

Chapter Member Spotlight



Name: Melissa Bent, M.D.

Practice location: Children's Hospital Los Angeles

Number of years in practice: 5.5 years

I was born in Jamaica and raised in Florida. I had clubfoot and other foot deformities as a child. I did not know that this would lead me to pursue orthopedics, where I am one of the clubfoot physicians at CHLA. But, looking back, everything has come full circle.

Being a first-generation college graduate and physician, as well as a black female, my path to medicine was not straightforward. I attended a historically black college and university, Morehouse University School of Medicine. I started in orthopedic surgery, however, changed to pediatrics. I completed my pediatric residency at UCSF and a fellowship in non-operative pediatric orthopedics at University of Wisconsin-Madison. I joined the faculty at CHLA 5 years ago.

I am in a field of less than 30 non-operative pediatric orthopedic specialists across the country, and there is an incredible opportunity for shaping the foundation of this relatively new subspecialty. Musculoskeletal education is woefully lacking in medical education, and even more so in pediatric residency programs. My goal is to improve this locally and eventually, nationally. I am passionate about educating trainees and colleagues in musculoskeletal topics. I created the first non-operative pediatric orthopedic fellowship at CHLA. Our first fellow will begin in Spring, 2023.

What do you do before work that sets the tone for your day?

I try to drink a cup of hot tea and do 10 minutes of yoga or a 10 minute guided meditation on the Calm app.

What are some challenges or struggles that you face at work?

My main challenge is finding the resources for my patients and their families.

How do you work through or overcome your challenges or struggles?

I try to take my time with my patients to navigate our complicated healthcare system. I do my best to advocate for resources for families including exercise handouts, access to physical therapy, consultants, and frequent follow ups to assist families. I truly appreciate leveraging assistance from other excellent pediatricians who can advocate for our mutual patients and their families.

After work, what do you do for your own wellness?

I go on long walks. I unplug from emails and notes while taking care of my 17-month-old daughter. I also try to be active using peloton #PelotonMoms!

From what/whom does your inspiration or motivation stem?

Grateful patients and colleagues make everything worthwhile. For example, I had clubfoot as a child and so I feel quite fulfilled when an expectant mother feels relieved after our prenatal consultation. I feel grateful when a child is running around the clinic after completing their Ponseti method treatment.

Wellness Tip: What is the one thing you would recommend to our readership to do each day to take care of oneself?

I believe in Work Life integration and advocate for self-compassion. I am a work in progress myself. Try to take 5-10 minutes for yourself, if possible, even while driving, walking, or drinking, to reflect on what went well once a day or week. Often, we focus on only what went wrong, so it is important to also focus on what goes well.

Contact information: mbent@chla.usc.edu