A local “clown doctor” who researches the effects of humor has on patients has been recognized for his work at the University of Windsor.

Bernie Warren — a.k.a. Dr. Haven't-a-Clue — works alongside health care teams in the community, promoting wellness for patients and their families through the use of music, improvisational play and humor.

Warren, a U of W professor of dramatic art and director of Fools for Health, received a University of Windsor Award for Excellence in Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity on Monday.

Hosted by U of W president Alan Wildeman and vice-president of research Rajanna Bird, the event spotlights accomplishments and achievements of faculty who have received significant awards and honours for their research or creative activity.

“Dr. Bernie Warren is a very unique individual who is highly recognized in the medical community,” said Bird.

“What he has done with his imagination and creativity in terms of health care is a great example on how research can bring such a valuable contribution to humanity.”

Warren’s most recent research focuses on the effect of clowns on seniors diagnosed with dementia.

“Even though every patient is different, we have seen that the visiting clowns link some of the patients’ past and present,” said Warren.

“The patients remember the visiting clowns, the day of the week they visited, and what the clowns did during their visit.”

The area of research dealing with elderly patients with dementia is groundbreaking, said Lionel Walsh, director of the school of dramatic art for the University of Windsor.

In 2001 Warren created Fools for Health, a charitable organization dedicated to using the arts to promote health and well-being in health care facilities throughout Windsor and Essex County.

Warren says clown doctors provide a form of health care that is missing in the hospital environment.

Health care teams focus on the sick parts of the patient, while clown doctors focus on the healthy parts of the patient, he said.

“I want everyone to live a happy and healthy life, if I can do anything to achieve that, that’s wonderful.”

Majid Ahmadi, Susan Holbrook and Chitra Rangan also accepted Excellence in Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity for their internationally recognized research.

Ahmadi, associate professor at the U of W, was honoured because of his numerous contributions in digital signal processing.

Holbrook, who is specializing in 20th-century poetry and poetics in Canada and the U.S., was also honoured.

Associate professor Rangan was also honored for her research in theoretical physics on the control of nano-scale light-matter interactions.