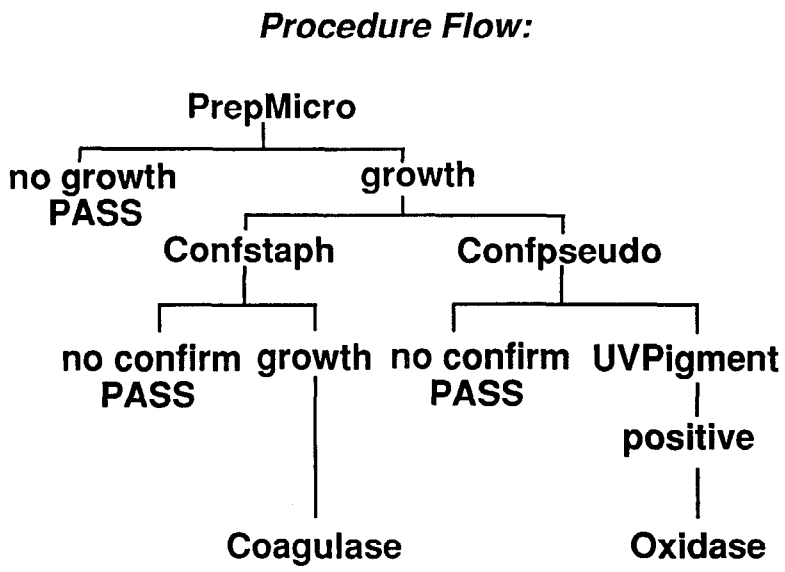

Fig. 4. Language-based rules.

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Meeting Reports

2nd International Symposium on Automation, Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Applied to Analytical Chemistry and 2nd International Conference on Robotics in Laboratory Medicine

The 2nd International Symposium on Automation, Robotics and Artificial Intelligence applied to Analytical Chemistry and the 2nd International Conference on Robotics in Laboratory Medicine were held in Montreux, Switzerland, 23–26 February 1993. Approximately 260 delegates attended the short courses, oral presentations, poster sessions and vendor exhibition. The joint symposium was chaired by Jan van der Greef, TNO and University of Leiden, Netherlands and organised by Scitec, Switzerland.

The conference started with a day of short courses covering topics such as: LIMS: strategy and tactics, application of neural networks in chemistry, multivariate data analysis, experimental design and robotics in today's analytical laboratory. All of the short courses were presented by recognised authorities in each of their respective fields. The neural networks short course provided a good overview of the theory and how this technology can be used practically to solve difficult non-