Equestrian instructors are not required to undertake personalised Continual Professional Development (CPD) post qualification, except once every two years to satisfy professional body requirements. Geographical distribution of British Horse Society (BHS) instructors can lead to the feeling of isolation. Many BHS instructors are self-employed and naturally protective of their commercial interests, resulting in a reluctance to share good practice with others. Anecdotally instructors reflect in practice but this is more often related to their performance as a rider or on the performance of their horse. The ability to self-reflect as a rider or later as an instructor appears to be subconscious in nature. In nursing and education the process of reflection and mentoring are considered to enhance professional development (Boyd & Fales, 1993; Leyson, 2002; Young et al, 2005) and are actively scheduled into the educational development of staff. It would be a benefit to explore the concepts of self reflection and mentoring and the impact that these have on equestrian instructors. This study aims to identify the impact and use of reflection through mentoring support to enhance elite equestrian instructor education. The objectives of the study are to evaluate an effective reflexive process that can be adapted into the equestrian industry and to appraise the use and role of mentoring within a distance learning environment to elite equestrian instructors.

**CONCLUSIONS:**

The participants positively bought into the study and readily engaged in the reflective process. During this process the instructors stated that they developed a positive cognitive awareness of their own ability which allowed them to take responsibility for their learning and ownership of their teaching skills. The instructors considered that the mentoring process was supportive and useful in developing the ability to self-reflect through the weekly dialogues. Consequently, this lead to their ability to self-mentor therefore acting as a suitable tool for CPD in this industry. To the author’s knowledge this is the first study to amalgamate reflection and mentoring in practice, specifically to this industry. In order to support the development of current equestrian coaches within the UK, the opportunity for available and interactive support for professional instructors should be provided to ensure that they can feel valued. Through their own education, the coaches can cascade and disseminate their tacit knowledge to their protégés and support future coach development and education within this theatre of practice. The work done in this study and the understanding of the limitations that have been identified would act positively as a pilot study to be refined for direct use in the BHS Coach Education system. This study concluded that both a reflective element and a mentoring process are required to effectively empower equestrian instructors and facilitate a culture of lifelong learning.

**INDUSTRY APPLICATIONS:**

The study process was shown to be very accessible to instructors in potentially isolated areas or those working in a freelance capacity where commercial ownership of teaching skills is important and protected.

**REFERENCES:**

