Alyssa Dela Cruz Fernando, a third-year medical student at Mercer University School of Medicine’s 3-year accelerated track program in primary care, is passionate about health promotion and trying to prevent chronic disease. While her research focus has been on hepatitis C screening in medical school, she recently spoke to the Georgia Chapter of ACP about how she stepped up to volunteer by giving COVID-19 vaccinations at community clinics.

**How did you get involved in COVID-related volunteering?**
Chatham County Health Department reached out to the dean of our medical school to have health professional students help with community vaccinations. At the beginning, there was a lot of demand for vaccines and nurses were still inundated with the surge. I, along with many of my fellow medical student classmates, were trained to administer COVID-19 vaccines.

Mercer has had many opportunities to help during the pandemic, including delivering groceries to older adults in the community, but I chose to help with vaccinations. We assisted at clinics at local and the local health department.

**How did it feel to administer vaccines as part of your medical school training?**
We completed an online module training and on the first day when we arrived at the site a nurse had to sign off on our skills to administer vaccines. Then, we could sign up to help at clinics.

At the clinic, the volunteers had our own patients. We would call them back from the waiting room and provide education about the vaccine if they had any questions. We also explained what side effects they might expect and when to come back. I signed off on people's COVID vaccination cards, which was pretty cool. It felt nice to have some small part in helping others get through this pandemic and it helped develop my patient interaction skills.
How do you juggle volunteering with your medical school schedule?
Medical school schedules are very demanding, especially in an accelerated program, but as part of trying to be the best doctor I can potentially be, I felt that everyone was affected by the pandemic, and there was an increased need for my help. I felt the call to help with vaccinations and to contribute in some small way. It is fulfilling to help my community.

As medical students, sometimes we feel like we do not have much to contribute, but we really do. Even if it is not directly in the exam room, we can give back to the community. Serving in the community and actually being involved in the community directly helps remind me of why I went to medicine the first place.